

Inner Enjoyment, Not Inner Work

On enoughness, and why the long road never required you to postpone the joy.

I use the term *inner work* all the time. I am going to argue against it anyway.

The phrase is useful — it signals effort, seriousness, that this is not passive. But it smuggles something in. **Work tells you the good part is somewhere else, later, once the work is done.** It puts you in the posture of laboring toward a result. And that posture, applied to your inner life, quietly guarantees you will not get the thing you are after.

Because what you are actually doing when you sit down and turn your attention inward is not labor. It is an act of self-love and self-care. You made a quiet space. You set aside time nobody is paying you for. You are, for a few minutes, on your own side. That is the whole event.

So I would rather call it inner enjoyment of self.

“I use the term inner work, but it's really inner enjoyment of self. We create a capacity to see life not as a struggle, but as an activity — your hobby.”

TIM O. DAVIS

This is not a nicer way of saying the same thing. It changes what you do.

If it is work, you will measure it. You will want to know whether the session was productive, whether you are progressing, whether you are doing it right — and you will be evaluating your own interior with the same instrument you use on a quarterly target. Which is precisely the instrument that made you tired in the first place. People bring their whole achievement apparatus into meditation and then wonder why it feels like one more obligation.

If it is enjoyment, you simply show up to it. And something interesting follows: the capacity it builds is the capacity to see life not as a struggle but as an activity. Your hobby, if you like. A thing you get to do. Mickey says this is God's idea of Disney World, and I think he is being more literal than people assume.

Now — the question underneath this, the one I am asked most often by people who are very good at achieving things: how do I hold enoughness in the long term while

also finding joy in the here and now? The two feel opposed. Enoughness sounds like a distant state of arrival. Joy now sounds like a distraction from getting there.

But look at what that framing actually is. It is the work posture again, applied to a whole lifetime. The good part is later. Joy is a reward for completed effort.

And if you run that program long enough you discover its defect, which is that **there is no later.** The target moves. You hit the number and there is a new number. You do arrive, briefly, and then arrival dissolves and you are back on the road. Every successful person I have worked with has found this out, usually around the time it stops being interesting.

Enoughness is not at the end of the road. It is a way of being on it.

Here is the practical version. The joy is in the practice itself, and the practice is available this morning, for free, in the ten minutes before anyone needs you. That is not a consolation prize while you wait for the real thing. The felt sense of being quietly on your own side *is* the thing. And the long arc — the deep change, the version of you that does not get knocked over — accumulates as a side effect of doing the enjoyable thing regularly. **It is not purchased with suffering.**

I would go further. The suffering posture actively slows it down. If you approach your interior as a problem to be worked, you bring pressure into the one place that heals by relaxing. You cannot force your way into quiet. The effort is the obstacle. Which is why *work* is the wrong word — not because it is too demanding, but because it is the wrong physics.

So there is no balance to strike, because the two things are not on a scale. You are not trading one for the other.

Put the effort into yourself, and notice it stops feeling like effort fairly quickly. It is here for enjoyment.

THE PRACTICE

Long-term enoughness is built out of a great many ordinary mornings in which you enjoyed being with yourself. The joy now is the mechanism, not the reward.