

- ♡ No one is "acting irresponsibly" [♡]
- ♡ they are just fearful, confused, and suffering.
- ♡ Bodhisattvas don't blame people for their suffering - the cause of their behaviors.
- ♡ Every time I'm angry at anyone - I'm angry at their behavior.
- ♡ Be angry at the cause of the suffering - and not at the ^{the} person. (Compassion)
- ♡ all beings are responsible for their own actions
- ♡ Suffering and happiness is created by my relationships to experience - not by the experience itself.
- ♡ The freedom and happiness of others is dependant on their actions not on my wishes for them.

Method

The Zen Habits Method

Recently my family had to move from San Francisco to Davis, California because of an illness that Eva's father has been dealing with. This led to some major life disruptions: we had to find a house, buy a used car, move to a new city, adjust our lives to this new place, all while Eva (along with the rest of us) was struggling to cope with the illness of a close loved one. I also had a pretty major workload and a lot of logistical things to deal with on top of all this, and a family trip coming up.

♡ In the middle of these major changes and struggles, I found myself calm. Sure, these were all new things to deal with, but somehow I wasn't panicked, sad, angry, or otherwise suffering too greatly.

♡ I realized why: I was dealing with everything one thing at a time, as much in the present moment as I could, with acceptance rather than wishing things were different. I let go of the Childish Mind that wanted things a certain way and just re-adjusted as things changed.

♡ This gave me peace. Sure, I missed San Francisco. And of course my father-in-law's illness, and Eva's grieving that

★ resulted, made me sad. But I saw all of these life changes as a part of life and that helped me cope much better.

★ As you've worked through this book, you've been learning one concept at a time about change, as each concept applied to habits. Today we'll look at how they all come together, not only for habit change but for living a life that's filled with change. For coping with life changes, small and big.

☉ We're going to call it the Zen Habits Method: a method for creating and dealing with change. It will pull together ideas from previous chapters.

The Zen Habits Method

♥ Here's the method in short—we'll go into each item in a little more detail.

1. SPOTLIGHT: Be mindfully in the moment.
2. PLUM BLOSSOMS: See everything as change (impermanence), and embrace it.
3. CREATE A SPACE: Deal with things as they come, one at a time.
4. MIND MOVIE: Don't be attached to expectations and ideals.
5. GROW A PLANT: Focus on Intentions, without attachment to Outcomes.
6. CHILDISH MIND: Let go of the Self that wants the ideals.
- ☉ ☉ 7. SEE THE MOUNTAINS: With Appreciation and Gratitude.
8. DEWLIKE LIFE: Don't waste a moment.

♥ With these interrelated ideas, we can take on anything: illness, loss of a job, unhappiness with someone else, being overwhelmed, procrastination, financial problems, and more. We'll go into a little more detail in upcoming chapters.

I think of this method in a little (unrhyming) poem:

*Be in the moment, embracing life's impermanence
Deal with things as they come, without expectations,
without ego
With good intention, appreciation and gratitude
Without wasting a moment*



OK, I'm not a great poet. Let's go a little further into the method before seeing how it's applied to various areas in our lives in the next few chapters.

1. Spotlight

Recall the Spotlight of Mindfulness we discussed in Chapter 9 that makes everything else in this method possible. Without mindfulness, you won't be able to see your Mind Movie or Childish Mind, you'll forget to have appreciation and gratitude, you won't remember to have good intentions, you won't see your attachments to outcomes or ideals.

♥ Be mindfully in the moment, as much as you can. You won't be able to be mindful all the time, but when you are dealing with a frustration, a major life change, stress or any other type of suffering, turn on the Spotlight of Mindfulness.

2. Plum Blossoms

^{p66} ♡ In Chapter 15, we contemplated the impermanence of the plum blossom, and everything else around us. If we can see that everything in life is change, that everything is impermanent... we can either hate that change or embrace it.

♡ I say embrace change. Love impermanence. It makes growth possible, life possible, love possible. Let the possibilities of change fill you with a sense of wonder. See everything as change and impermanence and embrace it.

3. Create a Space

In Chapter 1, we talked about Creating Space for your change and doing one habit at a time. Well, whenever we have new changes coming at us, give each one of those their own space. You can't focus your attention on 10 things at once anyway—all you can do is switch between all of them, either giving them the full space and focus they deserve, or switching quickly and giving them insufficient focus.

★ ★ We can't plan and prepare for everything, because we can't predict the future, and as things change, plans will be disrupted. Instead, be prepared for anything by dealing with things as they come, one at a time, giving each one the space it requires.

