



WAIT

A Training Guide to Understanding and Practicing Patience

Introduction:

In this workbook, you will learn about the power of patience: what it is, what benefits it offers, and how to cultivate it through practical exercises. Believe it or not, patience is like a muscle. With training, it can continue to grow and strengthen! This workbook will help you learn how to be patient across a variety of situations by applying our WAIT model. This four-step model was developed using research on patience conducted by Dr. Ben Houlberg, Senior Research Associate at The Thrive Center of Human Development and Dr. Sarah Schnitker, Associate Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Baylor University.





Personal Assessment

Before we begin our training on patience, take a moment to reflect on the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. This exercise is a personal assessment meant to stimulate your thinking about patience. Be as specific and detailed as possible with each answer you provide.

1) How do you define patience?

2) List all the benefits you think come from practicing patience.

3) Is it difficult for you to embody patience in your daily life?

4) **Rate Yourself:** To what degree are you motivated to develop patience? (0 = *not at all*, to 10 = *more than anything*)

5) Why do you want to be more patient?





What is Patience?

Patience is an engaged practice. It is a full on reckoning with reality and facing the world as its is, not how you wish or want it to be. At best, patience is the open-hearted acceptance of delay, difficulty, and frustration. It is actively waiting in the face of adversity, within personal relationships, and when confronting daily challenges.

Patience can seem like a passive activity, sometimes being conflated with inaction or meekness. Many people identify with impatience, as it signals a busy and therefore productive life. However, by reflecting on situations where you feel impatient, you can see how impatience is a stressful response that demonstrates the difficulty of this endeavor. Passivity is, by nature, easy. Patience, on the other hand, requires careful attention and engagement. Accepting difficulty, delay, or setback with patience requires strength.

Our researchers at The Thrive Center for Human Development have spent years studying patience and its effect on emotional well-being. Just like any other endeavor that requires strength training or exercise, patience can also be trained like a muscle, reaping many benefits.

More Than a Virtue

Religious and philosophical traditions across the world emphasize the idea of patience as a virtue. Patience can act as a virtue by helping people make choices that increase their overall well-being. Research has indicated that patience is directly tied to emotional, mental, social, and physical well-being. The benefits of patience are also borne out of scientific literature.

Those who claim to have patience have rated themselves as:

- ◇ Being more mindful.
- ◇ Having more gratitude.
- ◇ Feeling a stronger sense of connection to mankind and the universe.
- ◇ Possessing an increased sense of abundance.





The Benefits of Patience

Physical Health

Research has demonstrated that people who are patient have better health outcomes. They are less likely to suffer from stress-related ailments, including ulcers, headaches, acid reflux, acne flare-ups, and insomnia. Stress has a negative impact on our physical well-being and can exacerbate other health-related issues. Cultivating patience can help decrease stress and lead to better overall health, which is tied to our ability to regulate emotional responses.

Regulate Emotions

Patience gives you time to identify your true feelings and their root causes, allowing you to be more flexible in the way you respond to a situation. Researchers have found that patient people experience less depression and negative emotions. They can cope more effectively with difficult or stressful situations. In fact, people who practice patience report higher levels of optimism, gratitude, hope, and increased self-worth. In addition, they report feeling more connected with both humanity and the universe. Patience is also associated with having better relationships.

Social Skills

Patience brings self-compassion and allows you to face others with more kindness. Researchers have found that patient people are more empathetic, forgiving, and equitable to others. They are also often more agreeable, conscientious, generous, and open to new experiences, ideas, and people. Research has also demonstrated that people who practice patience are more likely to vote and increase their civic participation. Patience can influence our character by giving us awareness and understanding.

Purpose

When patience is connected to purpose, it gives us additional motivation in pursuing and achieving our goals. Patient people are more likely to persevere through challenges and become more confident with the outcomes. When we discover our purpose, the practice of patience becomes more meaningful to us. This results in higher levels of satisfaction.





Exercise the **WAIT** System

The goal of this workbook is to help you develop patience through WAIT. This four-step model will teach you how to think through and apply patience to difficult situations. What is WAIT?

