

Half Hearted and All In

Prologue

Some people reading this article are familiar with most of the stories in the article. The topic of half heartedness is worthy of repeating; possibly the reader will gain new insight by again going over this topic.

Three Groups and The Same Three Results

I've been a participant in three groups; the first group for two years, the second group for eleven years and the third group for nine years. Early in my time in each group, the leader called me out about being half hearted. Each leader said that there was nothing worse on the spiritual path than being half hearted.

Why nothing worse? Because we can forever be half heartedly on the spiritual path. Half heartedness gives half results. Have you ever been half hearted in a relationship? Did you expect that relationship to be awesome? The spiritual path is the same; be half hearted and you'll not have fulfilling results.

The First Group

The first group leader did not shield her opinion. She told me that my attitude was very bad and if it continued, I would be wasting her time and my time. I soon volunteered to staff many intensives (often once a month) and I'd be at meetings almost all the time (this could be up to three times a week). This was much different than my half hearted effort. My life was beginning to have a fullness that I had always longed for and that I knew was possible.

The Second Group

The second group leader very soon called me out and said that my half heartedness was my major problem. He knew that I would come to the meetings, though how much was I really willing to work? I knew I was giving it what I could (and he knew this too). I also knew that I was giving a half hearted effort. I wasn't jumping 'all in' in working; I was half in and half in resistance. Half heartedness exists because resistance is active.

He again spoke to the core of my problem. Soon after this conversation I got my first email address (this was in the 90s). I choose lukewarm@ as my email address to remind me of what I needed to work on. Often went I sent or received an email I saw lukewarm@. I experienced varying degrees of a sickening feeling as I saw lukewarm@.

Within months of being called out the second time, I was all in. I much more actively worked against the resistance that was at the core of my half hearted effort. In the eleven years I ended up being right near the top of the people who went to the retreats north of San Francisco. The three day retreat setting really poured on the heat compared to meetings of two hours a piece; which was the work here in town. There was no comparison in that the retreats brought my short comings to the forefront each and every time in a very direct way. I also fulfilled all of the requirements (weekly meetings and occasional work days) here in town.

Again, the results were night (half hearted) and day (being 'all in' within what I could do in the group context). I felt so much more alive and fulfilled being all in.

The Third Group

After a year or so in the third group, my teacher called me out. I told him of my dissatisfaction with what I viewed as slow progress. He paused and then said: "Well Phil, maybe you're just lazy." This seared through me. How could I fall for the same trap a third time? And I knew that I had.

Soon I was more actively working in the face of the resistance that was at the core of my half heartedness. And it was searing. When a 'no' (resistance) would come up, that was the time to turn it into a yes. No, I don't want to go to the retreat. And then I'd go. No I don't want to write. And then I'd write. No, I don't want to put forth more effort. And then I'd put forth more effort. This yes in the face of a no happened often.

My life changed. What I received from life and from my teacher grew in abundance. It wasn't all sweet; actually much of what I experienced was very disturbing. Disturbing to what? To my half heartedness and to the resistance.

I again ended up being near the top of the people who went to the retreats in the twenty years that my teacher led these retreats. It's not the number of times that's important. It's that I worked against the resistance frequently and regularly. These three day retreats cooked me. Staying with the feelings that come up for three days can be emotionally and even physically painful. Staying with the uncomfortable feelings and thoughts that are happening is called going through the fire.

Half Hearted

Many people on the spiritual path are half hearted. And they're doing what they can. How can we overcome our half heartedness? One way to overcome half heartedness, or a pattern that we're stuck in, is that we can respond to something that shocks us. Each time the group leader pointed out my half heartedness, I felt this as a shock and there was a response that followed of being much more all in. I needed repeated shocks in regards to my half hearted efforts on the spiritual path.

Each person needs to work through the resistance that keeps them half hearted in their efforts and in their surrender. Another way that we can overcome half heartedness is addressed in the next section of this article.

Overcoming Half Heartedness – Being 'All In'

Half hearted isn't only about our efforts on the spiritual path. Half hearted or being all in is about how we are in each moment of our life. We can overcome half heartedness in many ways each day.

Are you all in when you're washing the dishes? Or are you thinking of something else and barely even know that a dish is turning in your hands as you wash it?

When you're walking, are you all in about walking? Do you have attention to how your feet are touching the ground, to how your arms are moving, to your breathing or to the surroundings as you walk?

When you're talking with a friend, are you all in on listening as they speak? Are you all in on what you're saying?

Are you all in when you eat? Are you tasting each mouthful of food?

Are you all in when you're simply sitting? Or is your mind going on and on unchecked and you have very little awareness of your body?

Being half hearted or being all in is about how we live our life; not about how many retreats we've gone to or for how long we meditate. Being all in is living in the fullness of life; then fulfillment and happiness show up.

May all beings live in fullness.