

5 Ways to Practice Patience

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Patience is a virtue — or, at least, that’s what people like to say. I’m slowly learning how to be patient, and I’ve found that God teaches me patience by putting me in situations that ***test my patience***. Of course, that makes sense — how can someone become patient without practice?

Historically, I have not been a patient person. I get irritated and antsy when something takes longer than I think it should take. I feel an anxious coiling in my stomach when I’m in a situation where I really should be patient, but think something’s wrong because it’s not going how I want it to go.

Practicing Patience is a Process

There’s a certain power when someone can be patient in frustrating scenarios.

That's not to say that one should have infinite patience. Patience often runs out, but I needed to get better at not letting it run out too soon.

And like the title says... Patience takes practice. And practice makes perfect! Kind of.

Patience is one of those things that you won't ever master, because you've got to constantly keep practicing it.

Here are five things I'm doing to practice patience in my life, especially in situations where I really don't want to be patient.

1. Breathe Deep

For me, impatience ties closely with anxiety. When I'm anxious, my stomach fills with knots, it feels like the bottom of my stomach has fallen out and there's a sharp sensation I have to breathe through to get rid of.

My endocrinologist taught me deep breathing, specifically [4-7-8 breathing](#). It's a breathing method that activates the Vagus nerve and slows the heart rate, which reduces stress and anxiety. It's super useful before going on stage to speak, to manage impending panic attacks, and to remind myself that I must be patient with the things I cannot control... And I must be patient with myself.

Breathing deeply should be my number one response to impatience, but it's often an afterthought.

I remember (sometimes too late) that maybe I should do some deep breathing, and by that point I'm in the throes of impatience and already starting to beat myself up for falling into the trap again.



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2. Meditation & Prayer

[I'm a Christian](#). For over a year (closer to two, I think) I practiced daily meditation in the Headspace app. I didn't find much use in it, even after two years, so I canceled my subscription.

In 2019, I read the entire Bible, and towards the end of the year, I started praying daily after reading it. I've found that praying helps with my stress load, as well as reminding me that I've asked for patience and God is giving it to me by putting me in that testing arena.

Praying is meditation. But not all meditation is prayer.

That's probably why I didn't find any long-term benefit in the Headspace-type of guided meditation.

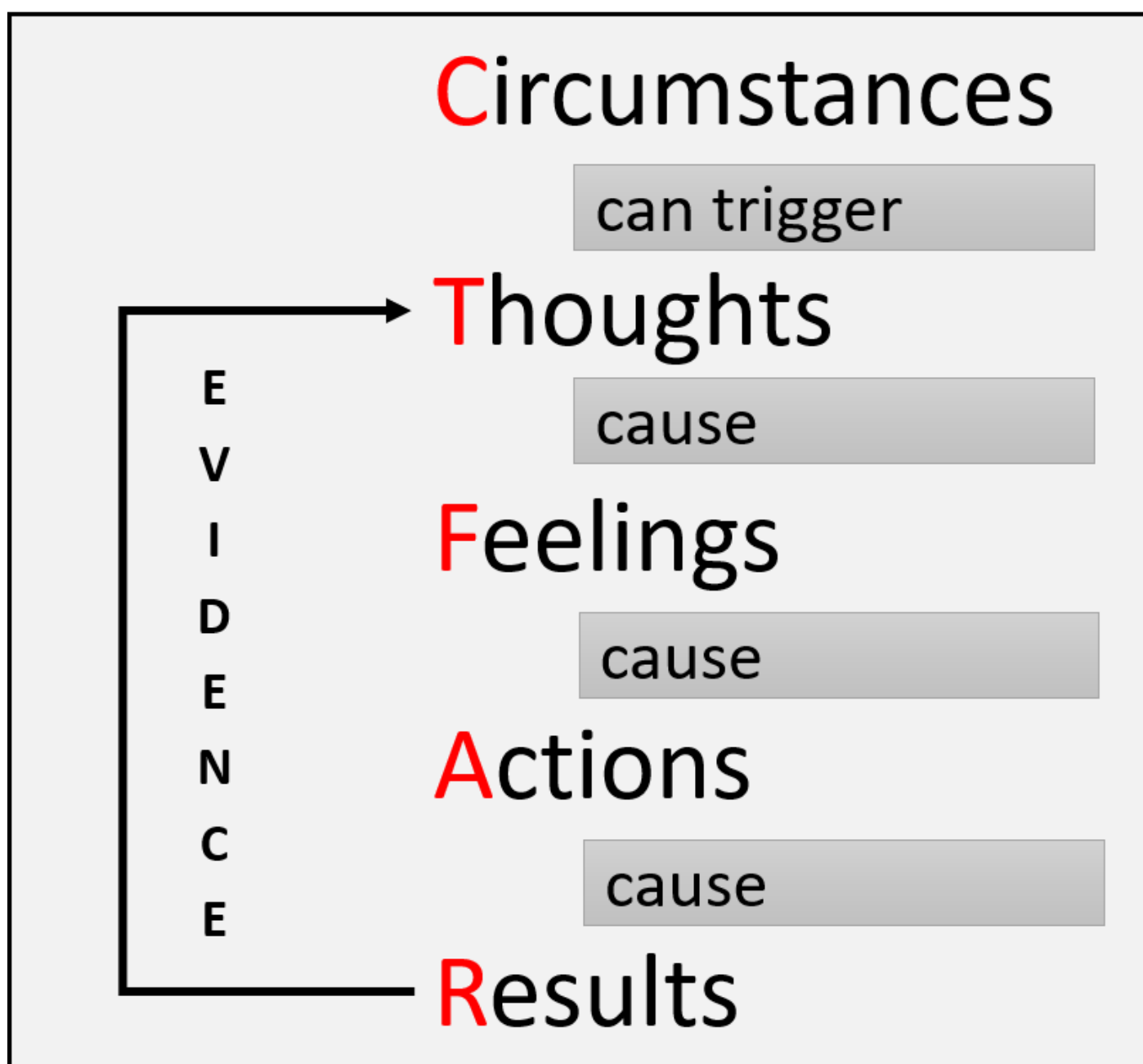
Give me silence and the space to focus on my breath, and I can "meditate" for five minutes, but meditating on God's word is a better use of my time and better for developing skills like how to practice patience.

