

# Starting, Over and Over Again

There's a hope that when we start creating a new habit that we'll master it and never have to worry about it again, or when we start a new project that it'll go perfectly.

Unfortunately, life never goes according to our plans. We travel, and eating and exercise habits go out the door. We get sick, and our meditation habit falls off. We have visitors, and our writing project falls into a deep abyss.

I know from my own experience, and coaching thousands of others, that habits and projects are a messy affair. We get good at building and maintaining 5-6 habits, or we get off to an amazing start with a new project, and then everything falls apart when our lives get disrupted. And this becomes a huge problem — we get discouraged!

But what if the disruption and falling off isn't the problem? **What if the problem is our hope that we'll never have to get disrupted, that things will always go perfectly?**

This hope is, of course, greatly misguided. Things don't ever go smoothly, progress is never linear, and we'll *always* get disrupted. It would be best to give up that hope and instead deal with the reality of our lives.

What we need to do is get good at starting, then starting again. And again. This is an incredible skill that becomes a superpower when everyone else is wringing their hands about how much they suck at life, how difficult things are, how everything has fallen apart. Instead, we just focus on starting again and let go of all the stress.

## The Skill of Starting

The first skill, of course, is starting in the first place. Lots of people never do this, procrastinating, saying they'll start tomorrow (I'm not judging, this is very human). So just starting at all is an incredible step.

The skill isn't that hard, and with practice, you can get good at starting:

1. Take the tiniest step to get started. Any movement at all.
2. Commit yourself to continuing that tiny step every day. Get accountability if you need it, and set up reminders so you don't forget.
3. Keep taking tiny steps, creating a good feeling about this endeavor and about yourself. This good feeling is a powerful thing.

When you notice yourself pushing it off, delaying the start, rationalizing why you can start "in a few minutes" ... shake that off. Just take the first step. After that step, the other steps

are a lot easier.

## The Super Skill of Starting Again

OK, great, but what about when you get disrupted? Not a problem.

Most of us have a process, when we get disrupted, that looks like this: we mess up, we curse ourselves, we feel bad about it, we stress out about why our lives are a mess or we are so horrible at this, and then we let all of that stop us from continuing. Or some version of those elements.

But that's a harmful method. Instead, if we could learn a less stressful, more helpful method, it could change everything. All of a sudden, falling off a habit or a project would be no problem at all.

Here's the method I recommend:

1. When you get disrupted, notice this and notice any tendency to be harsh with yourself about it, or resentful towards life or other people about the disruption.
2. Shake off that feeling and instead, tell yourself that life is an uncontrollable river and you just have to flow with it. Instead of wishing the river were a set path, perfectly controlled and manicured, accept that things are constantly changing, never according to plan, and that you just need to adapt to the present circumstance.
3. Shrugging off any past mistakes, focus on starting again. Just like before, focus on taking the tiniest step.
4. If there's any learning to take from the previous attempt, adjust your method to account for whatever obstacles you faced. Sometimes it's just a random life event (a family crisis or a loved one died), so there's no learning to be had — you just have to start again. Other times, there was an obstacle in the way that you can adjust for — mornings are too chaotic for writing your novel, perhaps, so you have to either wake earlier or find a better time. Maybe you need an accountability partner. Maybe you need better reminders so you don't forget. There's always a solution to the common obstacles we face, and someone has figured it out, so do a little research! And then adjust your method, so you are constantly getting better.

It's that simple. Shrug off the disruption, flow with the changing circumstances, and simply start again. Adjust yourself if needed, but don't stress out about having to start again.

Life is a constant stream of disruptions, changes, broken plans and rain delays. Every day, we're just starting again. Every moment is simply a new start. That can be a source of frustration, or delight.