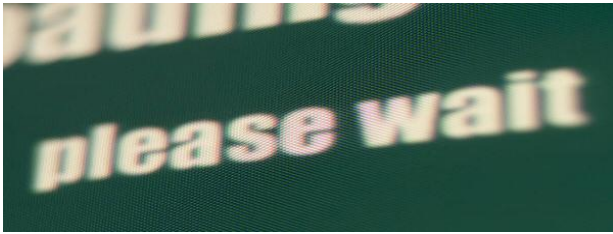


When Patience Dies

"I want what I want when I want it."

By G. Raymond McCullough



Wouldn't it be nice if we could just think about something we wanted and have it instantaneously become our reality? I think this is commonly called "Instant Gratification". This is a rather seemingly harmless and benign concept that has wreaked havoc in the lives of many. There are so many sayings that contradict the concept of instant gratification, i.e., "a penny saved is a penny earned". Why not "a grand saved is a grand earned". I mean let's speed the process up.

**"Patience is the companion of Wisdom."
Saint Augustine**

What exactly is patience? Patience is essentially a quality or characteristic of a person that is exhibited in his or her ability to resist provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without engaging in self-defeating behavior or acts, i.e., the loss of temper or focus. Furthermore, it's a person's innate ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with their needs or desires not being met. Thus, this would suggest a person who is patient and who has a demeanor that is quiet, steady, even-tempered, and diligent.

Serving in the U.S. Navy onboard ship was a remarkable experience that tested and taught me patience. I served onboard U.S. Navy combatants before cell phones or the internet, which now makes communication with family and friends seemingly instantaneous. In my day, when the ships were wooden and the men iron, a deployment on ship could sometimes last 13 months. Your only means of communication with family and friends was through the mail system, what some now call "snail mail". Depending on where you were in the world, a letter could take 7-10 days to get to its destination and another 7-10 days to get a response. For example, you

might write: "Hello Baby, I miss you and love you dearly. I don't want to upset you, but I heard a rumor that you might be seeing someone else." Then, 14-20 days later, you might get a response that says, "Sweetheart, how can you be so silly, thinking I am cheating on you." I must add that there were probably numerous letters between the two letters that made no mention of the initial inquiry. Talk about acceptance and patience. That's prophetic that acceptance would have anything to do with the exercising of patience. I mean, on the surface, it makes sense. For example, the more accepting I am of the reality that it took me 20 plus years to gain 50 plus pounds, the more likely I will accept the concept that it could take an equal amount of time to lose it. Now that is a magnificent example of patience in the making.

Another experience in the military that teaches you patience is the obsession that the military has for lines—whether it be running in line, marching in lines, standing in lines for anything or everything imaginable. Yes, lines will teach you patience if you know you must stay in line to get whatever it is you want, e.g., your pay check, medical care, food, taking a shower, etc.



Pregnancy and childbirth is yet another life experience that teaches patience. Let me see you rush that one even when the bloating, swelling, gas, weight gain, and cramping have become almost unbearable. This may be the universe's way of helping mothers to develop the patience that will be required for the next 18 years, if you are lucky.

I would be derelict in my responsibility if I did not mention one of the most remarkable life experiences that is a testament to patience. That experience is a long-term, successful marriage. Recently, I was sitting in a Borders Bookstore's Seattle's Best Coffee enjoying a green tea latte and a piece of banana walnut bread. A older lady (Lauralie) asked me if she could share my table. I immediately said yes, but on the inside I was thinking that I didn't want to be disturbed. Nonetheless, we conversed for about 30 minutes. During that time, she shared that she had been married for 59 years and had lost her husband almost a year ago. When I asked her how they managed to stay

together so long, she responded, “I blame that on him. He had a great sense of humor. When people ask me the key to a long marriage I tell them you have to have a sense of humor.” When I was getting up to leave, I said, “Lauralie, have a good day.” She responded, “You helped.” Actually, she made my day. You may ask what does this have to do with patience? My hope is that it’s clear.

Modern medicine has made miraculous advances in identifying and curing many ailments. Much of this has happened because of the pharmaceuticals that have been instrumental in resolving many of the complaints of patients who are being treated. I imagine a patient who is being seen by a doctor for a viral infection, chronic headaches, or other painful condition. Many patients probably have an expectation that their wonderful and learned physician will prescribe something that will relieve them of their discomfort....“the sooner the better.” If their discomfort isn’t resolved as they hope, patience is out the window, and they are back for their doctor to get it right this time. This scenario is likely more about managing expectations that have the potential to lead to impatience (the absence of patience).

Drugs, and for that matter alcohol, have the potential to lead many unsuspecting souls down the path that leads to a lack of patience and to an insatiable fixation on immediate gratification. I feel stress or sad, I take a hit, and I feel instantaneously stress free and happy. I feel anxious, I have a forty, and I feel progressively relaxed. I feel bored, I snort or eat this, and my world immediately comes to life. Many of us are aware and understand that there ultimately is a down side to these quick remedies to ameliorate our presenting condition. It seems that if we had a little patience, creativity, and skill, we would commit ourselves to a longer-term and more credible solution to whatever it is that is bothering us. I know what you might be saying, “I don’t have the skill or the patience to do it any other way.” This may be true on both counts. I suspect as long as you take the shortcut to resolving and addressing your difficulties, you will never develop the skills to deal with them any other way. I warn you my suggestion will take Patience, but it is well worth the effort.

I personally have experienced the virtues and rewards of patience on countless occasions. One of the most significant occurrences was patiently waiting for the right person to come into my life with whom I could comfortably and exuberantly share my life; it paid off better than I could have ever imagined.

What value would this article have if I didn’t share some thoughts about how to develop patience?

Here are some steps for doing so:

1. Evaluate the state, circumstances, or conditions that may be at the root of your impatience. This may require an impartial observer to help you get an accurate idea of what is in play.
2. The next and most challenging step is accepting whatever condition or state it is that you are disturbed by, upset with, or flatly discomfited by. In the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book, there is a poignant paragraph that reads: “And acceptance is the answer to all my problems.” I suspect that the writers saw the resultant power that could come from a person embracing these words as a part of his or her reality.
3. I have discovered that the bigger the gap between my expectations and the reality of a given situation, the greater the magnitude of my response. Thus, adjust your expectations of the given condition, circumstance, or state, and this will enable you to become empowered rather disempowered.
4. Act in a way that keeps you focused and diligent, resist provocation, and mitigates annoyance and emotional discomfort while maintaining your integrity and self worth.
5. As we learned from Lauralie, keep or develop a sense of humor.
6. Lastly—and most importantly—practice deferring gratification. In other words, sit with the physical and emotional state to see if it passes. Breathe and think pleasant thoughts. Also, remember that some things may require professional assistance.

Sound simple. I doubt it. The effort you put forth now will go a long way toward helping you develop Patience. Give me a call if you would like a more detailed explanation. Or, buy a 5000-piece puzzle and go to work until it’s completed.

**Patience
is a
Virtue**