

## **Next: Wring Out Your Sponge**

You are a sponge. We all are sponges. We go through a life absorbing information in the form of experiences, textbooks, perceptions and, occasionally, even reality. But most people in our society get to a point when they essentially give-up on absorbing anything more. We go into the "just tell me what to do" mentality. We give up on creativity. We give up on happiness. We give up on "success" (whatever that means) and we start to settle. That often leads to regrets and "could have/should have/would have" speak.

Want to know how to stop that obnoxious and energy draining cycle? Wring out your sponge. Think about it...a sponge is useful until it is full. Then what? When it cannot absorb any more, it is of no value. The only way to create value once again is to wring it out. Then, it works just fine again. If you do not wring it out occasionally, do not expect it to be of any value to you.

Think about your life for a moment. Are you in need of a wringing out? How much is saturating your mind right now in the form of stress? By the way...this is a great place to interject the reminder that we create the majority of our own stress! Take a moment every day and "wring out your sponge." Get rid of the dirt that is stealing value and draining energy while rendering you worthless with the task at hand.

There is a concept in coaching known as "tolerations." Take 1 minute (do not tell yourself you are too busy... you will be lying) and write a list of the things in your life that you are tolerating that you are not willing to tolerate anymore. Personally, professionally, mentally, emotionally, physiologically. What weighs on your mind to the point of creating stress for yourself that does not have to be there? You really are not the center of everyone's world. That is a wonderful thing to truly understand. Give yourself permission to believe it!

SO...ask yourself this question:

When did you start complaining? We all did at some point. One day you just realize that out of the 10 things that happened that day, you are choosing to focus on the one challenging thing instead of the 9 positive things. We live in a society that thrives on complaining. Granted, dissent is necessary for anything to be accomplished. After all, isn't that exactly why we need to ask more questions? But when we stop asking questions because we do not like the answer, we convince ourselves that it is just so much easier to complain than to

find a solution. It is then that we lose even more of that idea of "possibilities."

Poet Maya Angelou once said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain." The only thing over which we really have control is ourselves. Yet, we have convinced ourselves that we are "out of control" because of other people, things, and events. It is then that we lose even more of the idea of "imagination." We ask "what if?" all the time. But we never answer the question! We choose to ask it in negative contexts. "What if I fail?" "What if it doesn't work?" "What if other people think I'm crazy?" The running theme here is **we choose** to do all of these things.

When did you start running on auto-pilot? We all did at some point. When did things start "changing" but not progressing? When did you convince yourself that you are right and everyone else is an idiot? When did you start altering yourself so that you could look like, sound like, or fit in with a certain group? When did you lose YOU? We all did at some point.

You cannot move forward until you switch off of "auto-pilot!" Let's pull out that super hero cape and imagine some possibilities! Misery is a choice...and a poor one at that.

## **Next: Draw Your Route**

OK...the analogy is incredibly simple. If I hand you a map and ask you to "draw your route," what is your first question? Of course, "where are we going?" This is what we in personal development and self-help coaching call an "A-HA moment."

We spend a lifetime drawing maps only to get to a destination and regret that we were not somewhere else! We say things like, "I am nowhere close to where I want to be," "I should have/could have/would have done something else if I knew," and "I just never had the chance to do something I always wanted to do." Is there something wrong with our maps? NO. Is there something wrong with the detours that inevitably occur throughout a lifetime? NO. Is there something wrong with the very thinking that we need a "plan" and that is why we are even holding a map? NO. So...where is the breakdown? The problem is simple. We spend a lifetime drawing maps, but we

never stop to ask ourselves where is it we actually want to go? (I think we just experienced another "A-HA moment!")

Think about this for a moment. If you have a big enough map, you can go anywhere in the world. To do that, you only need to know 2 pieces of information: where you are now and where you want to go. If you know the answer to those 2 questions, drawing a map becomes child's play. That is it! If you have not answered those 2 questions (honestly!), why are you drawing maps? I know...because it is what we are "supposed to do" and it is because we "should" do these things...

Now...guess who is responsible for your lack of "success" (whatever that means)? YOU! Nobody else. Now, before you say those horrific words, "YEAH, BUT," keep reading.

When you stop making excuses and step back out of your life for just a few moments, it is easier than you believe it is to get some clarity. And when you have some clarity about what you are trying to accomplish, your map draws itself! How cool is that!

So...how do you map your life right? Follow these 3 steps and never look back!

1. Get clarity: What would you be doing right now if you could be doing something that you loved to do? Where do you find your energy? Who would you be with? Where would you be? What are you going to regret not doing in your life? Take the labels off your life and think about WHO you really are.

2. Get excited: As a motivational speaker and coach, people often ask me to "get them motivated." I often think it must be what comedians experience when someone sees them and says, "hey, make me laugh!" My answer is simple...want to get motivated about something? Find something that motivates you! Think about this for a moment...if you hate your job and you are always stressing about something and you do not like your financial situation and you are choosing misery over happiness...I have news for you...I CANNOT motivate YOU! YOU need to leave your stress and find your energy. If there is something you really want to do...does someone else need to motivate you to do it? Or do you just go and do it? Of course you do! It is when we really do NOT want to do things that de-motivates us. SO...find the things that motivate you because they have meaning for you and replace some of your stressors with them.

3. Get moving: Knowledge without action is worthless. If there is something you want to do and there is a valid "why" you want to do it...go do it! If you are making excuses instead of taking action, you might not really want to do it. Be honest with yourself. There is no such thing as "failure" (whatever that means). The only way you can possibly "fail" is to never try something you will regret not trying.

"Failure" should never frighten you. Regret should scare the hell out of you! If you choose to do nothing to make your journey fulfilling, try not to look back...you will not like what you see.

Get clarity! Get excited! Get moving!