

128. Impermanence and the Art of Letting Go: Navigating Life's Transitions Mindfully

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Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

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Hello, sweet friends. Welcome back, you are listening to Episode 128, where we will talk about impermanence and the Art of Letting Go. So I have just come back from the most incredible retreat, I was at a conference, actually, a physician coaching conference where I was asked to be a speaker. And I had got on the plane to go it was in Arizona, and I had this incredible energy. When I was on the plane, I kind of felt like I was about to step into some deep transformation and healing. And I didn't know really what to expect, it was kind of this nebulous type of feeling where I couldn't pinpoint why I was feeling that way.

Turned out that the retreat was at a Deepak Chopra site of transformation and mindfulness. And I just let myself fully be in that space and be in that moment and allow myself to go through what it was that I needed to go through. And it's probably one of the most beautiful experiences so far that I've had where I experienced a lot of inner healing, where I got to go deep on things that had been holding me back and release a lot of those things. And so it was overall a fantastic experience. So I'm grateful that I got to experience the energy at that site because I have no doubt that the reason why I had that experience is the energy at the facility, you know what Chopra has created in that retreat center. Alright, so I am just like back, it's full of so much loving energy right now. And I cannot wait to just go deep on this episode with all of you today.

Two announcements before we start, number one, we are launching the most incredible Business Mastermind, I will take 10 people through a fantastic journey where you do all of the mindset work that you need to launch a program, a project, a side gig, a business, and not just the mindset work, but the actual actions that you need to take. So yes, we are going to uncover all your subconscious blocks. But I'm also going to give you the exact tools that you need to get going, whether that's your marketing, whether that's launching a webinar, designing your program or your projects, really thinking through the tech how to automate how to make sure that you are creating space for your entire life as you do this because many of you listening have more than one identity, you're not just a professional, you're also the spouse or a parent, or you know you volunteer somewhere, or you want to continue to focus on your well being and exercise.

And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to help you navigate that entire process accelerate your growth and get your side gig or project or program off the ground. So I'm excited to do that. We're going to take

10 students through that, and the waitlist opens next week, the enrollment will open in December, and the program is going to start in January. So it's a great way to kick off the new year in 2024. So if this is something that's resonating with you keep your eye out for the waitlisted openings next week.

Okay, if so, I also want to make sure you will know that my program, the journey is open. The Journey Again is a program for really smart women who want to be more effectively achieve their potential in life and get more done without stress and burnout. So we uncover a lot of subconscious blocks there. We do subconscious mind transformation there. And we also teach you tools to manage your time more effectively to organize your life better, and to align your life with your priorities. So that's the journey and the doors are open. Now you can find that up VanessaCalderonmd.com/join, and there's a link for that in the show notes. Alright, so let's dive into today's episode. So today we're talking about how we navigate life's transitions mindfully. And this is, you know, very pertinent to me as I'm experiencing many transitions in life. You know, one big external transition is we moved recently from California across the country. I am also experiencing a transition and going back into the emergency department. So I'm an ER doctor and I love clinical medicine. I took this unintentional sabbatical over the last five months because my state medical license was held up it took forever to get processed.

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And I am transitioning now and going back into the emergency department after taking five months off. So that is another transition I'm experiencing. As many of you know I've been listening to this podcast, you know, my mom is also on a journey with her health right now. And that is another transition that I'm just supporting sort of myself and navigating my relationship with my mom, but also my mom that she's going through her journey with cancer. So let's talk a little bit more about impermanence. So at first, I'm going to just talk about what it is I'm going to teach you an analogy that I think is helpful to help us think about this. And then we're going to talk about how we can start practicing this and using this tool in our own lives.

Okay, so impermanence, which is often referred to as Annika, it's a Buddhist philosophy. The fundamental concept can be used as this powerful reminder, it's like a mindfulness tool, a reminder that life involves recognizing and accepting the inherent transitory nature of all things and all experiences in life. So this concept can be applied to external circumstances. So like I mentioned my move or going back to the hospital. But it can also be applied to internal thoughts, emotions, and sensations, like, you know, my relationship with my mom as she's going through her journey, or my mom's healthcare journey, your relationship to your thoughts and your relationship to your emotions. So I'm going to give you this sort of analogy to help sort of set the stage for today's episode. So I want you to imagine life as this incredible garden, and you are the gardener of your life. And in this garden, there are various flowers.

