Scratching an Itch

If you think about it, **when you have an itch, the first urge that you get is to scratch it.** In your head, the irritation disappears as soon as you do that. And yet, is this always valid?

Imagine that one day you develop a patch of eczema (if you are unfamiliar with the term, this is a common skin condition). As your skin is very irritated, your natural reaction is to scratch it. However, the cells in this area are already inflamed and therefore highly sensitive. When you do scratch your skin, they release chemicals called histamines that cause even greater irritation; they inflame your cells even further. If you pay attention, the itch comes back a bit later and it feels even more intense than before.

So, what do you do? **You scratch the itch once again, naturally.**

At this moment you hardly recognize that you have involved yourself in a vicious cycle. The more you scratch the itch, the worse the eczema gets, and the greater the following irritation.

If you go to the doctor, what is the first thing they tell you? **To stop scratching** and apply some medicine to your skin.

Similarly, your challenging emotions are like an itch on your body.

It urges you to scratch it over and over again to make the discomfort go away. The more you do that, though, the more intense your emotions become.

For example, you might be sad over a fight with a friend. The more you think about it and try to get rid of your sadness, the worse you feel as it comes back stronger. And this emotion can even drag others alongside it (frustration, anger, shame, guilt, hopelessness, etc.). In the end, you feel like a pressure cooker ready to explode and have done nothing effective about the situation.

**What if you stop scratching?**

How would you feel if you just let your emotions be?

Would that open up space for meaningful actions?