

e-tips ...

to help you Live Well

How Can Wabi-Sabi Help You Cope With Being Imperfect?



A shelf collapsed at my home recently and one of my favorite figurines was shattered. I've been so heart-broken that I've left it and all of the pieces on the shelf – I don't want to part with them because the figurine is a beautiful gift from my mother that has a lot of meaning to me.

Today, I learned about a term that may help me cope with this relatively small incident and with something much bigger in my life. It's called wabi-sabi.

In Japan, when a piece of valued pottery breaks, instead of tossing the pieces in the trash, craftsmen practice the 500-year-old art of *kintsugi*, or "golden joinery." This is a method of restoring a broken piece with a lacquer that's mixed with gold, silver, or platinum, which results in a new piece that's imperfect but highly valued. This practice is interwoven with the philosophy of *wabi-sabi*, which means "to find beauty in imperfection."

As a recovering perfectionist, the idea of finding beauty in imperfection is a much higher standard than what I've been striving to achieve. For years now, I've been working on letting things be "good enough," and that motto has been very influential in helping me let go of imperfections when there wasn't enough time or energy to get it perfect. I've also tried to relax and just "let it be" when others weren't as perfect as I thought they should be or when the situation was simply out of my control.

But what if I began to find beauty in these imperfections, both within me and in my surroundings — not just put up with them?

Google adds to the definition: *Pared down to its barest essence, wabi-sabi is the Japanese art of finding beauty in imperfection and profundity in nature, of accepting the natural cycle of growth, decay, and death. It's simple, slow, and uncluttered — and it reveres authenticity above all.*

It could mean loving fingerprints on doors, the misspelled word from your child's note, messing up in front of others, telling a joke when no one laughs, cooking a meal that tastes bad, the hole in your favorite coat. Maybe it means leaving the pieces of my figurine on the shelf, letting them remind me of living a life of wabi-sabi.

I'm going to learn more about this philosophy of wabi-sabi AND I'm also going to say it out loud a lot because it's fun to say and sounds cool. Wabi-sabi, wabi-sabi, wabi-sabi!

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Intermountain Employee Assistance Program e-tips are messages that teach, remind, and inspire in our journey to live well.

