All You Need, You Already Have

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by Leo Babauta

There is a famous stone water basin (or “tsukubai”) outside of the even more famous Ryoan-ji Temple in Kyoto, with four characters that read: “ware tada shiru taru.” This is a Zen saying that can be translated in a number of ways, all to do with contentment. But my favorite translation is:

“All you need, you already have.”

I think it’s such a lovely way of looking at life.

As you sit here reading this article, pause and take an assessment of your life right now. Chances are, you have enough food, clothing, shelter, and other basic necessities in your life. You might also have loved ones, people who care about you. You are (mostly) comfortable, without any desperate needs. All you need, you already have.

And yet we don’t see life this way … we are dissatisfied, looking for more comfort, more love, more knowledge, more certainty, more possessions, more food, more entertainment, more validation. I do this too – I’m not criticizing anyone. We don’t often embody the idea that we already have enough.

If we remember to do so, we can give thanks for what we have. We can appreciate the beauty, the preciousness, of every moment, of being alive. It is a miracle, and we don’t have to take it for granted.

So to me the question is: how can we learn to embody this idea?

“All you need, you already have.”

Learning to Embody Enough-ness

It’s nice to say that we have all we need, but what does this mean in practice? What actions can we take to help us remember this?

I find it helpful to try to remember a few principles in my daily life:

1. **Appreciation.** If we have all we need, the problem is that we forget this simple fact. So we can develop the habit of noticing what we already have, being thankful for it, not taking it for granted. We can appreciate the people in our lives (instead of complaining about them), the possessions we already have (instead of thinking we need more), the food we get to eat (which might mitigate our desire for yet more food pleasures), the simple moments that we often take for granted (instead of needing even more entertainment and distraction).
2. **Respect.** If we appreciate something or someone, we might treat them with respect. In the Zen tradition, bowing to others and even to your meditation cushion are a deep part of practice. It shows a respect for the world around us, which supports us and which we are deeply a part of. You might not want to bow to everyone you meet, but you can make a mental bow to them, offering respect internally even if you don’t make any sign that you’re bowing. It will show in your other actions.
3. **Turning towards others.** If we already have enough … why worry so much about ourselves? Why not see what we can do for others? There are others who are suffering, perhaps starving or facing violence, or perhaps just sick with anxiety or depression. We can’t solve all of these ills alone, of course, but if we do our best to help others as much as possible, perhaps we can contribute towards the betterment of the lives of all

beings. This doesn’t mean you need to spend every waking hour devoted to helping other people, but even considering whether your motivations are other-facing or for yourself is a good practice.

So how do we learn to embody these principles? Through habits and rituals.

Rituals to Embody Enough-ness

It’s hard to remember to be present and grateful and filled with enough-ness throughout the day, with all that we have going on, with all of our distractions and internal stories.

So I recommend forming little rituals that help us remember.

Here’s a list of ideas for rituals, but I don’t recommend trying to form all of these rituals, and especially not all at once – try one at a time and see what helps you:

1. Wake up and say a little prayer of thanks for what you have in your life.
2. Keep a one-paragraph gratitude journal every evening.
3. When you meet someone, bow to them (in your mind) out of respect. You might touch your heart or offer them a smile if that helps.
4. When you eat, say a little prayer of thanks to everyone who made your meal possible (farmers, cooks, transporters, their families, etc.). Appreciate every bite if you can.
5. Before you start a new activity (a work task, a workout, a meeting), pause and ask yourself what your intention is for this activity. Is it focused on helping others?
6. When you are done with an activity, show respect for others, your environment and your equipment by respectfully and mindfully cleaning up, instead of

rushing to the next activity.

There are other rituals, of course, but these are a good start.

You might also ask yourself, before you buy something … whether you really need more or if you have enough. Ask yourself, before you go to an app on your phone or a website on your computer … whether you are doing it to help others or to fulfil a “need” that you don’t need fulfilled. Ask yourself, as you interact with someone else, whether you’re showing them deep respect and appreciation, whether you’re focused on helping them or protecting yourself.

Ask yourself, regularly throughout your day, whether you have all you need. I think you’ll find that you do, and by appreciating that fact more often, you can see what a profound miracle that is. ?