

Win the Moment

When dealing with stressful situations, as we all are now with the COVID-19, it's tempting to fall back into old, comfortable habits we have used in the past to kind of soothe ourselves and feel the emotional comfort they bring. Sometimes, these may be habits we have never quite resolved to change anyway, so a stressful situation can seem to be just the justification we need to hold onto it, or to even increase its role in our lives. Whether it is carbohydrates, cigarettes, a bad temper, social media or binge-watching TV, we can feel overwhelmed when we feel weak, tired, lonely or frustrated and we don't have that old habit to comfort us. Our final thought before we completely go off the rails is usually something like, "Well, I never was going to stick with that anyway."

As human beings, we have a pretty high rate of failure when it comes to changing our old ways of doing things. One reason for this is that we tend to focus on what the rest of our lives will be like if we are never allowed to have the thing we are trying to give up. And, when stress gets a firm grip on our thoughts, the anxiety we feel can quickly bring us to the point of, "Oh, what difference does it make? I can worry about that again once I get through this."

Wouldn't you like to take an approach to making change that gives you more control during those times? Rather than giving into those self-defeating thoughts that you will never succeed in the long-run, how about just taking it one moment at a time? You may not be able to control the way you feel tomorrow or how you failed yesterday, but you can make a conscious choice about how you handle this moment right in front of you. You don't even have to think about whether you are giving up your old behavior forever, you just have to win this moment, right now.

As you begin focusing on each individual moment and see each one as a free-standing opportunity to win, you can be much more intentional about making the right decision that supports your goal. When your only definition of victory is achieving your ultimate, long-term goal, it becomes daunting to continue the work to get there without feeling as if you are having any successes along the way. With that approach, each setback is also an opportunity to simply give up. With this mindset, it is easy to forget all the right decisions you make most of the time and to let yourself feel disheartened by the failures. However, when you begin noting all those moments when you do win, you develop a more objective view of how often you are successful.

Once you begin to focus on winning the moment and see each of those moments as a victory, then you will feel more empowered to make it through those moments when you feel most vulnerable to giving in. Even if you fail sometimes, you can still win the next moment. And, you likely will not have to be entirely focused on winning *every* moment for the rest of your life, but for those moments when your temptation is greatest, you can recognize what is happening and win that moment, or perhaps a few moments, until the temptation dies down.

Over time, if you string together enough moments where you win, you will find that you have developed new habits and new ways of comforting yourself, celebrating and relaxing that are free of any old, self-destructive behaviors. Once you have reached that point, you may be surprised at how much less powerful those old temptations become. But, still – don't let your guard down!

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