

It's not what's happening...it's how you respond

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One of my favorite stories took place a number of decades ago when the English had colonized India and they wanted to set up a golf course in Calcutta. Besides the fact that the English shouldn't have been there in the first place, the golf course was not a particularly good idea. The biggest challenge was that the area was populated with monkeys.



The monkeys apparently were interested in golf too, and their way of joining the game was to go onto the course and take the balls that the golfers were hitting and toss them around in all directions. Of course the golfers didn't like this at all, so they tried to control the monkeys.

First they built high fences around the fairway; they went to a lot of trouble to do this. Now, monkeys climb...so, they would climb over the fences and onto the course . . . that solution just didn't work at all. The next thing they tried was to lure them away from the course. I don't know how they tried to lure them—maybe waving bananas or something—but for every monkey that would go for the bananas, all their relatives would come into the golf course to join the fun. In desperation, they started trapping them and relocating them, but that didn't work, either. The monkeys just had too many relatives who liked to play with golf balls! Finally, they established a novel rule for this particular golf course: *the golfers in Calcutta had to play the ball wherever the monkey dropped it.*

Those golfers were onto something!

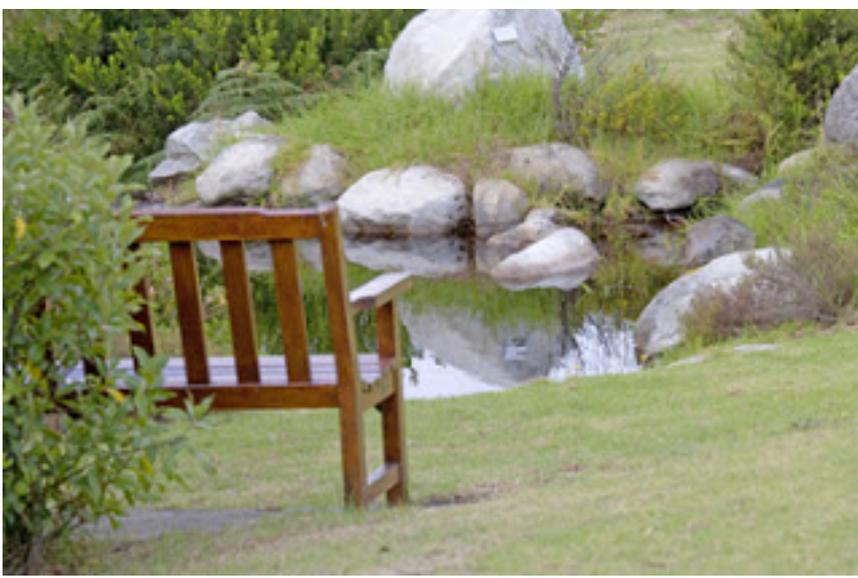
We all want life to be a certain way. We want the conditions to be just so, and life doesn't always cooperate. Maybe it does for awhile, which makes us want to hold on tight to how things are, but then things change. So sometimes it's like the monkeys are dropping the balls where we don't want them, and what can we do?



Often we react by blaming...ourselves, or others or the situation. We might become aggressive. Or perhaps we feel victimized and resign. Or sometimes we soothe ourselves with extra food or drink. But clearly, none of these reactions are helpful.

If we are to find any peace, if we are to find freedom, what we need to do is learn to pause and say, *“Okay. This is where the monkeys dropped the ball. I’ll play it from here, as well as I’m able.”*

So how do we do that?



What if you pause right now, and take a moment to be quiet. Can you think of a place in your life where things are not cooperating with how you would like them to be?

Whatever unfortunate place the monkeys have dropped a ball in your life, bring your focus to that. It could be something that happens in a

relationship with another person, where you get reactive. What would it mean to "play the ball" here? If you could tap into your deepest wisdom, your true compassion, how would you like to respond to these circumstances?

One of the great teachings in spiritual life is this: It doesn't matter what is happening. What matters is how we respond. How we respond is what determines our happiness and peace of mind.

So how might you respond with presence, when you find the monkeys have dropped the ball in a difficult spot?

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