

To Make Wise Choices

Charlie Smith

The point is that in three seconds, you can get over upsets, move on, and make wise choices..

Mary was stuck

Her company is in trouble. Life was one piece of bad news after another. She feels tired and sour. Happy events are quickly replaced by upsets. She wants good things to happen but too often, something gets in the way, big or small, and in an instant, she is upset. With the upset, she is afraid. Part of her wants to run away. She is angry, sad, frustrated, suppressed, helpless, trapped, and focused only on the problem, all at the same time.

Then, in almost the same moment, she explains the situation to herself. Her thoughts are, "What's wrong? Who is to blame? What's a nice girl like me doing in a place like this. I've got to fix it. Is there no help?." She feels worse. No possibility. Wise choices cloaked in bad thoughts.

Mary asked me what to do.

I told her that show stopping upsets like this happened with everyone I had ever worked with, in little and big ways. When we are very young, there is always an event, an incident, a moment of extreme upset, that stays with us for our whole life. Forevermore, It affects how you see things and react and what upsets you when anything reminds you of it even, when the reminder is subtle, a look, a tone of voice a similar surrounding.

She thought for a moment and said that when she was young, maybe five or seven years old, she went to a local supermarket and for 25 cents, bought a small book because she liked the cover. On the way home, her mother saw her on the street and asked what she had done. Mary told her, and for a long time her mother yelled at her and ranted she was no good with money, and was ruining her future. She was thoughtless and stupid. Mary shriveled. She stopped breathing, felt small and couldn't talk. She wanted to run away and couldn't move.

The event stayed with Mary her whole life. Anything that was or might be an insult or unavoidable obstacle or criticism would remind her of the event, and instantly mobilize the same debilitating feelings and thoughts. This happened a lot with her husband, with employees and friends. It was for her part of many broken relationships and failed business partnerships.

This repetition of reactions learned when you were a helpless little kid happens with everyone. Most people can remember the incident or incidents. Some can't. But as with Mary, we spend our lives repeating what happened in that incident, trying to complete or finish it in a way where we are finally able to speak our minds and hold our own as an adult.

I said this to Mary until she saw that her feelings and thoughts from that incident were the same ones as when her boss made crazy demands with no recourse. And she saw that until she could make those automatic feelings and thoughts disappear, she was stuck with them forever.

I told her that there is a fine way to deal with this and she could make her upsets disappear if she would follow a simple practice. All she had to do was practice it There was nothing to understand. I told her she could recover her freedom in three seconds if she would do the following and keep doing it.

She tried it and it worked.

When she got upset, she would:

1. Take three seconds only.
2. Not talk
3. Not act
4. Feel her feelings.

Don't name the feelings as she sensed them.

Just feel them, without thought.

Let them move through her body.

Not think.

She practiced this three second activity often when employees brought her bad news and when she worried about currently poor sales hurting her career..

In her own words, "I kept getting better and better at it. Surprisingly, after three seconds the bad feelings lost their grip on me. I got present and became suddenly sane. It seemed that my upset feelings really did move in my body and then disappear. Some times were harder than others, but in each case my response was then considered, centered and a reflection of me at my best and not just a stressed reaction."

The point is that in three seconds, you can release upsets, stop grasping, move on quickly and make wise choices successfully.

Acknowledgment

The ideas and practice discussed this article come from Zoe Marae, a brilliant and effective counselor and teacher in Concord, Massachusetts. She is a self described "map maker" whose diagram of your life lets you make wise choices, and come to know the freedom of your own free will.