



Being Engaged

This month, we're looking at engagement. To illustrate what I mean by engagement, here's an excerpt from The Universe F*cking Loves Me:

I was taking a class called Pole Basics early in my pole studies. In it, the teacher, Nikki, broke down common spins to help hone foundational moves.

We were doing a round-about into a pirouette, and Nikki came over to observe me. Her tip for me was not to relax into the round-about so much, but instead to stay in better control of my muscles to make the move more fluid.

One of my gifts is seeing connections and patterns in seemingly unrelated contexts. As I stood there after Nikki moved on, my mind started flying between the physical world of pole dancing and the energetic world of my work with clients and my overall understanding of life.

I work with lots of clients who have a stranglehold on life. Everything is about control—controlling their business, their relationships, and their lives. You name it, and they're controlling it. And it's exhausting for them.

In fact, I have yet to meet anyone who hasn't tried to control some aspect of life. I'm consistently watching to see where I'm micromanaging my life, instead of fully living it. This desire for control comes from fear, and from experiences in the past when we felt like a victim with no control or influence over events in our lives. One of the big fears is that if we let go of control, everything will fall apart, and/or nothing will ever get done.

Part of my job is to help clients trust more and control less. We release the stuff from the past and the fears, and then move on to practices that help them expand their ability to trust themselves, other people, and the unfolding of Life.

The result is that they feel more and more in the flow of life. When they're able to relax, they have more fun in their relationships and their business, they're more productive, and everything unfolds with more ease and grace.

So how did Nikki's words that "more control will give more fluidity" fit in with this? Or did it?

As I did another round-about and focused on "control," I paid close attention to my body and what was happening there. Lean out, body strong yet fluid, shoulders down, core...

And it hit me.

*What we were really talking about was **engagement**. It was about keeping my muscles engaged. Not control in the sense of being rigid, which leads to injuries. Not relaxation in the sense of being saggy, which also leads to injuries. But engaged.*

Take a minute now to do the following and see if you can feel the difference in your body.

Tighten your stomach muscles until they feel clenched. If you do it hard enough, your breathing becomes shallow and your shoulders curve over a bit.

With your muscles still clenched, try twisting your shoulders to look behind you. You don't get very far, do you?

Now let those same muscles completely go. Let your gut hang out. Your whole body slumps, and again you're taking shallow breaths, aren't you?

In this position, try again to twist your shoulders to look behind you. It's hard to move, isn't it?

Now, engage your stomach muscles while keeping your shoulders relaxed. Your body straightened and you're taking deeper breaths now, right?

What happens when you twist your body now?

When your muscles are toned and engaged—not rigid or slack—there is flow. Your circulation moves better, hormones levels are more stable, food is digested more thoroughly, and wastes are eliminated more easily.

There's also more flow in your energy. You have more stamina and more vitality. Your acupuncture meridians and your chakras are more vibrant. You're more alive.

This is true in how we approach life too.

When we're engaged in life, neither controlling or disconnected, we're more alive. We're more vibrant. We have more flow and more vitality. Sometimes we err on the side of pushing, trying to control Life, ourselves, and others. This makes us rigid and closed off. At other times we err on the side of looseness, not taking actions that are ours to take. We aren't showing up for Life, so very little happens.

When we show up, engaged with and open to what Life brings us, ready to do our part, magic happens.

Your power in life is tied to the choices you make and the ways you show up. To be empowered, you need to make clear decisions about what you want to be engaged with, and how you're going to do it.

Ready to explore your engagement?

Who and/or what do you want to be engaged with?

[Feel free to go wild with this and write down everything that calls to you. (ex: myself, pleasure, nature, my kids, humor, my purpose, the Divine, etc.)]

The 1-3 of those that you're going to focus on are:

What does being **disengaged** from them look and feel like? How do you know when you're disengaged?

What kinds of things lead to you being disengaged? What triggers disengagement?

What does being **engaged** look like?

*What does being engaged **feel** like?*

Exercising your body regularly tones your muscles. This means that they're both strong and flexible. They quickly and easily engage, and allow you to move with fluidity and good form.

People who exercise regularly also tend to choose healthier food and lifestyle habits. They're reminded to care for their body throughout their day, even when they're not actively exercising.

Doing regular practices that focus your mind, energy, intention and awareness on what you're choosing to engage will do the same for your inner life. You'll develop more strength and flexibility of mind, heart, will and intention. You'll stay more engaged with what you've chosen throughout your day, and it'll feel natural to do so.

Having toned muscles also allows you to be very connected to your body and expressive with your movements. When you decide to move a certain way, you can quickly and easily translate that thought or desire into action.

With regular inner practices, you'll move more easily and quickly from inspiration/ desire to action. You'll also respond to what shows up in your life with more flexibility and strength. That's when you truly feel in flow with Life.

What supports and enhances your engagement?

Next, you're going to have the opportunity to commit to 1-3 daily practices to support you being engaged. Before you do so, I want to remind you that doing a small practice consistently is far more effective than doing a big practice irregularly.

In his book Atomic Habits, James Clear recommends making your commitment something you'll do if you remember it on the way to bed. For instance, if you commit to doing a minimum of 3 pushups every day and you remember on your way to bed that you haven't done them, you'll drop and do 3. It's much less likely that you'll drop and do 100 if that's your commitment.

Instead of committing to spend 30 minutes outside every day, you might commit to walk outside and take 3 deep breaths. Even in the rain and cold you can stand just outside the door and do that.

What 1-3 daily practice(s) do you want to commit to:

When you feel disengaged (e.g. frustrated, overwhelmed, discouraged, angry), what would you love for someone to say to you?

What would you love for someone to do for you?