3. Self-Coaching

Since January 2020, I've been in a monthly program through the Life Coach School called Self Coaching Scholars. I'd binged the [Life Coach School Podcast](#) for over a year before I took the next step to join Scholars, and it's been life-changing even just after three months of active participation.

The things I'm learning about myself and my tendencies go a long way to me understanding how to make my life truly MY life — and that includes becoming a more patient person.

All of my results come from what I think. Impatience is a feeling. Feelings come from thoughts, and feelings drive our actions, which drive results.



When I'm impatient, it's usually because I'm thinking things like:

- This shouldn't take this long.
- He needs to go faster.
- I could do that myself and it would turn out way better.
- I wish this would just happen now.

I'm setting myself up for failure because I'm creating expectations that nobody can meet.

When I think those things and feel impatient, I end up acting in a way that I don't even like acting.

Self Coaching lets me see the underlying thoughts, and realize that those thoughts are why I'm feeling the way I'm feeling. And when I understand what's going on, it becomes a lot easier to change how I'm thinking and generate a new feeling, like compassion or understanding. And those feelings prompt me to show up differently.

I think everyone should be in Self Coaching Scholars, or at least benefit from someone coaching them through their thoughts, feelings, actions, and results.

It's life-changing.

4. Scheduling My Life

A lot of my historic impatience has come from unmet calendar appointments, usually with others. When I set up a meeting or a "date" with someone, and they're late to it, it throws off the entire rest of my schedule.

Before I started scheduling my entire life in my calendar, things like this would bring up impatience in me because ***don't they respect my time?***

A lot of people are constantly late, but I pride myself on being on-time or early to nearly everything. I feel bad when I'm late to something, especially if I don't call ahead to inform the person I'm meeting with.

This is a case of something that's important to me, not being important to someone else.

I've found, though, that when I schedule my life with such precision that I know exactly what I need to do every day and when I plan to do it, it becomes a lot easier to manage my schedule if someone's late or reschedules for another day.

My primary issue is honoring appointments with myself, but honoring appointments with others isn't usually a problem.

Scheduling my life lets me practice patience because I don't feel like the rest of my day is ruined by someone else's behavior. If they're late, I can just use that time to do something I had scheduled for later. For me, it doesn't matter if it's done at a specific time, just that it's done that day.



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5. Going With the Flow

This one is a lot like scheduling my day, and being okay with rescheduling things if someone else's plans get disrupted.

But most things are out of my control anyway, and in those cases, all I can do is go with the flow.

Maybe my flight is delayed. That requires patience. I can't control when the flight leaves, or if I miss my connection, but realizing that and understanding that getting upset about the things I can't control doesn't help with literally anything. In those situations, the only thing I can do that keeps me level is to be patient.

Maybe there's an accident on the way to an appointment or on the way to work, and I end up getting in late or missing a meeting.

It's up to me to own the responsibility for that, and come up with ways to hone my response to something similar in the future.

I live near Seattle, and went to a conference at the Washington State Convention Center in October 2019. After the conference one day, I had an appointment scheduled in Kirkland, which is normally a 20-minute drive... Up to 40 or 50 depending on traffic.

I left with plenty of time but underestimated the ***absolutely horrible traffic*** going from the convention center to the freeway. It took half an hour to go half a mile. I ended up calling the office and telling the receptionist I'd probably be late.

