



“9 Principles of Practicing Patience”

Everyone can benefit from practicing one specific skill everyday. That skill is patience. Research suggests that people who have little patience are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure, intensified anger, added stress, and they develop more wrinkles. Who wants that?

Patience may be a virtue, but if it is not one of yours it may be causing more problems than you realize. The amount of patience you have in daily life and in relationships can determine how much you enjoy your life. The good news is patience is a learned skill, and one that can become a habit.

Whether your frustration comes from long lines at the supermarket or from people that push your buttons, having patience to cope with these and other stressful situations greatly affects your potential for success and happiness.

On any given day we have three opportunities for practicing patience. One opportunity involves dealing with other people – people who have the potential to push all the wrong buttons, the ones that frustrate the most.

Another prime time to practice patience is when teaching your children, communicating with your spouse, or waiting on co-workers to finish their part of a project.

Lastly, we can practice patience with ourselves. Instead of becoming paralyzed by our mistakes, our less-than-rapid but gradual growth toward goals, or our hasty decisions, we can choose to let it go. We can view these minor set backs as lessons, not permanent losses.

Below are nine key principles of practicing patience, including the numerous benefits for all areas of your life:

Practicing Patience:

Manages impulses ~ Controls anger ~ Helps avoid costly mistakes

When the frustrations of life come our way, our natural response is to react. Patience encourages withholding that immediate response, which is often anger. Anger is the enemy of patience. It puts us in an auto-response mode and takes away our power to influence the outcome of a problem. When we respond out of anger, we set ourselves up to make costly mistakes. Patience, at its core, involves waiting – waiting for a temporary situation to pass, or waiting through a situation out of our control.

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Practicing Patience:

Promotes compassion ~ Helps gain perspective ~ Measure maturity

A patient person realizes life is not all about them – their needs and desires. Having patience promotes compassion and empathy for other people. It is realizing and appreciating that the clerk (at the post office or the sales desk) is serving other customers and managing other challenges beyond just your needs at the moment. You have an enlarged perspective and are able to see the bigger picture. You are also able to appreciate the journey of life. While we live in a world of high speed and real time faxes, there are no instant fixes. Practicing patience is also a measure of maturity. Whereas young children tend to throw a fit when their request is not instantly fulfilled, the skill of patience involves being able to delay gratification. It is being calm and confident that few obstacles will last forever.

Practicing Patience:

Increases personal power ~ Reduces stress ~ Improves relationships

Having an attitude of patience increases personal power because you are not giving away control of the stressful situation to a person or to the problem. You then have the energy and persistence to continue forward. You are not derailed by challenges that spring up; you can move ahead and create great things, even when things are not going your way. This sense of resiliency in day to day living greatly reduces stress. Being patient enables optimal physical and emotional health. It lowers blood pressure, keeps your heart healthy, and aids in maintaining a strong immune system. When you first feel the intensity of anger, aggravation or any potentially dangerous emotion, stop. Take a breath. Count to ten. Having a life with less stress benefits all parts of your life - relationships included. Practicing patience in any relationship (with your family, neighbors, friends, in-laws, or co-workers) means you are not derailed by mishaps or misunderstanding. You are also resourceful of time and can utilize the time wasted from anxiously waiting, to spending it on other useful task – such as you!

In sum, intentionally practicing patience will allow you to cope with uncertainty, imperfection, and disappointments from others. You will also have a calm presence when you are patient. This can be a great source of encouragement and witness to renewed possibilities for others as well. Being patient is fundamental for successful living, for greater happiness, and for effective problem solving. The “lemons” of life will come. What will be your response?

**Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-HELP (4357),
for information about help and support for you or your family.**

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About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org.