

The Nature of Struggle

Some people have an uncanny ability to know what to do when they are in a struggle. Regardless of the intensity of the issue, and, independent of its outcome, these people move through challenges in ways which are positive, in cause, and which are most apt to give them a solution they can live with. Other people find that most any struggle causes them pain, freezes them in their tracks, or at the very least, bogs them down in the dilemma. They end up feeling like they are victims and cannot find a way to get out of 'effect'. For people in the second group, it seems to be more than just a lack of knowledge about how to struggle—rather, it seems an issue with the concept of struggle itself.

For them, it just doesn't feel right or fair that the struggle should be there in the first place. Their view of the way the world should be does not include a model for having to struggle. They like things to work, dislike obstacles, and experience impatience if things do not come quickly. They just don't understand why things have to be the way they are, and they never quite come to grips with working through them.

The Nature of Personal Growth

Anyone in the process of personal growth is setting themselves up for a model of being which is no longer stagnant and predictable. Their search for new ways of being requires them to make transitions again and again as they evolve but those for whom struggle carries negative connotations find that the path is a lot longer and a great deal harder because of their inability to understand and work with the process of struggling.

The Nature of the Times We Live In

The material which follows is offered as a working model for struggling which includes both belief systems and principles (or techniques) for struggling successfully.

New Belief Systems: If struggling is difficult for you, the first step in change is to look at the belief systems you currently have about the nature of struggle. If any of the following statements seems incorrect to you, an exploration of that belief would be a good place to start.

1. 1) **Everyone in life experiences struggle in one form or another.**
It is the nature of life on earth to work through our processes with struggle. No one escapes this dynamic—it is a part of living. The adage—Life is hard, and then you die! is a strong statement of this but a reflection of the fact that we are here to work.
2. 2) **No one can evaluate or compare their struggles to those of anyone else.**
Since your path on earth is unique, your challenges are one of a kind as well. What is hard for one person is not necessarily as difficult for another and, in the final analysis, there is no way to compare or assess the level or meaning of anyone else's path. A statement like 'she has it so easy' would be common for a person with this particular belief system.
3. 3) **Why Me? is a question which simply freezes the process and the progress of the struggle holding us in a space where we cannot move correctly.** It signifies a person who is in victim energy. As long as you question the reality of your situation, you are not capable of doing anything about it. Why Me? is a question which makes the assumption that struggle is negative and something to be avoided when that may not be the truth at all.
4. 4) **Struggles are an opportunity to work our most difficult issues.** They give us the chance to use our heart, mind, and soul, in new ways. They are the test for which all the learning was done.

None of the belief systems above are designed to diminish the nature of struggle. When we are being tested we are asked to draw on all our resources, knowledge and belief and use our bodies in their most

committed and conscious way. Put in a more positive framework, struggle is the effort we put into the process of changing.

Even after we have succeeded in rethinking some of the belief systems that limit our ability to struggle, we still need to know the skills which help you work through the process. And if you spend any time talking with people who do not know how to struggle, it quickly becomes apparent that they do not know the steps to make the process work for them. Even if they accept the premise that struggling is correct, they don't know how to do it.

The following principles are the building blocks of behavior dedicated to moving through a difficult time or situation. Each is important and must be considered if you are to proceed through the test situation or change process successfully.

1 - KNOW YOUR LIMITS

A key component in struggling is to be clear about the possibilities. It is important to determine where you are at as you start the process. This includes looking at questions like:

How much energy do I have at this time?

How much time can I devote to this issue?

Where else are my energies needed?

What can I reasonably do? (as one human being)

Where can I look for support as I work this piece?

Where are the areas where I feel unclear about working the problem and what will I do

when I encounter them.

2 – KNOW WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO!

When confronted with a difficult situation, it is important to see yourself as a human being and not try to

be a superhuman person. This step comes after you have identified who you are and what you are capable of at this time and involves choosing where you will give your resources and to what end. This is a crucial step for assuring that you stay in cause.