And then I didn't let the traffic bother me.

There was nothing I could do about it, and getting angry or upset wouldn't make it go any faster. I just enjoyed listening to my podcasts, slowly inching forward every few minutes.

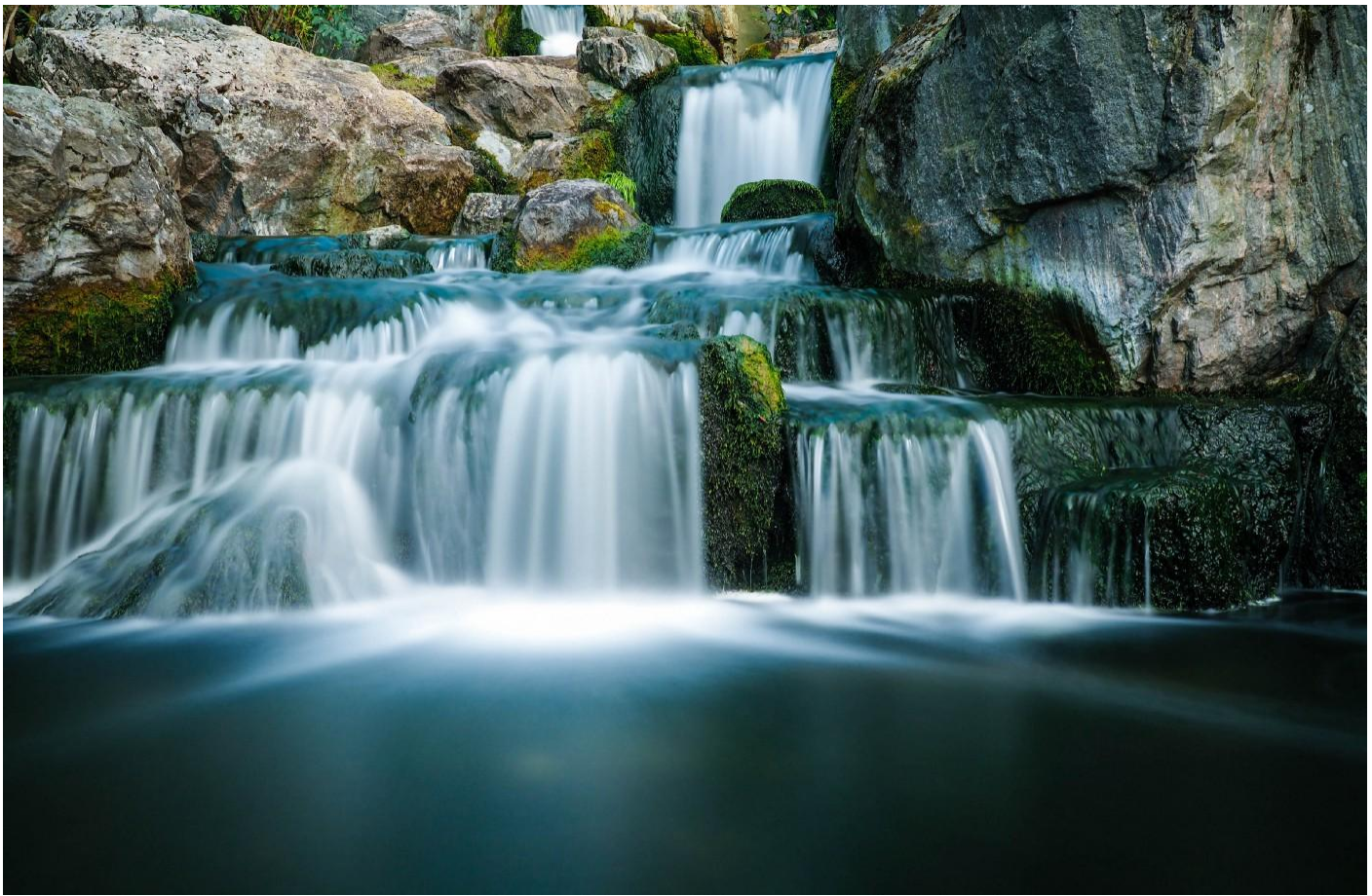


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Practice Patience in Your Life

Practicing patience is a skill, and I believe anyone can learn it. When you land in situations that trigger your impatience, take a deep breath. Remember that if you can't control it, there's no point in indulging in the impatience and anger that usually arises.

If you find yourself in a tense situation and you start to feel impatient, focus on your breathing. Meditate. Identify what the impatience feels like, and just let it be there without reacting to it.

Deep breathing, meditation and/or prayer, self-coaching, scheduling your life, and going with the flow are all great ways to practice patience in your daily life. After a week of paying conscious attention to how you handle impatience, you'll be surprised how much these methods help keep you level.