

## The Somatic Self, Pain, and Suffering

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By Charlie Badenhop at [www.seishindo.org](http://www.seishindo.org)

Pain and suffering will visit you at various times in your life, and it's thus of significant consequence to understand what you're meant to learn from such experiences. Pain can be a valuable teacher, and it's important to allow your teacher in when it knocks on your door.

Our "somatic self" orchestrates the activities of our body, and our "cognitive self" orchestrates the activities of our rational mind. When we feel healthy and fulfilled these two aspects of the self work together in a cooperative partnership, and life is grand. When the cognitive self fails to respond to the promptings of the somatic self, pain and suffering are sure to follow.

A burst of adrenalin and short breaths lets "me" know my somatic self is feeling overwrought. A release of norepinephrine and a deep breath is the body's way of signaling its feeling safe and relaxed. Such communication is simple and clear, IF we are able to pay attention to what the body has to say.

Because our cognitive self is so busy attempting to fulfill our worldly needs, it often fails to slow down, appreciate, and heed the communication of its somatic partner. When we fail to respond to the promptings of our somatic self, our "dis-ease" increases, until such time that we're forced to pay attention. Pain is not a punishment. Pain is a signal that lets us know we're building up excess energy that needs to be released. Our suffering informs our self-partnership that it must find better ways to care for the self. The stronger the pain, the clearer the message. "We need to redirect our life energy!"

Beyond being an opportunity to deepen and strengthen our self-partnership, pain and suffering also usually signal the need to revitalize our partnership with others. Supportive caring relationships are a biological necessity and not a luxury. No matter how well balanced we feel on our own, we need others to help complete us. We need others to help us find our rightful place in the world, and feel truly at home. To be genuinely happy and healthy, we need to expand our sense of self to include all those that play a significant role in our life.

Because pain "hurts like hell", it might seem counter-intuitive to acknowledge that pain gives us the opportunity to decrease our suffering. Without our pain to awaken us to the possibility of a fuller life, we would cumulatively suffer more over time.

Rather than attempting to avoid or eliminate the discomfort you sometimes feel, please consider the possibility of embracing your suffering. I realize this idea might seem flippant or naïve. I'm not suggesting your

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anguish should be an occasion for celebration. Instead, if you can realize the essential human need you have for a loving cooperative partnership with self and others, you can begin to experience your pain as a wake-up call from life. The stronger your discomfort, the stronger the wake-up call! Pain is like an alarm clock that starts out with a soft buzzing sound that becomes louder and louder, until you finally get up out of bed and start your day. When you experience your pain alarm clock going off please appreciate that you're being called to wake up to the fullness of life! Your pain is a positive message that lets you know it's time to make some important changes in the way you live. The greater your pain, the greater your capacity to feel joy and fulfillment. Your heart is calling out to be healed. Please answer this call for help with love and compassion.

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