



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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What Are You Made Of ?

For many of us, the past couple of years have been a challenge. Some of us have lost our jobs, some our savings and retirement, some even our houses. Illness and death have walked through our life space. Relationships have been stressed and future dreams have been crushed. Economic security has worn thin, and "easy street" is no where to be found. Our life situation has changed, and as a result, we find ourselves struggling ... even suffering.

Certainly, few of us expect a life free of any struggle or suffering. Yet, when it arrives, how do we respond? It has been said that struggles build character. But if it were that simple, the automatic outcome of stress, frustration, pain, loss and suffering would be personal growth and improvement (more "character"). This, however, is not always the case.

We all know of individuals who, rather than "rising to the occasion" or "triumphing through adversity", react to their challenge with bitterness, negativity, helplessness and defeatism. Rather than growing in strength and endurance, they are crushed into jagged shards of discontent. Why is that?

The truth is that struggle and suffering do not automatically build positive character. Rather, they tend to unveil and give expression to the underlying character that already exists. Suffering has a way of stripping away our masks and our easy images. It brings out the heart of who we are, what we are made of, and what we really believe and value.

Yet, many of us want to imply just the opposite. In the midst of our struggles, we seek to excuse our hurtful behaviors and attitudes by claiming that we're "having a rough day". We tend to say "this just isn't me", as if some alien force has invaded our body and is responsible for our actions. Yet, it is us! It's the "fall-back" character we resort to when the stress and struggles of life challenge us.

When we realize this, we become aware of one of the true benefits of struggle and suffering - they offer us the opportunity to look deep inside our heart and see the person we are at our core ... the person behind the curtain of easy "nice-ness". It reveals to us the real beliefs and attitudes that shape our behavior. We get to witness firsthand our character strengths that serve us ... and our character weaknesses that

work against our joy and peace. With this knowledge comes the opportunity to change - to reinforce our strengths and transform the areas of our character that fail us.

Each of us, then, should ask the question: How do I handle myself when I am under stress, when the pressure is on, when I'm struggling and suffering? Do I find strength and comfort in my beliefs? Do I hold to my values and gain confidence as I continue to live them out? Do I seek and gratefully accept the support of those close to me? Or do I lose my footing as the foundation of "easy living" crumbles? Do I fall prey to fear, worry and anxiety? Do I withdraw from others, selfishly rage against the "injustice" of the situation, or lash out in anger towards those closest to me?

Recognizing our character patterns can be both affirming and humbling. It can also be very valuable! It is the first step in deciding whether we want to change our style and upgrade our character.

The choice is ours. The opportunity is real. Let's allow the Spirit within us to mature us through our struggles and empower us for tomorrow!



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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The Four Steps of Change

So often, our desire to change remains just that - an unmet desire. We say, "I wish I could change, but it just doesn't happen. I guess this is just who I am."

Indeed, change, especially change of character, can be a difficult process. While there are those who claim we simply can't change our character, the truth is ... WE CAN!

So let's consider the four steps of change.

1) **Decide** - The desire for a personal change must become a conscious decision to change. "I would like ..." becomes "I will ...".

2) **Commit** - The desire of the heart and the decision of the mind must then be empowered by the commitment of the will. Our whole being must stand behind our decision, support it, and reinforce it whenever it is challenged.

3) **Plan** - Even the greatest army is compromised by the lack of a battle plan. Likewise, change of character requires a plan of small steps designed to culminate in success.

4) **Act** - Our plans are only as good as our implementation. Consistently taking the steps laid out, letting go of the old while reaching out toward the new, creates the movement of lasting change.

If you would like someone to assist you in your journey, a life coach is uniquely trained to partner with you as you transform and grow. Give yourself the gift, and watch the benefits multiply!



Life is a grindstone, and whether it grinds a man down or polishes him up depends on the stuff he's made of."

- Josh Billings