

The Morning That Hadn't Gone Wrong Yet

On my first Sunday speaking at Unity, after Emily's death, I woke up in a full-body argument with reality. Nothing had happened yet, but the thought "*I can't do this today, I have nothing to give,*" was already running on repeat. Then a friend's email arrived: "*Keep sharing your wisdom, your truth, and your love. They need you. And Emily would want you to.*" A breath. A cup of coffee. The thought loosened its grip, just enough. The grief was real, but the story I was telling myself that feeling grief meant I had nothing to give was not real.

Have you ever had an experience like mine?

Resistance Is a Thought

Resistance is not a condition, a personality trait, or a spiritual failing. It is a *thought* we've mistaken for reality. When we see it for what it is, we stop adding a second layer of suffering on top of whatever we're actually experiencing.

Byron Katie and the Power of Inquiry

After years of severe depression, Byron Katie had a moment of awakening: when she believed her thoughts, she suffered; when she didn't, she didn't. Her practice of inquiry begins with one question: "*Is it true?*" In that honest investigation, the thought begins to lose its power — not because we force it away, but because we see through it.

Cognitive Fusion and Defusion

Steven Hayes, founder of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, describes "*cognitive fusion*" as the moment we become so identified with a thought that we mistake it for reality. We don't think, "*I'm having the thought that today will be hard.*" We think, "*Today will be hard. Period.*"

The antidote is "*defusion,*" creating a small space between you and the thought. You notice it rather than becoming it. Research shows this shift reduces stress reactivity and increases psychological flexibility.

The Buddha's Second Arrow

When something painful happens, that is the first arrow. But then we shoot a second arrow into ourselves, the resistance: "*Why is this happening to me?*" "*I can't handle this.*" The Buddha's insight was that the second arrow causes far more suffering than the first.

The Buddhist text, The Dhammapada, reads, "*Mind is the forerunner of all actions. All deeds are led by mind, created by mind.*"

Pema Chödrön: The Storyline

Pema Chödrön calls it "the storyline," the narrative we layer on top of raw experience. The raw experience is usually manageable. It's the storyline that makes it unbearable. That Sunday morning, grief was the first arrow. The story "*I'm not strong enough, I have nothing left*" was the second.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

In Rachel Joyce's novel, retired Harold Fry sets out to mail a letter to a dying friend, and keeps walking. 500 miles, with no boots, no map, no plan. Every thought says, "*Turn back. You can't do this.*" He overcomes resistance not through willpower but by simply not believing the thought that says he can't continue. Harold Fry says, "*It's not about the body. It's about the mind. If you can believe you can do it, you can.*"

As Harold walks, the outer journey becomes an inner one; layers of emotional resistance dissolve, not because he forces it, but because he keeps showing up. We are all on a pilgrimage we didn't plan. The thing that stops us is almost never the road. It's the thought: *"I can't walk this road."*

The Default Mode Network

Researchers identified the Default Mode Network, the brain's idle mode. When not focused on a task, the brain worries, replays the past, and rehearses the future. Resistance isn't a character flaw; it's a brain habit. Neuroplasticity research shows that mindfulness and present-moment awareness genuinely rewire these default patterns over time.

The Heart Knows How to Let Go

The HeartMath Institute found that when we're in resistance, our heart rhythm becomes jagged and erratic. But when we shift even slightly toward acceptance, cardiac coherence improves within seconds. The body already knows how to release resistance. We just have to stop feeding the thought that sustains it.

The Tao of Non-Resistance

Lao Tzu wrote, "Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them, that only creates sorrow."

Rumi's Open Door

Rumi wrote, *"Why do you stay in prison when the door is so wide open?"*

The prison is the thought, the story that we're stuck, that we can't, that this is too much. And all the while, the door stands wide open.

A Sufi teaching, *"Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead, let life live through you."*

The Three-Breath Return (a three-breath practice to reduce resistance)

- **Breath One — Awareness:** *"I notice I'm resisting."* No judgment. Just naming what's happening.
- **Breath Two — Defusion:** *"This resistance is a thought, not a truth."* You're not pushing it away — just seeing it clearly.
- **Breath Three — Willingness:** *"I am willing to be here now."* Not perfect acceptance — just the small, holy act of willingness.

The Door Has Always Been Open

The resistance that morning was not a wall. It was a veil, thin, made of thought. Emily would have understood. Watercolor is the art of letting go of control, letting the water and pigment find their own way. That's what we're being invited to do: let go of the thought, trust the flow, let life live through us. Friends, the door is open. It has always been open. Let's walk through it together.

Affirmation:

"I release the need to argue with this moment. I am not my resistance. I am the awareness that notices it. I take the next step, not because the path is clear, but because my willingness is enough. I trust the flow. The door has always been open. I walk through it now — gently, freely, and at peace."
And so, it is. Amen.

My Blessing for You

May you leave this place remembering that not every thought deserves your loyalty. When the mind turns drizzle into a storm, may you pause and gently ask, *"Is this true?"* May you feel what is real without adding the extra arrow of resistance. May curiosity soften what control cannot. And when the storyline grows loud, may you rest in the quiet awareness beneath it, steady, spacious, and free. Go in peace. Go in love.