Each flower represents a different aspect of your life, your relationships, your health, your personal experiences, and your career. And let's say now, maybe you're 3040 5060 years old. And You've nurtured and tended to your garden, these beautiful flowers for so many years. And now you see them and the flowers are in bloom, and they're beautiful. Some of them are bright orange, some of them are yellow, some have thorns, some don't. And now I want you to think of these flowers as moments of your life. Some are vibrant and filled with joy, like successful projects at work, or really meaningful memories

that you have with family or friends. Others of these flowers also are beautiful in color, but they have thorns. And those thorns represent the challenges that you had to face the hardships you had to face along the way. And here's where impermanence comes in. Because just like those, those flowers there and real flowers and life, those moments are impermanent, which means the flowers are there, and they're beautiful, and they're blooming, but eventually, they're going to wither and they're going to fade away. And that's just a nice, natural cycle of life.

And when they wither and fade away, you will get to tend to gardens of new flowers and have new experiences of new things coming up for you. So the beautiful moments that you cherish, as well as the difficult ones, the ones that have thorns, they're all temporary, and they will all change like different seasons in a garden. And at times, you're going to wish for that vibrant moment for those beautiful flowers to last forever, or you're never going to want them to go away. And you're also going to want to avoid the thorny ones. But here's a reminder that just like you can't stop the seasons in the world or the seasons in an actual garden, you can't stop the flow of life's moments in your garden. So the key to finding peace and balance lies in recognizing and accepting this impermanence. So as the gardener of your life, you can start to appreciate and savor the beautiful flowers in your garden. And you can also acknowledge that they're going to fade away and they will be replaced by new ones. This awareness is what can help you share each moment and enjoy the challenging ones because you know that they're going to pass with greater mindfulness and gratitude.

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Embracing impermanence can be an incredible source of wisdom, resilience, and inner peace for us on our journey in life.

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Okay, so let's talk about how impermanence functions as a mindfulness tool.

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So I mentioned this awareness of change. That's probably one of the most important things that impermanence encourages us to understand that things around us are in a constant state of flux, including the things inside of us, what we think, and what we feel. All of it is in a constant state of flux. It reminds us that nothing lasts forever. And that change

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That's an essential part of life. What that does is when we can acknowledge that nothing lasts forever. It allows us to be present in this moment. Focusing on the impermanent nature of the present moment, allows us to fully engage and appreciate the things that are around us. When things are going well, what impermanence allows us to do is see those moments with gratitude and appreciation. I am so grateful that things are going so well. And not hold on to that tightly. But just know that this is what it is right now. And this is exciting. And this is wonderful. And I am so grateful for this moment that I'm experiencing right now.

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And when things are challenging, it allows us to cope with those challenges. When we're faced with a difficult situation, we can remember again, that nothing is permanent.

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Nothing is forever. So when things are challenging practicing impermanence will give us a sort of solace in knowing that even this will change. The same thing to things going on in our minds, when we're feeling anxious, sad, disappointed, or afraid. All of those fear-based emotions that I sort of label as paralyzing emotions, all of those emotions, we can remember that those things are also impermanent, that they will also shift and change for us in life. And they will be replaced with things that support us. So practicing impermanence allows us to accept the good stuff with gratitude let go of the challenging things and know that they're not forever.

This right here is a great point because impermanence also lets us go which supports us in letting go of attachment. So the way I think of attachment is sort of what suffering is created out of suffering comes from being attached being having this thought that we're not going to be okay. Without something without a specific relationship, maybe it's your marriage, without a friendship, we're not going to be okay. If you know, we don't have a specific label, maybe that label is something your job is giving you that we're not going to be okay until we achieve a goal maybe that goes a weight loss goal, maybe that goes getting a specific promotion. When we are attached to a relationship, a label a goal, what does it do, it creates suffering for us, because the suffering is coming from the thought that we are not okay without that. And what impermanence lets us do, it's it's a reminder that we can let go of these attachments and these cravings, we can let go of them because we will always be okay. Right now, if you're listening, you are 100% whole and complete. You don't need anything to be okay.

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You don't need a specific relationship or a goal. You don't need to command control over anything to be okay. You don't need to be promoted at work. You are 100% whole and perfect right now as you are when you can breathe that in and let go of the attachment. That right there will support you in practicing peace, which is the whole point of impermanence. Impermanence allows us to create more peace and acceptance in our lives. And I did an entire episode on radical acceptance, it's a few episodes back, I think it's in the one teens or so like, I think it's 121, something like that. So I encourage you if this is resonating with you to go back and listen to that episode on radical acceptance. It's been one of the most popular episodes that we've done here because I think once you let go of attachment, you practice acceptance, which is what impermanence also allows us to do.

