

Learning objection/acceptance without contraction - a lifelong practice

Notice the thing.

Notice the objection – “I don't want this to be true/happening. “

Notice the habitual reaction, the specific contraction, the typical way you protest.

The practice is to hold the thing itself in an open framework and let it be so.

It is just so. “This is the way it is now.”

The first step is to more fully let it be what it is in this moment.

Let every membrane and cell open.

Do something different - **movement, breath, sound.**

For instance, take a moment to breathe, to settle.

Notice where/how you tighten

and how you might open as you do something – anything - different.

It can be a slight difference, *titrated**, like squirming, (movement)

letting the breath shift to a longer exhale, sighing, muttering. (breath/sound)

or a big difference -- shouting “NO!”, running in place. (sound/movement)

Then take another moment to breathe, to settle.

Don't try to make it (the thing you're protesting) be different.

Explore how it is as you let it be, just for now.

It can feel so wrong. And - it is - (or it may be).

Holding the objection tightly does not make it 'not true' – or even less true.

The difference we can make is in how we "protest".

automatically and habitually (and often in ways harmful to ourselves or others)

or skillfully, with awareness and wisdom.

Notice how the difference feels in your body after trying something different.

– check areas that were especially contracted. Honor even small, slight shifts toward opening. Often small, gradual openings feel safer and are more sustainable in the long run than big swings to expansion that may result in big swings back to contraction.

-- check how your body and being feel overall. (Sometimes our whole *felt sense* can open more, even when our major bracing areas haven't quite caught up.)

Allow any opening, any increase in ease to soak in for at least 30 seconds --“taking in the good”.

Take some time to look around the place where you are and let your eyes go where they want to. Orient in the here and now, this place, this moment of relative safety and support. This is the experience we wish ourselves and each other in loving kindness practice.

This practice is useful from many perspectives, and especially for people with particular

types of trauma where there is a lack of sense of safety and ease. Where the feeling that is not tolerable provokes such a strong reaction - usually a somatic/body reaction - of trying to make it *not* so. There's an unbearable thing or feeling; you have to bear it anyway; you don't want it to be true. You contract against it to keep it out. The contraction creates more pain and suffering. That's a horrible dilemma for anyone to be in.

The contraction in objection is what the Buddha called the second arrow or second dart.

This is an exercise, a homework tool for working with our deep impulses to shoot the second arrow. Because our minds and nervous systems are always trying to keep us safe, *Objection without Contraction* ends up being a lifelong practice.

Important: Start with small things that allow you to be successful in the beginning. *Titrate** (*keep it small enough not to be overwhelming*) by not using the biggest thing you react to. Choose something that is simply irritating.

Practice noticing that thing, thinking about it, remembering the experience - the person, the event that occurred. . . It doesn't matter what it is. It could be the restaurant being out of your favorite dish, waiting at the stoplight when you're late for yoga or telemarketers who keep calling – my personal practice issue. When these are easy to move through, you can explore practicing with what you're anxious or outraged by. For those things you're overwhelmed or undone by, it may be wiser to go in with skilled support.

Begin by noticing the earliest, slightest impulse to object that you can become aware of. Then practice allowing the objection to be present without it having to take the particular form it habitually takes. Shorthand, we call it "contraction". It could be holding your breath, clenching your jaw, hunching your shoulders, dissociating or running away - whatever way you move away from whatever it is you feel affronted or irritated by.

Whatever it is you would usually/automatically do, you practice not doing that. You 'not do' the habitual thing by practicing doing something else, something different, involving **movement, breath and sound**.

Together or on your own, we/you may have worked out what that something else might be: breathing, moving, making noise. Or it may arise spontaneously from your inner intelligence and wisdom, which can be obscured but is never destroyed.

Shorthand reminder of the "rules" for this exercise with **"movement, breath and sound"**. **You don't hold yourself still** – different from sitting meditation. You allow movement, even if its running in place - really moving - or wiggling, squirming. You keep breathing. You make noise. You might make a noise of objection - it might be shouting, it could also just be sighing. (My personal favorite is "horse lips".) It doesn't matter. **You let your system be mobile rather than locking down in your habitual response. As with sitting meditation, you bring mindfulness to the process.**

You keep doing allowing something different to happen until the objection alters. What happens if you choose a small enough objection to begin with to learn the practice is that **you can't hold an objection in the same way when your system**

opens. The quality of forcefulness of the objection changes. You're just no longer harming yourself by contracting against your experience while you're holding your objection.

You may need some skilled assistance in approaching the really significant (life-threatening or life-shattering) objections. Please be kind to yourself by getting support for the really big or really early disruptions.

In people who have had significant trauma, the meaning that will sometimes get made is "If I don't object with everything I've got, if I don't contract totally against it, I'm condoning it."

And, of course, infants and very young children, by nature, respond with everything they've got, with their whole body and being. So if an objection arises from an early trauma trigger, it can automatically be whole body/whole being – "Global high intensity activation". In kindness to yourself and to insure the possibility of successfully learning the practice safely, please don't choose one of those intense, global reactions for learning this practice.

It's best for learning safely that this global survival activation isn't what's evoked.

Eventually, you might be objecting very strenuously. You might take action - write letters, make phone calls, say something. You may behave differently as a result of it.

But YOU DON'T HARM YOURSELF IN ORDER TO HAVE THE OBJECTION BE MANIFEST.

And that's the learning edge for most of us. Because what we tend to do as an objecting reaction might be something that's hurting us - like biting our tongues, bracing, contracting, shutting down, disappearing. . .

This is the transition you're learning in this practice - that you can have objection to something and stay open.

Then when your objection arises with organization, congruence and coherence behind it, it ends up being more potent than when it was accompanied by shut down or bracing, anxiety, outrage or dissociation.

Sometimes what you may realize is that there isn't anything to object to any more.

You may find that the objection was something that was happening in the past and is actually not something that's happening now.

This is the edge of exploration that arises with this practice. It's an ongoing exploration that brings present to our awareness the dynamics around how we move toward self-protection or reaction in relation to another -- whatever we've bundled in under "objection". And exploring how we do that without harming ourselves. How do we do that and make it powerful and effective, kind and compassionate.

(Lela Carney offers her version of a practice from Kathy Kain's *Touch Skills Trainings for Trauma Therapists* 4-1_Fri.)