

Handling Discouragement



While I would love for all of my blog posts to highlight my tremendous progress and exciting wins, life doesn't work like that. Invariably, we all experience ups and downs, and progress occurs more like "two steps forward, one step back" than in an upward slope. Although I posted two weeks ago about the wins I've experienced since starting this blog, this past week has been more of a period of discouragement. In this post, I will share my feelings of discouragement, along with some suggestions for how to handle such times in your life.

Career & Health Woes...

One of the "wins" I shared in my "Progress Already" post was that I was attracting more work projects and experiencing increased confidence as a result. Well, that win turned out to be short-lived... The inquiries regarding prospective work have led to dead ends and a couple of projects which I believed were "sure things" have fallen through for reasons unknown to me.

I now find myself in the all too familiar zone of uncertainty and negativity regarding work. Despite my desire to remain positive and hopeful, I am feeling increasingly discouraged about my work prospects. I know that it does me no good to lament my poor past choices, but I have had to stop myself multiple times from rehashing ancient history and wishing that I had taken a different path. I sometimes find myself feeling very depressed for not being where I'd hoped to be career-wise at my age.

In addition to my career woes, a few of my health issues have flared up as of late. I had thought that my digestive problems were mostly in the past, but I've been feeling extremely bloated and uncomfortable all week and have been popping antacids like candy to address the painful burning in my stomach. The bloating has rendered many of my pants un-wearable and has me feeling fat and unattractive, a feeling I know all too well from my many years of eating disorder struggles.

The Tendency to "Snowball"

I have a tendency for my thoughts to snowball in weeks such as this one. A few bad things happen and I start to think about all of the ways in which my life – and myself – are just plain wrong. Instead of merely noting that it's a "bad week," I start to "catastrophize" and see things only becoming progressively worse. The result is that I become paralyzed by depression and fear, do virtually nothing to improve the situation, and end up feeling much worse.

How to Deal With Discouragement

Fortunately, there *IS* a better way... There are some ways to deal with discouragement before you become caught up in that snowball going 60 miles per hour down a huge mountain. Here are some tips for addressing your discouraging feelings head on:

Take a “Time Out”

Opt for a change of scenery. Get outside in the fresh air or do any activity which will bring you peace and joy. For me, a good “time out” is taking a walk along the water with my husband or visiting the mall to enjoy a movie or do some shopping. It doesn’t matter what you do, but make sure it’s something you enjoy. Even an hour or two away from the source of your discouragement can help you to regain a more positive attitude.

One Day at a Time

Stop thinking so far into the future! Adopt the wise 12-step group saying of “one day at a time.” Plan your upcoming day, focus on what you need to do that day, and don’t worry about **anything** beyond that. Life is so much easier and far less scary when taken in small “bite-sized chunks.” Ask yourself, “What **ONE** thing can I do **TODAY** that will help me to feel more positive about my life?” Then do that thing...

Get Into Action

Stop the “paralysis by analysis!” It’s common to become paralyzed by fear and then be afraid to act. But I’ve found that if I do even one small thing in service of my goals, I feel **so** much better. Take a “baby step.” Maybe it’s a phone call or an email, or maybe take 15 minutes to investigate something which might be beneficial to you in an area of your life that feels stuck. Just do **something!** Don’t set the bar too high, and give yourself credit for taking even a small action in the right direction. Those small actions add up and propel you forward in life.

Refocus on Your Goals & Gratitude

Sometimes when we are feeling in despair, we don’t remember what’s most important to us. It can be helpful to revisit our key goals and commitments during these times. You **ARE** writing your goals down, aren’t you? You are much more likely to achieve your goals if you put them in writing.

When you are feeling low, remind yourself of what really matters most to you. Look at the progress you **HAVE** made toward your goals and look at what’s right about your life now. [Remember gratitude](#) – we all have things for which we can be grateful.

Get Help

You don’t have to do everything alone! I know it can be hard to ask for help. It’s a very tough thing for me to do... But the people who love us want to be there for us and they want to help us during our difficult times. Sometimes all we need to do is ask. Call someone to talk or ask a friend for a small favor, or just ask someone to spend some time with you doing something you both enjoy.

If necessary, get help from professionals who might be able to assist you in getting unstuck. It may be a medical professional or a service provider; there are many professionals who can help us with our various needs, and it’s often not as costly as we might think. Remember, there is no charge to

investigate available resources. Do what you can to help yourself, but don't be afraid to look outside of yourself when necessary.

Getting Past My Slump...

Here's what I've done and will continue to do to get past my current slump. Yesterday, I got into action and did something on which I'd been procrastinating for quite a while. I decided upon what absolutely needed to be done in order for me to feel a sense of accomplishment. I set a target of "good enough" instead of perfect and approached the task with a goal of finishing it yesterday. Less than two hours later, it was done and I felt great! One step toward becoming unstuck... I also planned a fun activity with a friend for a few days from now so I have something to look forward to.

I am taking things one day at a time as well. To help with my health issues, I'm focusing on eating better foods and getting more rest. To address the career challenges, I'm taking baby steps in the right direction. I'm deciding upon a small key action to take each weekday so that I can build some positive momentum in that arena. I'm also considering ways in which I can get help with these issues, whether it be from a health professional or a personal coach.

Hopefully, I will soon move out of my slump and start feeling positive and hopeful once again. I know that I will have other times when I feel discouraged. When that happens, I will take my own advice and stop those negative feelings before they stop me!