

Be Free (Even When People Disagree)

Character is how you react when someone tells you that your product or philosophy is not for them.

"I see what you're saying, but I don't agree."

"Thanks for the offer, but I'm not interested."

"I appreciate the invitation, but I have other priorities at this time."

When you hear these kinds of statements, do they make you feel defensive? Do they make you feel the need to attack the integrity or intelligence of the person who utters them? Do you find yourself needing to make others look bad in order to feel good about what you love?

If your answer to any of the above questions is "yes", then you may be guilty of trading away your power for the sake of protecting your ego.

Lots of people know how to be cool and confident as long as everyone is nodding their heads in agreement with them. It's a lot harder to be cool and confident when someone listens to you and says "Sorry. I'm not buying anything you're saying."

Lots of people know how to be powerful when they're standing up in the front of a room waxing eloquently about how amazing their products or perspectives are. It's a lot harder to respond powerfully when someone falls asleep or walks out during your sales pitch.

What does it really mean to be confident? What does it really mean to be powerful?

I'll give you at least one condition that's necessary for both: It's the ability to stand in the presence of people who are unimpressed, uninspired, or unconvinced by you without feeling threatened and unsettled by their reaction.

Ram Dass captured it well when he said "you can be right without being righteous about it." That is, you can be free to act on your own knowledge of what's right for you without needing to push your view as if it's the one right way for everyone else. You can be free to get value out of whatever you want without wasting time worrying about those who don't "get it."

If you want something, is it not enough for you to want it? Is it really necessary that others want the same things in order for your desires to be regarded as valid? If you feel something, is it not enough for you to feel it? Is it really going to make things better if you try to debate everyone else into feeling the exact emotions that you feel? If something

works for you, is it not enough that it works for you? Is it really necessary to be angry or condemning towards those who don't find it to be useful?

What difference would it make if the whole world were on your side anyway? If everyone told you that you were right, would that somehow liberate you from the hard work you need to do in order to create the results you want? Will other people's declaration of your rightness magically make your challenges and responsibilities disappear?

I learned a pretty basic distinction from Carl Frederick many years ago: "you can be right or you can get what you want."

Sometimes you don't have to choose between those two things, but sometimes you do.

Sometimes the cost of doing what makes you healthy or happy is accepting the fact that someone else is going to label you as irrational or immature. Sometimes the cost of creating a good life is dealing with the fact that your concept of good is someone else's concept of stupid, silly, or selfish. Our unwillingness to live with this fact holds us back from living authentically more than anything else. We need too many people to like us, respect us, or be approving of us and this traps us in a self-defeating cycle.

My colleague Isaac Morehouse offered the following insight about what it truly means to be a sell out: "It's rarely about the money" he said. "Most people sell their soul for nothing more than not having a stranger get mad at them."

We say we want to be free, but what we really want is to be praised by others for being a great freedom fighter. So when someone threatens to take away that praise, we give away our power by focusing more on their reactions than on our goals. We say we want to make a difference, but what we really want is to be seen as a hero who makes a difference. So when our efforts to help someone are misunderstood, we give away our power by losing our cool and lashing out.

Power is a terrible thing to waste. And there's no quicker way to waste it than by losing your sleep or your sanity over people who don't share your point of view. At some point in your life, you have to take the risk of living as you believe.

"But what if some people find my beliefs to be boring?"

They most certainly will. You will survive. Own your power and move on.

"But what if some people misunderstand me?"

They most certainly will. You will survive. Own your power and move on.

"But what if some people talk about me behind my back?"

They most certainly will. You will survive. Own your power and move on.

“But what if some people get rude, or mean, or unfair about the way they express disagreement?”

They most certainly will. You will survive. Own your power and move on.

Anybody can complain about the negative reactions that others have towards them. It takes great character however, to stay motivated and keep moving in spite of it.

Stop chastising and chasing after everyone who disagrees with you. You have better things to do. Exercise your integrity and refuse to be distracted from what you're committed to creating.

Learn how to be free even when some people don't agree.