3 – GIVE NOTHING TO THOSE WHO TAKE

A key component in times of struggle is the necessity of saving your energy for the struggle itself and not letting it get squandered by those who would drain you. Carlos Castenadas calls it 'impeccability' and it refers to taking care of the energy you have and not letting anyone waste it or diffuse it. If there are people in your life who would take from you, it is your responsibility to prevent them from doing so.

4 – LOOK AT WHAT YOU NEED

This is an important step in staying in cause. You have to identify and ask for the things you need to keep

yourself going.

If you need the support of friends, ask for it.

If you want time alone, build that into your day or week.

Make sure you eat correctly to support your body nutritionally.

Give yourself plenty of time for sleeping or rest.

Give yourself permission to feel and express the feelings that come up. Hiding them—from yourself or others—can help you shift into victim energy.

5 – SEEK THE ENVIRONMENT YOU NEED TO DO YOUR BEST WORK

It is important to do your work in an atmosphere which supports and facilitates that work—not in a place or situation which makes it more difficult. Whatever the crisis—physical, financial, or relationship—it is important to do the

work in an arena where you have permission to do the work your way. In addition, the struggle may require certain kinds of information you need and this means you have to seek out professionals who are trained to give you the data, perspective and skill sets you need.

6 – SEEK THE PROFESSIONAL HELP YOU NEED

The challenge you are going through may require certain kinds of information you need to go through with

the best outcome. Thus you may want to find people to help you have been trained in the specialty you lack. You might also want to find a professional to help you work through the process in a cleaner way than you can do it with those already in your life. (This is especially true if those close to you have an investment in the outcome of your process.) An example would be the woman who is questioning her marriage but finds that her husband, children, parents, and friends are not neutral people with whom to discuss the problem.

7 – LOOK AT HOW YOU HAVE DEFINED THE STRUGGLE—THE DEFINITION IS THE KEY TO HOW YOU HAVE SET THE ENTIRE CONSTRUCT UP.

When people find that they are stymied in the resolution of a struggle, often the solution is a

redefinition of the problem. When the situation is framed differently, new possibilities are opened and the person has new levels on which to approach the problem. For example, if something your spouse does is driving you crazy, one way to approach it is to talk about the behavior. A way to reframe or

redefine it is to focus on what that behavior means to you and look at why it is so upsetting (attitudes, family history, etc.)

8 – KNOW WHAT YOU ARE GOING FOR (FIND YOUR SANITY PIECE)

In many struggles, the ultimate outcome is not one we might have chosen. In each important struggle, it is essential to identify those things you know you can achieve. There always has to be a success, however small, which you can fall back on to know something was achieved. Thus a person will say, “I really want this but I can at least have this”. Remember that even with the limitations built into the struggle, there has to be a gain somewhere or you will be apt to buckle. In situations where you cannot find a physical gain, there can still be gains in knowledge, awareness, growth, or in paying off a karmic debt.

9 – MAINTAIN STABLE DATUM

In any time of unknowns, our bodies cry out for the familiar. When you are in the midst of change, it is essential that you keep some parts of your life the same. It can be as simple as the time you go to bed, or the day of the week that you do the laundry. The greater the stretch you are making, the more you need your stable datum.

10 – REMEMBER THAT LIFE MUST GO ON

Whatever the level of crisis, the rest of your world continues to exist and it is helpful to keep other areas

in motion. If you can continue at your job through a crisis, do it. If you have been planning a family vacation and the timing and appropriateness still work, go on the vacation. If your daughter is having a birthday, give her a party. Not only are these other life events a needed diversion, they help to keep you moving and put the crisis in a broader perspective.

11 – LEARN TO LIVE WITHOUT ANSWERS/LET GO OF CONTROL

A part of the human dilemma is that we will never have all the answers we need. We may never understand the ‘why’ of things. Each person comes to their own personal decision about letting go and turning over things to a higher authority but it is a needed step in finding peace. This is not the same thing as giving up, and an individual is responsible for knowing all that they can know and never letting pain or fear stop them from finding things out.

