

# The Main Reason Changing Your Life is Tough

Many of us have things we'd like to change: our exercise and diet habits, procrastination and productivity habits, patience and mindfulness habits, quitting bad habits, decluttering and finances, reading and learning and doing all the things we want to do in life.

But very often we fall short of our hopes.

What's the problem? Why do we struggle with these changes?

There are lots of reasons, some of them external ... but the main reason that it's difficult to stick to these changes is actually internal.

**The main reason changing our lives is hard: we get in our own way.**

How? Our thinking is the problem. See if you've done any of these:

- You mess up or procrastinate on your habit changes, and then are harsh or critical on yourself.
- It's time to do what you set out to do, but then you put it off and look for something easier. You go to distractions.
- You are doing something uncomfortable but then look for a way out, tell yourself you can't do it.
- When you're doing something hard, you stress out about it, setting unreasonable expectations and agonizing about whether you can do it.
- You fantasize about how this will turn out when you meet your goal, but then worry and stress out about whether you will hit that goal.
- You feel bad about yourself, doubt yourself, beat yourself up ... and this prevents you from even taking action.

I think most of us have done these at some time or another, often without even being aware of it. We get in our own way, make things more difficult than they already are.

## Why We Get in Our Own Way

Why do we do this, if we're just making things harder? These are old patterns, built up over the years, that are coping mechanisms for dealing with difficulty.

The reasons we go to the patterns mentioned above:

- We have lots of uncertainty or discomfort about the task or project, so we look for a way out, and start to rationalize and look for something easier.

- We create high expectations (our goals, ideals, fantasies) and then fear not meeting those expectations (more uncertainty).
- We don't believe in ourselves because we doubt whether we're good enough to do it (uncertainty about ourselves).
- Being harsh on ourselves for procrastinating or messing up is a way to deal with the uncertainty that arises when we do these things.

So **some kind of uncertainty arises**: about ourselves, about how we just procrastinated, about how this project will go, about how to go about doing this task, about whether we'll meet our goal.

Then **we react to this uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty by being reactive**: by being critical of ourselves, stressing out about it, procrastinating and seeking distraction, rationalizing why we should quit. These are old patterns, how we cope with the discomfort of uncertainty.

It doesn't feel good to take these actions, but it's a natural reaction to the scary feelings of uncertainty. There's more comfort and certainty in our distractions, running away, self-criticism, harshness, stories about not being able to do this.

The discomfort of uncertainty is what we want to get away from. **We get in our own way by trying to get away from feelings of uncertainty.**

## Getting Out of Our Own Way

So how do we stop getting in our own way?

By getting *out* of our way.

When we notice that we're procrastinating, seeking distraction, being harsh or critical, rationalizing quitting or putting something off, stressing out about not being able to do something ... we should pause. Just notice what we're doing.

Then think about how we're just making things harder. We can make things more effortless by not reacting to the uncertainty.

Instead, notice the feeling of uncertainty in your body. See that it's there and that you want to get away from it or get control of it. Stay with it and see that it's just a feeling, nothing to panic about.

In fact, by practicing the mindfulness of staying with discomfort and uncertainty, we can *learn to be comfortable with uncertainty*.

As we do this, we can just turn back to the task and act. Just simply be with the task, and

just take action. Just do.

If we're procrastinating with a writing task, we can just stop running and instead allow ourselves to feel the uncertainty. Then just start writing, without worrying about running from uncertainty.

If we are beating ourselves up because we haven't done a good job sticking to a plan, we can notice that we're being harsh, and instead allow ourselves to feel the uncertainty about ourselves. Then just start again on the plan, letting go of what happened and starting afresh without stress.

If we are stressing out about not meeting a goal or expectation, we can notice that we have uncertainty about this goal, and just stay with it. Then just take action on the goal without worrying about the expectation.

Notice the uncertainty and our desire to run. Stay with it and don't run. Then act, with gratitude and a smile. We don't have to get in our way, things can be no big deal.

## My Dealing with Struggles Course

If you'd like help with getting out of your own way, I've just launched a new video course called **Dealing with Struggles**, and I invite you to join me for four weeks.

It's two video lessons a week, and mindfulness exercises to practice with each lesson. You'll also be able to ask me questions that I'll answer in videos and articles, and discuss the lessons and your struggles with other participants in a Facebook discussion group.

In addition, I'm offering **five bonus ebooks** that I've written:

1. Beginner's Guide to Mindfulness
2. Essential Zen Habits
3. Little Book of Contentment
4. The One Skill – How Mastering the Art of Letting Go Will Change Your Life
5. Focus: A Simplicity Manifesto in the Age of Distraction

I hope you'll join me.

Check Out the Course