



It All Goes Wrong Anyway, by Ajahn Brahm

Wherever you live -- in a monastery, in a city, or on a quiet tree-lined street -- you will always experience problems and difficulties from time to time. This is just the nature of life. So when you have problems with your health you shouldn't say, "Doctor, there is something wrong with me -- I'm sick"; rather you should say, "There is something right with me -- I'm sick today." It's the nature of the human body to be sick now and again. It's also the nature of the septic system to need pumping out when you don't expect it, and it's the nature of the water heater to sometimes break down. It's the nature of life to be this way. Even though we struggle as human beings to try to make life go smoothly for ourselves and others, nevertheless it's impossible to ensure that happens.

Whenever you experience any pain or difficulty, always remember one of the deep meanings of the word suffering: asking the world for something it can never give you. We expect and ask impossible things from the world. We ask for the perfect home and job and that all the things we work hard to build and arrange run perfectly at the right time and place. Of course, that is asking for something that can never be given. We ask for profound meditation and enlightenment, right here and now. But that's not the way this universe works. If you ask for something that the world can't supply, you should understand that you're asking for suffering.

So whether you work or meditate, please accept that things will go wrong from time to time. Your job is not to ask for things the world can't give you. Your job is to observe. Your job is not to try to prod and push this world to make it just the way you would like it to be. Your job is to understand, accept, and let it go. The more you fight your body, your mind, your family, and the world, the more collateral damage you'll cause and the more pain you'll experience.

Sometimes, when we understand and stand back from our daily lives, we see the big picture. We see there's nothing wrong with the monastery, nothing wrong with us, nothing wrong with life. We understand that it's just the nature of the world to go "wrong" -- that's what the Buddha meant by the first noble truth of suffering. You work, struggle, and strive so hard to make your life just right -- to make your home, your body, and your mind just right -- and it all goes wrong anyway.