

Be (At Least) Better Than Your Bad Days

Bad days make you a worse person.

You know what I'm talking about. When things go wrong, it's very easy for them to become worse. You get more irritable. You have lower impulse control. You do things you regret. And then you judge yourself.

If you're particularly self-improvement oriented, this can be hard. You're always comparing yourself to how you did at your best. If you are not constantly improving, you feel shame. What's more, you feel fear that you're "slipping."

When a bad day hits, slipping is going to happen. Unfortunately, measuring yourself and finding yourself wanting when you're already having a bad day can make your slide even worse.

So here's what you've got to realize:

1. You are going to have bad days. They're part of what make up even the best lives. They come with the territory (they even have a lot to teach you).
2. When those bad days come, you don't have to be topping your best self's performance.

If you know #1, #2 becomes easier to accept. You can be forgiving realistic about how much you can turn around on a bad day. You can be forgiving of your fall, because it is not a defeat or a life sentence to mediocrity.

All you have to do is be (at least) better than your bad day. Be better than what a bad day would turn most people into. Be better than what you were on the last time you had a bad day – just a bit more forgiving, a bit more self-controlled, a bit more courageous. This is how the progress will come, not from judging yourself against your ideal-on-a-best-day self.

When the bad days come, focus on that. Then just ride out the waves, get some rest, and prepare to climb back out of the surf and off the rocks the next morning.