

## **What to do when things are not the way you want them to be!**

Most of us will experience many times when we just don't like what's happening to us. Here is a solid approach on how we might respond to such a situation.

1. Start with what is bothering you the most, what is currently getting you down.
2. Then ask yourself, "is this something that I am doing that bothers me?" or "is it something that someone else is doing that is the problem?"
3. If it is something that you are doing, then it involves learning how to make changes to your own behaviour, which is, of course, easier said than done. But the task is one that is clear...learn how to change your own habits and attitudes.
4. There are many ways of going about this. You can study what we know about how to accomplish such change by taking courses, by reading about it or listening to podcasts, by watching YouTube videos or perhaps by working with a professional who can provide assistance.
5. If you are not successful, then you have another choice...accept the situation, at least for now, and learn to live with it. You can return and try to make changes at another time, so it does not mean giving up.
6. If the problem you face involves another person or persons, then you are faced with a different agenda and that is how to influence others and get them to change their behaviour. Again, not an easy task but one that is worth the effort. The same suggestions regarding how to learn about changing your own behaviour apply to changing others' behaviour...see #4 above.
7. And once again, if you are not successful at making the other change, either you make change to the situation, for example end the relationship, or you are faced with accepting that it is what it is and allow it to be, at least for the current time.

So, some of you might recognize this approach as an expansion on the old advice to "change what can and should be changed or accept what cannot be changed." In our culture we often pick up the sense that things must go our way and if they do not, we deserve to be upset and to rant and rave about it. A more helpful approach might be to accept the situation, and even accept our frustration, anger, sadness, etc. Perhaps see it as part of life.

Another way of looking at this approach is to think about three categories of a situation that you want to change:

- a) one that can be changed directly, which is primarily one that involves one's own behaviour.

- b) one that can only be changed through indirect control, mostly through the persuasion of others.
- c) and finally, the situation over which we have no control.

We all realize that much of our life is a result of our choices, but I'm not sure that we are aware of how many choices we make unconsciously. And even before we decide on a choice, we are often unaware of the alternatives available to us. And also, that not making a choice is a choice. My solution to this is to practice mindfulness.

Of course, this article may not be helpful to everyone, but the approach has certainly been helpful to many people. The acceptance part of the approach is probably the most important, and one means of achieving it is via mindfulness practice, which is a separate but related topic that I will write about on another occasion.

I would close by acknowledging my many mentors and teachers, and prominent among them was Steven Covey, whom I met in the late sixties or early seventies, prior to his book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People". He was a fine man and a wonderful teacher, and he was considerably influential on my learning and on the material in this article.

If you would like some professional help with your efforts, please feel free to call me or send an email and we can arrange a chat. I am not continuing my coaching practice for the income, but I have found that my clients put more effort into their work on change if they have invested in themselves. I am prepared to work on a "sliding-scale payment" basis according to one's ability to pay.

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