

Enlightenment Is Not An Experience

~Excerpt from an interview with Linda Clair
Published in InnerSelf, May 2008

Q: What do you mean when you say that enlightenment is not an experience?

Linda Clair: An experience has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Enlightenment is beyond time. It's the end of time, really. And it's forever—infinity. There's no beginning to enlightenment, no middle, and no end. If you still see enlightenment as an experience, it's not enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a word that is bandied about quite a bit, and different people seem to have different definitions of it, but I see true enlightenment as the end of all experience. It's not the real thing if it ends—it's still an experience. People who say that they've had enlightenment experiences may have had very profound experiences, and maybe a glimpse of how things can be, but that's not enlightenment.

When you are totally immersed in the present moment, there is no time to experience anything. When you are experiencing things, it's time related. There is a person experiencing, so there is a separation, which implies time. When there's no separation—no "I," no mind separating things all the time, there can't be any experience. It's almost like you become the experience—which is what most people are trying to do in life. They are trying to satisfy themselves by using an experience, but what they really want is to be so totally immersed in it that they *become* the experience.



Photo: Phil Franta

When the "I" that separates itself from everything else goes, you just merge into the present moment—into reality. You become reality—and reality is not an experience. I had some profound experiences during my training, and I thought those experiences were giving me a glimpse of how it could be—but in a way they weren't, because enlightenment is a state where there is no experience at all, where everything turns inward and you become what you thought you were seeking. When you are still in your mind, when the mind is still separating you from things, you've got no idea how it's going to be.

It's a state of not knowing—that's what enlightenment is. And when you're really fully immersed in not knowing and not wanting to know, there can't be any experience. There's no time for any experience.

You've really got no idea about enlightenment until it actually happens—until it takes you over—and that's what happens—it takes you over completely. You *can't* have any idea about it. You can feel things energetically when you're around someone who is in that state, and that's the closest you can come to it. You get a sense in that way—energetically. But the mind will try to

turn that into an experience, and try to explain it and figure out what's going on, and futurize it. The mind works on the past, so it can only use the past—which is the known—whereas enlightenment is a state where you're always in the unknown, so you can't think about it. You can't have any idea about it even when you're in it. You are so immersed in not knowing that you don't even know you're enlightened.

I say that I'm enlightened because if I want to teach I have to say something. I have to use words, to try to encourage people, and to try to explain the state I'm in, knowing that it's impossible. It's not the words. The words connect me with people in a way, but it's the energy behind the words that is important.

I've heard people say I must have a huge ego to go around saying I'm enlightened, but the only reason I can say it is because there isn't any ego there. It would be much easier in a lot of ways to just keep my mouth shut, but I can't keep quiet about this—it's too important. I know there has been a lot of negative reaction, and that me just saying this will alienate a fair few people, but anyone who is open to the possibility that maybe this woman is enlightened may also realise that it's possible for anyone who wants it enough. Some people will be repelled by it, and other people will be very attracted, and say, maybe I should see for myself whether I feel she is enlightened or not.

Enlightenment is a state of indescribable peace, a deep passionate peace—not cold and empty like your thoughts. Once you realise this state, you can't lose it. When you have nothing, you can't lose anything. It doesn't come and go like an experience.

You keep going more and more deeply into Here. Into Now. There is no end to it. You actually *become* this peace. It's only then that you start to see what love really is.



Linda Clair is a non-sectarian teacher based in Adelaide, Australia. Visit www.simplemeditation.net for more information. Her book *What Do You Want?* is available for purchase in hardcopy or digital versions.