The Little Trick to Make Any Moment Better

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I learned a little trick while practicing meditation that helped me, not only with meditation, but with just about everything I do.

I noticed I was reluctant to start the meditation, and paused to wonder why that is. What I noticed was a kind of tightness, in my chest and shoulders and neck, but also in my mind. Something about the meditation was causing me to tighten up, and that made me not want to do it each morning.

Well, there are a few choices here: 1) I could stop doing the meditation because I wasn't enjoying it; 2) I could push myself through it even though I disliked it, or **3) I could let go of the tightness.**

I chose to let go of the tightness.

It was amazing. I just noticed where the tightness was, and let it dissipate into the air. What was left was a more relaxed body, a relaxed mindset. And actually it was the relaxed mindset that ended up being most important. I could now approach the meditation with a looseness, a sense of exploration and happiness, that I couldn't do when I was tight. And then I smiled, and things got even better.

Then I started applying that to everything I did: if I was writing and noticed tightness, I let go of the tightness and smiled — and the writing became instantly more enjoyable. Same for running, for meeting someone new, for cooking and washing and going to the store.

Every moment became instantly better.

The brilliant Lissa Rankin tells us that our mental and spiritual health are just as important as, if not more important than, our body health. She told me that at the root of it is our stress response and relaxation response to everything — work, relationships, day-to-day activities, sex and so on.

There are lots of ways to relax when we are stressed: meditation, yoga, tea, massage, exercise, talking with a friend, taking a hot bath or shower, sex. And I highly recommend all these.

But *none of these actually relax you* unless your mind approaches them with a relaxed attitude, and lets go of tightness. These things happen to trigger the release of tightness for most of us, but in truth, you can let go of tightness without any of these relaxing activities, no matter what you're doing.

Here's how to let go of tightness:

1. **Notice the tightness.** Pay attention to your body and mindset as you do any activity: work, meetings, driving, walking, reading, cleaning, talking with a loved one. If you notice tightness, that's your cue.

2. **Visualize it dissipating.** Just imagine the tightness floating out of you and into the air, dissolving into little bits and then being blown away by the breeze. The simple act of this visualization can often work.

3. **Go from tight to loose.** You can practice this right now. Pause for a second and clench your fists. Now relax them. It's that easy. Do it with your jaw. Now your abs. Now your shoulders. You can let go of tightness just by softening, letting go of the tightening that you're creating yourself. It works for the mind too.

4. **Breathe.** Take in a deep, slow breath. Let your attention stay on this breath. Hold the breath in for 5 seconds, then slowly exhale and pause for another 5 seconds at the end of the exhale. Repeat a few times if you like. This can help loosen you up if you need it. If you don't need it after Step 2 or 3, you can skip it.

5. **Smile.** This transforms everything. You can now approach any activity, any moment, with an attitude of relaxed enjoyment.

Honestly, once you're good at it, you really only need to do one of the three middle steps (2-4). But steps 1 and 5 are crucial.

Notice the tightness, let it go, and smile. This moment, and every moment after, can become instantly better.