12 – IDENTIFY THE WAYS YOU ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE GAME

Sometimes this objectivity is hard to find without the help of a neutral person to help. But one easy way to note your participation is your failure to do the steps in the process and try to leap instead.

13 – FIND THE SPACE IN YOU TO DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

This is the place where you positive and negative are blended. For some people, this is the space that

their belief in and reliance on a higher power takes them to. For others, it is the strength of their being which they draw on. It can even be knowing that you have to wait until tomorrow to make any more progress and giving yourself the time. It is the highest form of working with yourself and knowing yourself. It is reaching to your core and finding the energy and the desire to move.

14 – WHEN YOU CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. . .

Talk about the fact that you can't take it anymore. If possible, find the humor in it—even if it is only in some small way. When you hit disbelief or feel overwhelmed, sometimes it is enough to accept the fact that you hate the reality. . .that it is all you can do to bear it. If you find that it takes all your energy just to face reality, then it is important to know that you have really hit hard times and it is absolutely imperative that you move into acceptance.

15 – ACCEPTANCE VS RESIGNATION

On the surface these two stakes can look very much the same, but it is only on the surface for the

energy of them is very different. In resignation, there is victim energy and thus a lack of creation. In fact, resignation actually robs energy and the situation stagnates. You admit defeat, feel powerless to change what is, and give up. There is always a sense of loss in resignation, and usually your view of yourself is negatively impacted. A person who is in resignation is frozen—nothing changes and

nothing is ever created in this state. When you notice that you are in resignation, accept that. Then find a way to move your energy—somehow. Move yourself physically and let your insides move too. Don't stay in the same state of mind either.

In acceptance, you are always in motion. You stay in cause, understand your human limits, accept those limits, and do not judge yourself in any way. You don't need to like what is, but you can live with what is without feeling any form of personal defeat. People who are in acceptance have humor, keep moving, and find that some things do shift because they remain in cause.

16 – THE NATURE OF DOING

Some people find that they get trapped because they are unwilling to do anything which they do not like. Thus all doing is judged. As soon as judgement enters, you have moved into effect and will find that the judgement gets in the way of moving through the situation. It is important to remember that you will have to do things in this world which you do not like. The determinant of how they are experienced by you as you do them is the attitude and the energy you bring to the situation. If you accept them as a reality of life, and trust yourself to move through them, and find the gains in the lesson, doing won't be a problem.

17 – FINDING YOUR GAINS

Part of being human is the side of us that likes to see rewards in the things we do. And when the process we are in is a difficult one, or one we do not like, the rewards (gains) become even more important. Thus at each step in the process of struggling through an issue, it is absolutely essential that you take the time to find the gains in the situation. This step provides the balance for all the work. Sometimes—especially in the really hard time, those gains will be small and hard to identify but they serve to re-energize you and to keep you from falling into a victim posture so they are very, very important.

18 –DO THINGS THAT INSPIRE YOU

Read inspirational literature, listen to those who have the capacity to motivate, find small ways to make a difference in the world. Choose music to listen to that elevates your mood and gives you energy.

19 – FIND HUMOR WHEREVER YOU CAN

Humor comes in many forms. Find a form of humor which isn't angry or unkind, which does not harm others and use it regularly to improve your mood and give you breaks from the difficult parts of struggle. It's great for health, and is beneficial to your immune system. When you are not finding any humor in life's circumstances, smile more and let the corners of your mouth turn up regularly and it will help your overall mood.

A final comment about working with this material:

If you feel that you are part of the group for whom struggle is difficult, it is important to try out these principles initially in a situation that is not the most important decision you have ever made. It is taking the small step first—trying the principles out on an issue that is not life or death in your mind. You will improve your chances of working through the steps correctly if you do this. Remember, bodies are slow to change and new material is not easily assimilated when it is on the body level. So improve your chances of success by starting with a problem you can work as a 'beginner' and then once you have the steps you can move on to a harder challenge.

A good rule of thumb might be that if you can name the steps without re-reading this material you are more ready to put them into action.