

Challenge – Finding the Benefits

Jan Engels-Smith | [all things healing](#)

“Being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional.” ~Roger Crawford

On the road to enlightenment, the way is not always smooth and it certainly is not effortless. How we view our challenges can determine whether or not we receive the full benefits that they offer. The universe is non-judgmental and does not define for us the events of our lives as good or bad; that decision is ours alone, and if we refuse the responsibility of our choice and assign the conditions to bad luck or the inevitability of failure, we have lost an opportunity for deeper understanding and a chance to enhance our appreciation for life. Hiking a trail in the wilderness, we overcome obstacles and we receive the dual benefit of having met the challenge and succeeded and of having the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of a remote area. If our only focus was on the pain encountered in our hike and the irritation at the obstacles along the way, it is likely that the beauty of our destination would go unappreciated and we would be blind to the wonders that surround us. On the other hand, if we reveled in the accomplishments we enjoyed in proving our mettle on the trail and found the trek to be part of the great pleasure of the outing, we can be assured that the scene at our final destination would be more beautiful than we had ever imagined and our joy would be unbounded. Such is the journey to enlightenment. Each challenge reveals to us who we really are and illuminates our existence so that we might know ourselves more fully and be more capable of growth and evolution.

Intention determines result. We know that we choose our intentions. The word itself implies choice. We need to

recognize the spirit's neutrality in the events that we encounter each day. The universe is not opting for good or bad incidents to toss at our feet; it simply provides the life force that offers us the opportunity of choice of response. We select the attitude, the emotional state, and the degree of self-assurance that we desire. How we choose to address the conditions that we face will determine the impact of the challenges. Realize that the goal may not be to lessen the impact but to make sure that we understand that the negative qualities that we first perceive can be altered into a positive force for change, because the difficult encounters might be the most beneficial to our spiritual development. I am not suggesting that a serious illness or an economic distress is a good thing, but that if the event has occurred, we may choose to blame it on our lack of worthiness, bad luck, or helplessness, or we may choose to focus on positive possibilities and find hope in a future that we can influence by our attitude and intentions. The laws of attraction are not grounded in past failure but in current attitude. Stressing the negatives in our experiences defines our intention and we draw in the misery and sadness we wish to release. Emphasizing the possibilities for healing and appreciation creates a positive force that quickly compounds itself into hope, renewal, and revitalization. Joy is not the immediate product of a difficult situation, but the intentions we set can offer a pathway to ultimate joy.

We live and function daily in the middle world, and the middle world appears confusing and at times chaotic. The distraction of this hectic and unruly place, very easily diverts us from our personal mission for spiritual growth; our attention focuses on the immediate and our perception of ourselves as a minor entity in an unimaginably large universe. Our practices of meditative contemplation of ourselves as at one with the universe are intended to mitigate this sense of aloneness and smallness. Setting our intentions to believe in our power to draw strength from the cosmos allows us to function

purposefully in the middle world and to act fearlessly in the face of challenges. The fragmentary appearance of negative forces in our hectic lives is an illusion that gains strength only if we choose to succumb to its negative energy. By drawing on our spiritual guides for support and directing our energies into positive forces for change, we transcend this misapprehension of helplessness and find an inner strength we may not have known we possessed. This is the design of ascension—opening the chakras to positive energy and gaining the power of the universe as our own, setting our intentions to become whole and one with the universe, and evolving to a higher dimension.

A good measure of one's progress along the evolutionary road of ascension is to consider how you view the inevitable difficult events that you encounter in your daily life. Sadness, distress, and fear are common forms of reaction and they may even serve a positive purpose in the short term as we come to grips with loss and pain and find solace in our emotional interaction with others. Negative forces are those which you allow to dominate your existence and which prevent you from moving progressively toward finding your true self. I recently experienced much sadness at the loss of my mother and I found it painful to accept the fact that she was gone from this life. However, I found great comfort from the outpouring of support I received from family and friends. She had moved a few years ago from Florida to Oregon and was close at hand for several years. It was joyful to spend so much time with her on a frequent basis during her last years and to see her interacting with her grandchildren and friends. The positive force of that joy does not eliminate the sense of loss but the dominant energy is one of thankfulness for the time together and the pleasure of fond memories. This is the nature of positive intentions. The spirits offer solace as you choose to seek it and one need not be mired in negative thoughts if you choose otherwise.

In our lives, we do not expect to eliminate all problems or avoid all difficult situations or never suffer loss. The spirits imbue life with a myriad assortment of occurrences but they do not assign emotions to the events; they leave that task to us. Occurrences have value as we determine their importance to us and they elicit emotional responses that we choose in our reaction to them. Humankind has allowed their consciousness to develop a false sense of external cause and effect for what we have created in our own mind. Not only do we often lose influence in how events affect us but we also assume an unnecessary role of victim and its resultant condition of helplessness. In my journeys, I have found that the spirits are puzzled by this behavior and they have told me again and again that we possess the ability to determine our fate and the power to alter the trajectory of our lives.

The universe launches us at birth as perfect beings on the path to fulfillment; but the intrusion of deceptive values drawn from cultures that have distorted our connection to the cosmos causes us to diverge from this path and begin to create different and erroneous definitions of ourselves as separate from and in conflict with our world. Our efforts to restore ourselves to the true meaning of our existence are the basis for our work in ascension.

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