

What Enlightenment Is Like

With enlightenment, you move beyond mere relaxation techniques or positive thinking. Enlightenment is a complete shift of perception, in which you flow with absolute inner freedom in an awareness that reaches deeply into the unseen realms. With the blessing of enlightenment:

- You have no more fear, no more greed, and no more aggression.
- Your love becomes unconditional and untainted by mundane expectations.
- You're able to let things happen naturally rather than trying to force them to happen.
- Every action you perform springs forth from the flow of universal energy through and as you.

To experience enlightenment, you have to be willing and able to let go of who you thought you were so that you can paradoxically become that which you have always really been.

Giving up all you think you are is a big sacrifice to make. But remember that if you don't do it now, Father Time will come and do it for you one day. Therefore, the Sufi sages gave the command to "Die before you die!" Die to your small self before the small self dies. Loosen your identification with the leaf and remember that you are the great tree. Then, when that particular leaf turns brown and falls to the ground, dissolving particle by particle into the elements of the earth, you will still be here in all your grand and divine glory.

Spiritual Wisdom

People ask 'What do you get by realizing God?' You get eternal peace and bliss. You are in a state of bliss in all conditions and circumstances because it comes from the source of your being. The fountain of joy will open in you and you will be flooded with it. In that state of happiness you work in the world, and that will be for the good of all.

—Papa Ramdas

You know how big the whole physical universe is, with endless blankets of stars, galaxies, and unfathomable distances and warps of time and space? Surely, you've seen the Hubble telescope images, and on clear nights have looked up to see planets and stars sparkling across the dark sky.

Well, enlightenment is like going through all the day-to-day events of your life—including brushing your teeth, feeding your pet, working at the office, taking a walk, and buying groceries – while remaining constantly and completely aware that you are a speck within this huge blanket of massive universe. Imagine walking through your day being equally as aware of the universe filled with stars as you are when you look into the nighttime sky. Except with spiritual enlightenment, you're not only aware of the immensity of the physical universe, but of its spiritual breadth as well.

With an enlightened perspective, you know that you are a speck of nothingness in the grand scheme of things and you also know that you are greater than you've ever imagined.

What Enlightenment isn't

Along with "finger-points" toward what enlightenment is, here I share a few "thumbs down" about what it isn't:

- Enlightenment is not about stuffing more and more information into your head.
- Enlightenment is not about feeling superior and going around pronouncing judgments about who is or isn't enlightened.
- Enlightenment is not about changing external appearances or looking more spiritual, but is a shift of awareness that may or may not be visible to others.
- Enlightenment doesn't mean that a person will only act in nice or pre-approved ways. Even an enlightened person can appear to act like a jerk sometimes!
- Enlightenment isn't something that you pay a certain amount of money to acquire during a course that ends with you walking away with a certificate of enlightenment. Enlightenment is not that cheap (even though it's technically free)!

Spiritual Wisdom

Keep two truths in your pocket and take them out according to the need of the moment. Let one be "For my sake the world was created." And the other: "I am dust and ashes."

— Rabbi Simcha Bunam

Here are some more descriptions that point toward what enlightenment is like:

- **Being enlightened is like being an actor in a play and knowing that all the scenes are just dramas for entertainment.** Even if you get angry or pleased with someone, you remember that you're really the actor, who is free from anger and is just playing his role. Those who remember that they are actors in this universal play get to smile at one another from behind the scenery even if outwardly they appear to be at odds.

- **Enlightenment is to be comfortable with paradoxes and seemingly opposing viewpoints.** Psychologist Abraham Maslow described *self-actualization* as a state that resolves dichotomies, where, “Opposites are seen to be unities and the whole dichotomous way of thinking is recognized to be immature.” Maslow continues by saying, “For self-actualizing people, there is a strong tendency for selfishness and unselfishness to fuse into a higher subordinate unity. Work tends to be the same as play; vocation and avocation become the same thing. When duty is pleasant and pleasure is fulfillment of duty, then they lose their separateness and oppositeness. The highest maturity is discovered to include a childlike quality. The inner-outer split between self and all else gets fuzzy and much less sharp, and they are seen to be permeable to each other at the highest level of personality development.”
- **With enlightenment, you see both the perfection and imperfection of the universe at the same time.** You realize that everything is perfectly complete even when there is still much to be done. You feel the perfection of everything even while you enthusiastically act to make improvements.
- Being enlightened is like someone in a dream who starts saying to other people, “I really do believe that this is all a dream.” Even if you don’t go around saying it to other people, you know in your heart that everything that takes place in life is like a dream in the mind of universal Consciousness.
- **With enlightenment, you’re not afraid of all the turmoil going on in the world, nor are you too obsessed with it.** Even as you take steps to help improve the world, your vision stays focused on the spiritual realm of universal creation that is bigger than all the concerns of this physical world. You remember that many sides and points of view can coexist, depending on how you choose to look at a situation.
- **When you’re enlightened, you may notice yourself becoming a conduit of grace.** Synchronicities may occur more often around you, and the spiritual presence of your company may inspire people around you to go through various transformations that bring them to a better place of awareness. Of course, keep in mind that grace doesn’t always look like grace at the beginning. Sometimes grace comes in the form of revealing a problem so it can be resolved.
- In the state of enlightenment, you are fully present in your life and also fully ready to leave this world when the time comes. You enjoy life while remaining detached from it. You don’t get trapped by things. You live with a sense of allowing, acceptance, and inner freedom.

Consider

Two conditions come together on a successful quest for enlightenment: You have to want it, and you mustn’t want it too much.

Living the goal

Enlightenment is like the feeling you have when you're standing in the middle of an awe-inspiring scene of magnificent nature – when you're at the precipice of the Grand Canyon, or at the foot of Niagara Falls, or walking through the amazing beauty of Machu Picchu. But when you're enlightened, you have this feeling even when you're sitting in your home, walking down the street, shopping for groceries, or doing your job. Even if the external situations you're in are not exactly beautiful or awe-inspiring, you still have a sense of the inherent awe and beauty that comes from seeing the world through enlightened eyes.

A popular Zen saying says, "Before enlightenment, I chopped wood and carried water; after enlightenment, I chopped wood and carried water." After enlightenment, your outer life may look just as it did before you were enlightened, with the same usual daily tasks to do. However, when you're living the goal, your inner state is free and expansive. Your mind is quiet and serene. Your heart is peaceful and warm, and your attitude is good!

When you live your life with an enlightened perspective, your enlightenment automatically helps the world, even if you don't speak about it. When you live in an awareness beyond limited ego, your positive vibrations and thoughts become amplified and extend throughout the world. In this way, many unknown monks and sages uphold the positive energy of this world through their enlightened meditations.