- W** Why is patience important to you?
- A** Awareness of how you are currently feeling?
- I** Identify ways to regulate your emotions.
- T** Transcend or connect the self to purpose.

Developing patience taps into all four steps simultaneously. While these steps may seem simple, the practice is not always easy. As you work towards developing patience, be gentle with yourself and celebrate your progress. This is an ongoing process that takes time and effort, but will be worth it in the end.

To teach you how to put WAIT into practice, we will be working with one particular experience. Choose a situation where you are currently or have been struggling with being patient. This could range from a minor irritation, like being stuck in traffic, to a larger problem, such as being unemployed. You will be referring back to this situation as you work through the remaining exercises in this workbook.

Describe that specific situation. (e.g. I performed poorly in a very important business presentation.)





Why is Patience Important to Me?

In order to effectively practice patience, we need to continuously remind ourselves why we want or need to be patient. Understanding the importance of patience in our lives helps us to practice patience and answer questions such as:

- ◇ Why should I be patient?
- ◇ Does patience really benefit me and those around me?
- ◇ Can patience influence my ability to respond to a difficult situation?

We do things for reasons. By using this workbook, you are already acknowledging that patience is important to you. When we take the time to reflect on why patience is important, we are able to appreciate it more and have a stronger willingness to apply it to our daily lives.

Exercises

Pause. Reflect. Understand. Then write your responses to each question below.

1. Why is patience important to me? (e.g. Is it part of my religious beliefs or moral principles?)

2. Are there moments when it's okay for me to be impatient?

3. How can my view and understanding of patience contribute to the way I respond to situations?





Awareness of Feelings

Awareness is a proven strategy for increasing your ability to manage your emotions, which is essential for practicing patience. When you become aware of your feelings, you are able to understand why you're impatient with a certain situation or person. It is completely normal to have more than one feeling arise in a given situation. Many times we can't control our emotions, but we can control the way we react to our feelings. Becoming aware is the first step.

Exercises

Refer back to the situation you described on page 6. Be attentive to your feelings from this experience. Don't judge them as right or wrong. Then write your responses.

2. Are these feelings healthy for my overall well-being?

3. How have these feelings influenced my responses to that situation? (e.g. I'm too embarrassed to see my colleagues eye-to-eye after the presentation.)





Identifying Ways to Regulate Emotions

Once we are aware of our feelings, the next step is to learn how to regulate our emotions. Certain emotions are known to trigger negative reactions. That's why it is important to take a step back and identify the best ways to handle a difficult situation despite how we feel. Sometimes, it can help to view the situation more holistically (e.g. Will this experience matter in month or year?) or imagine it through a different lens (e.g. What will a trusted friend say to me about this experience?).

Exercises

As you refer back situation on page 6 and the feelings it evoked, keep an open mind as you identify the alternatives to managing your emotions and responses.

1. What are some immediate ways to help control my feelings? (e.g. I can talk to my boss about my frustration and seek advice.)

2. What is a more reasonable explanation for why this situation happened? (e.g. By checking notes beforehand, I could have presented more confidently.)

3. Had I identified these alternatives and ways to help manage my emotions at the time the situation occurred, would the outcome have been different?





Transcend the Self to Purpose

Our research at The Thrive Center shows that transcendence or going beyond the self is a fundamental component to patience. When we connect to something greater in life such as our purpose, we are able to act on patience in any situation and turn it into a habit. Being in touch with our purpose helps us elevate our emotions, see beyond any immediate challenges, and persevere. Whether through spiritual practices or an ultimate life goal, there are many ways we can achieve transcendence.

Exercises

Returning to the situation you've journaled throughout this workbook, reflect how you can sync that experience with your purpose.

1. What is my purpose in life?

2. How does connecting to this purpose now impact the way I view the situation? (e.g. I trust that God will teach me something through this experience.)

3. After applying this last step, how will it help me develop patience moving forward?





Patience as a Habit

Congratulations! You have completed this introductory workbook to understanding and developing patience. However, your training does not stop here. Remember: patience needs to be nurtured and practiced on a daily basis just like any other skill. When encountering a difficult situation or interaction, practice WAIT. By applying WAIT regularly in your life, you will be able to hold on to patience and reap the benefits that come with it.

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