

Problem Solving

We don't ask for problems. They come to us, happen to us, often as a surprise. When they come, they disturb and unsettle us. Problems require us to solve them. Solving a problem requires a change, an action. We may see the required change as an imposition to do something we do not want to do, a limit or deprivation. All of which goes toward explaining why we avoid solving problems

Problems often come wrapped in a threatening danger, causing us to feel dread and apprehension. Instead of focusing on the solving the problem, we focus on the danger and the feelings we have for it.

Solving a problem depends upon how we perceive it. Unless we can clearly understand the causal conditions of a problem, we cannot solve it. Some deny that they cause problems and search for the appropriate entities to blame. Yet, we live within an interdependent reality. Everything connects with everything. We cannot find one cause in and of itself that completely necessitated the problem. All the causes act interdependently. Some causes seem to have more causal powers than others, yet the absence or the addition of one or more of the less powerful conditions could have changed the emergence of the problem. Thus, we consider how we have contributed to the problem through our beliefs, attitudes, worldview, or behaviors.

If we created the problem largely by ourselves, then we have the major responsibility to undo the problem. If we have little or no influence over those who perpetuate the problem, then we recognize that no level of self-righteousness, protest or resistance will change those who do not want to solve the problem, especially if they benefit from its cause.

Most of us have problems we consider too risky to solve and tolerate them even though these problems persistently nag us and continue to fester. We fear further destabilizing a relationship or want to avoid doing the harder but right thing to do. This avoidance of problem solving nurtures resentment and bitter passivity. We may shrug our shoulders and say that the problem has no solution or that the gods have cursed us.

If we have identified how we contributed to causing a problem, no matter how insignificant, it becomes our responsibility to stop ourselves from causing it. Until we have stopped causing a problem, our willingness to harm others distorts our view of the problem and its solutions.

Choosing to give up a harmful behavior by changing ourselves gives rise to an inner conflict because it means we must stop doing something that benefits us, namely our willingness to harm others for self-benefit. This keeps us from doing the harder thing to do – to change. We feel distraught, confused, powerless, and do not know what to do. We cannot see outside our box of beliefs, attitudes, and view.

However, we cannot expect to solve a problem by using the same worldview that caused the problem. Some impose a solution upon a problem that clearly represents their self-interests. Others will study a problem to death and make undoable recommendations for action. Many come up with solutions that ignore the suffering of life and the Earth.

Everything changes, everything flows. Overcoming our resistance to change frees us to remove ourselves from being a cause of the problems we deplore. Problems scream for us to change.

When challenged by a situation that bogs us down, those on the sacred path approach it as a life lesson that wants us to learn how to further life on Earth. We see the sacred coming through what obstructs us.

Our view moves from how the problem affects us to how it prevents us from fulfilling our sacred purpose to further life on Earth. Whatever solution the problem has will align with the sacred values of the Earth Interbeing.¹

Rest with the problem within the sacred presence and let the solution unfold from within. We allow the sacred influence to work through us. Without further effort on our part, we suddenly know what to do in ways that benefit all, including us. The solution may surprise us, but we know it will contribute toward resolving the danger. We then can act to solve our problem free of confusion and in harmony with the Earth Interbeing.

We deepen our sacred inner path by removing the ways we harm the Earth Interbeing. The more we free ourselves from our willingness to harm, the greater our capacity to know what to do. Once we have embarked on the road of self-change and removed ourselves from harming the Earth Interbeing, we turn from imposing a self-interested solution to meeting what life and Earth need. Coming to view the world through the eyes of an Earth interbeing increases our abilities to know how to further life on Earth.

We will never stop having problems, big and small. Their solutions that align with the sacred values teach us how to live in ways that benefit all. We become like flowing water, changing with the changes. Every solution comes down to our willingness to not harm for self-benefit. Every action, every change we make on the path deepens our knowing how to live on Earth with other beings in ways that further the well-being of all.

Problem solved. Keep flowing and doing the harder but right thing to do.

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¹ Sacred Values of the Earth Interbeing (work in progress): sacred unity, equality, and respect of life on Earth, yielding and bearing the burdens of life, knowing what to do to further life on Earth, humbleness, affectionate caring, sharing and cooperation, compassionate action, and self-discipline to remove what harms life on Earth.