4. Mind Movie

One of the central themes of this book is the Mind Movie: the stories and images playing in our heads that

we become attached to. These are our ideals, our expectations, our fantasies of what life should be or could be.

As we've seen, attaching ourselves to these ideals and expectations is the cause of frustration and suffering. It can cause us to abandon a habit change and also to be unhappy with ourselves, unhappy with others, unhappy with our life situation. All because of a made-up Mind Movie.

♡ Instead, don't be attached to expectations and ideals, and accept reality as it is.

5. Grow a Plant

In Chapter 12, we discussed the idea of how a plant grows: you focus on giving it the right inputs (intentions and effort), like water and sunlight and nutrients... but you don't control the outcome of the plant. It grows how it will grow. All we can control are intentions—we don't control outcomes.

As we approach any situation, we should focus on intentions, without attachment to outcomes.

6. Childish Mind

Another central theme of this book has been the Childish Mind—that young child inside of us that wants its way. It doesn't like discomfort or uncertainty, and it wants comfort and the Mind Movie it has created. This causes us all kinds of problems, not only by creating the urge to quit habits but also by building frustration throughout our lives.

♡ Instead, let's not listen to the Childish Mind. Let go of

the Self that wants the ideals, and we can live life more consciously.

7. See the Mountains

In Chapter 22, we talked about the passenger in the back seat of the car who is so focused on getting to the destination, repeatedly saying "Are we there yet?" while missing the scenery of the beautiful mountains the car is passing. Instead, don't miss out on the miracle of the present moment.



See each moment, and each person in your life, with Appreciation and Gratitude. There's something to be appreciated, and to be grateful for, in everything.

8. Dewlike Life

In Chapter 3, I shared Zen master Dogen's ideas about "this dewlike life" fading away and how we should "be-
grudge every moment of time."

♥ If we remember the fleetingness of this life, we can appreciate each moment for the precious gift that it is and spend each moment on something important: being compassionate to others, improving our health, creating something amazing, improving our habits, not being angry with others. Don't waste a moment.

♥ Dealing with major life changes ♥

When I moved my family of eight (Eva, me and the six kids) from the tiny tropical island of Guam to the relatively big city of San Francisco, I was full of optimism. And scared beyond belief.

While I was mostly sure this would be a great move for our family, I was nearly frozen by doubt. My kids were in tears, because we'd left behind everything and everyone we'd ever loved: an extended family network of literally hundreds of people who were our best friends, our support, our home. It felt horrible to see their broken hearts.

After a couple weeks of staying in my cousin's apartment and house-hunting, we finally spent the first night in our new house in San Francisco. It was freezing. We spent the night with barely any blankets, because we hadn't thought to buy very many, and I woke in the early morning numb with cold. When I discovered that we had central heating that worked (unheard of in hot and humid Guam), I was overjoyed!

Our new home warmed up then, but it took the kids months to warm up to our new city, and even longer to call it home. Eva and I had to make new friends, as we had

none, and we had to learn our way around this strange new place.

This was one of the biggest life changes we ever faced, and yet we survived. We now love San Francisco and will always think of it as one of our dearest homes.

The lessons I learned while dealing with this major life change, and helping my family through it, taught me a lot that I now use in any life change.

♡ You might be facing such a life change now:

- Loss of a job, or starting a new job.
- Starting a new business or venture.
- Starting a project that scares the crap out of you.
- Loss of a loved one (see next chapter).
- Being diagnosed with a major illness. - *on laws*
- Suffering a major injury. - *foot pain morning*
- A loved one getting a major illness.
- Moving to a new home.
- Losing your home.
- ♡ Losing everything in a natural disaster. *earth quake*
- Going to a new school. - *on prep*
- Transitioning to a new role in your job.
- ♡ Transitioning to a new phase in life. - *retirement*
- Becoming a parent.
- And so on.

The list of major life changes could stretch several pages, but basically it's anything that takes a major shift in mindset, that gets you out of your comfort zone in a drastic way, that scares and confuses you and fills you with uncertainty.

In any of these changes, your idea of who you are is forced to shift. If you move to a new place, you're no longer "Annie from Ohio" but now "Annie who is a new-comer in New York City." If you lose your job, you're no longer "Tim the accountant at Deloitte" but now "Tim the unemployed accountant who was fired."

♡ This shift in your identity is often the hardest to deal with, greater than the actual loss in income or difficulties finding your way in a new city. We get used to who we think we are (our Mind Movie of ourselves), and our Childish Mind doesn't want the change!

Luckily, we have the Zen Habits Method for dealing with this shift.

Let's walk through my move from Guam to San Francisco.