What that does is it allows you to now really regain a sense of power and make choices and decisions from where you are, from a sense of full sovereignty. sovereignty means that you are 100% in control of your life. And that is just beautiful. The other thing impermanence allows us to do is embrace change. So if you're someone that really struggles with any type of change, even like when the weather changes drastically, or maybe you have a new program or a project at work, what impermanence allows you to do when you can embrace impermanence is it allows you to create peace with change. Because whatever new thing is coming up for you won't be there forever. And whatever it is, it might be good. It might be bad. Either way, you're going to learn from it and you will continue to move on so it will support you in being more flexible and adaptive.

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Okay, so how can we start to incorporate this practice of impermanence into our own lives? The first is I want you to take a moment and reflect on your personal experience just in the world. Reflect on your journey. I want you to think about how you're

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life experiences have gotten you to where you are today. Think about how you were when you were 13. When you were 17 when you were 23. You know, when you thought you knew everything in the world, and you had it all figured out, and how you are today, notice how you have changed and evolved throughout that time. Notice how even your relationship with yourself is impermanent, how it has also evolved and changed and continues to evolve and change. Notice your relationship with things external to you. Maybe it's personal relationships with friends or significant others. Maybe it's relationships to work, jobs, identities, and titles, and notice how all of that has also changed.

That right there, just acknowledging all of the changes that you've experienced, that have created the beautiful person you are today. That right there will support you in really embracing impermanence, and knowing that you will continue to evolve as life goes on. And that is a gift. That's a beautiful gift that comes with impermanent, letting go of this thought that right now, in this moment, you have it all figured out. And that is a beautiful balance. Because yes, right now, in this moment, you are perfect and you are whole and you don't need anything else. And you will also change and evolve. And tomorrow or a week from now, you're going to learn new things, and you're going to grow. And then you will be perfect and whole at that point. And you will look back and say, Oh, how interesting, we'll get what I didn't know and look at who I am today. And that creates a beautiful sense of peace, for your journey towards self-actualization.

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The other thing impermanence allows us to do so here's another practice for you. So first practices reflect on your personal experiences. The second practice is practice letting go.

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So this is a really big one that helped me create peace. So what you want to do here is you want to notice, what are you attached to. Where in your life? Do you feel like you wouldn't be whole like your life would fall apart? Like you would be a total mess? If you didn't have this one thing? And, you know, maybe that seems a little bit drastic. So another thing you could think about is, what goals have you attached yourself to? What goals are you so attached to that you think you have, you're defining yourself as a failure until you achieve that goal or disappointment until you achieve that goal. Or you don't feel whole or you feel like you got to hurry up and achieve that goal. All of those things are indications that you are attached to one thing. So notice those places where you are practicing attachment.

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And what you want to do instead is you want to practice letting go. So how do you do that? So you can do that in a few different ways. One is when you bring that into your mind, when you just create that

awareness about what you're attached to, you can say to yourself, Okay, I am whole and complete. And I allow myself to release the attachment to that because I know I will always be whole and complete no matter what.

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That said, it can be as simple as acknowledging that thought that emotion and letting it go by saying out loud, I release my attachment to that because I know I'm holding completely in this moment.

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All right, and the last one here is just a really basic practice of mindfulness and awareness because it's tough to practice impermanence. If we haven't already done a lot of mindfulness work, we can acknowledge that what we're experiencing, the majority of what we're experiencing is made up in our mind that it's hot. I did this coaching session yesterday, and one of my students said, Oh, wait, so it all starts with just seeing that they're all thoughts. And I was like, ding ding, ding 100%? Yes. The world around you has been created by the thoughts that you have. And when you can acknowledge that, then you can catch those thoughts that aren't serving you.

You can start to practice impermanence. And that right there is mindfulness in action. That is the practice of mindfulness is acknowledging that the entire world around you are thoughts. And when you can quiet your mind and maybe even just watch your thoughts. Notice the thoughts that are coming through, you can start to choose thoughts that serve you. Let go of the thoughts that don't serve you. Notice the thoughts that are creating attachments for you and learn to practice impermanence. Alright, so with friends, I hope you found this helpful. And we'll see you next week.

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Hey, sweet friends, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us in the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at VanessaCalderonmd.com/join. I'll see you there.