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Chapter 3
The Invitation of Pain

> *If I didn't know the pain in me, I wouldn't recognize the pain in you, and I wouldn't care.*

After my knee injury, I realized I had two options: dwell on the past or set my course for a better future. I chose the latter. I began to believe in time machines. But only the ones that go forward, not back.

The first Noble Truth of Buddhism, *duhkha*, is usually translated as, "Life is suffering." This is not to say that our lives are sorrowful 100 percent of the time, but challenges that can trigger suffering are unavoidable.

In other words, life often serves us things on our plate that we didn't order. Unfortunately, once they happen, there is no option to say, "Sorry, I didn't order this; please send it back to the chef and give me something else I want."

My knee injury was one of those wrong orders. My first step to healing was to accept the injury and not resist it with anger. As with all challenges, wishing it didn't happen or placing blame on others was not serving me.

I learned that *duhkha,* or suffering, increases proportionally to our inability to accept a situation. The opposite of *duhkha* is *sukha,* which generally translates as ease. It rises in proportion to our ability to to find acceptance in the events that come up in our lives.

Our cardiovascular system is the perfect analogy for understanding the process of suffering. Our arteries and veins are not just static tubes like the plumbing pipes in our homes. The smooth muscles of our blood vessels constantly constrict or dilate in response to our need for oxygen delivery in the blood.

In the same way, our minds can either resist or flow with life events, depending on our level of acceptance.

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Photo by Meredith Rose