♡ How to deal with a move ♡

When we moved to San Francisco, we had to shift from thinking of ourselves as "Guam people" and "having lots of friends and family" to "newbies in a city" and "barely knowing anyone." This was difficult, especially for the kids.

Let's apply the Zen Habits Method to this change:

1. SPOTLIGHT: Try to be in the moment as we walk around and live in San Francisco, seeing our suffering with this new change as it arises.
- ♡ 2. PLUM BLOSSOMS: See that this move is a part of the change-nature of life, but even if you didn't move, there would be change every day, just less

pronounced. Embrace the change in your life, as something new, exciting, full of learning and growth opportunities, an opportunity for reinvention.

3. CREATE A SPACE: This major life change is filled with lots of smaller changes, from having to make new friends, to finding a new house, to figuring out who you are now. Deal with each of these things one at a time, as they come, giving each their own space.


4. MIND MOVIE: See that you have a Mind Movie for what your life should be—which is what you liked about your life before—and that attachment to this ideal might be causing you suffering. Finding compassion for yourself, let go of the attachment to this ideal, and see what the reality of your new life has to offer.

5. GROW A PLANT: As you deal with each change, focus on the Intention of being mindful and of not being attached to your Mind Movie, but don't be attached to the Outcome of being unattached. You can't completely control your mind's attachment, but

Neil Kelly Retros ✱ you can practice the Intention of letting go, and see what happens. Don't be discouraged if you don't get the Outcome you want. *mom + Holly*

6. CHILDISH MIND: Your mind wants to go back to what it was comfortable with and wants to hold on to the idea of yourself that you're used to. This Childish Mind wants to get what it wants and thinks that it is all-important. Instead, let it complain, but don't take it seriously. It's not important.

7. SEE THE MOUNTAINS: Instead of focusing on what you've lost, look at what is in front of you right now. Find things to appreciate about your current

 reality, about the change you're undergoing, about the opportunities that come with this change. Find gratitude in the midst of this change.

8. DEWLIKE LIFE: Life is precious, so don't waste a moment of it wishing things were different, focusing on the past, wallowing in self-pity. Instead, make the most of each moment and appreciate each one for the wonder that it is.

constant change

As you can see, there's a lot of overlap in these steps, because they are interrelated. Each step is another way of seeing the same thing:

1. Mindfully see your ideal and the Childish Mind that wants the ideal and the suffering that results.

2. Now let go of that attachment and focus on what is in front of you: embrace the changing nature of life, appreciate what you have, and find gratitude for every moment of this dewlike life.

This is the basic method of dealing with major life changes.

♥ Once you come to a place of peace about your relationship and the other person, you can now respond appropriately. How? There are many ways, including:

- ♥ Being compassionate with them.
- ♥ Talking to them (without blame) about what you're going through.
- ♥ Talking openly but without blame about the problem in communication and trying to resolve it so that you're both happy. - *win/win*
- ♥ Admitting to your contribution to the problem.
- ♥ Helping them feel accepted and not attacked.
 - Swallowing your pride and admitting you're wrong.
 - Giving them a hug.
- ♥ Writing them a letter, if talking becomes too hard.
 - Fixing the mistake, apologizing, mending the relationship, figuring out what went wrong and how we can prevent the mistake in the future.
- ♥ Doing our best to help.

♥ Those are just some ideas, of course. There are endless possibilities, but you can see that these are all reasonable, calm, peaceful actions that are appropriate to the situation.

♥ Once you find a place of peace, the appropriate response becomes much easier to find. If you're having trouble, imagine a friend is in a similar situation, that it's not happening to you, and try to think of what advice you'd give him or her in that situation. This allows you to get a little distance between you and the situation so you can see it a little dispassionately. ♥

Dealing with relationship problems and frustrations with others can be a struggle, because we can't control how the other person sees us, understands the situation, or behaves. When things aren't going well, it can drastically affect our happiness. But with practice, and not a small amount of breathing, you can get better at letting go of your story about the other person and responding to the situation with calmness and peace. *ahm.* ♥

- ♥ Spiritual qualities to nurture:
- Practice ..* Patience / Forgiveness / allowing
 acceptance / non-resistance
 understanding
 compassion
 wisdom
 contentment
 Peace / Serenity / calmness
 Right Speech (NVC)
- ♥ Right View (Emptiness - Ultimate View)
 Right action (impermanence)
 kindness ↑ relative view
 gentleness
- ♥ mindfulness
 Joy
- ♥ Thankfulness / Gratitude
 Respect
- ♥ Set Healthy Boundaries
 Balance
- ♥ Birth / Life / Death appreciation