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## Backhand Grace

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## Backhand Grace

I suppose a sports writer could say that a tennis player delivers a backhand stroke with grace, but my thoughts move in the direction of graceful moments in our lives that only appear as such when we take a reverse perspective. For example, any interruption to an intended action rarely seems a blessing at the moment. Afterwards, we might recognize that the forced pause in the work we were doing enabled us to summon a clearer focus on what we were doing. Experiences of backhand graces are common among us, and become more frequent as we acknowledge them and become increasingly appreciative of them.

All that seems good to us, that which we call grace, gift, insight, and inspiration, is welcome, and is usually received with gratitude. Hits and hurts, inconveniences and setbacks, are not perceived as good for us, and yet often contain something of great value if we reflect and look for the hidden benefits. We do not deny the negative aspects of an unexpected health problem or an unjust accusation. But neither do we want to miss out on any of the gains that might also be present.

If we miss an airline flight, or someone who promised to meet us at a particular time fails to do so, we are inconvenienced at the least, and perhaps suffer other negative consequences that follow the missed ride we had been rightly expecting. Without pretending that nothing is amiss, we might look for some concealed advantages that really are present. Aside from some near-miraculous event (while we were waiting, we received unexpected information worth thousands of dollars) we will most likely find truly helpful gifts that are present within us or in the immediate environment when we make the effort to look for them.

One rather frequent backhand grace is interior: rather than to increase pain or frustration by dwelling on the difficulties and other negative aspects of unpleasant realities, we are led to turn our attention towards possible advantages that might be present in the situation. Whenever we deal with a difficulty by exercising creativity in looking for some true benefit, we have already made a radical choice, however small it may seem to us, that brings light into darkness.

Most of us can recall times when we became quite angry or upset about a perceived failure to achieve what seemed a reasonable and desirable goal, only to find out some time later that the "failure" was the occasion that led us to make a change to another life-goal, one

that became truly satisfactory, and more fully in accord with our gifts and deepest desires. We learn about ourselves not only through moving from one planned success to another, but also by accepting the doors that close for us as invitations to look for another that will open. After meeting what seem to be insurmountable obstacles to our well-being, we make new beginnings that we now recognize as being wholly appropriate for us as we are.

“Backhand graces” might not be our favorite mode of proceeding, since they are always preceded by some undesirable challenges. But, when the alternative is to do nothing but dwell on the presumed injustices of life, “backhand graces” make a profound positive difference for us.