Mental Resiliency: Letting Go of the Guilt of Not Getting Things Done

It happens to all of us: we don't get done what we hoped to get done, then we feel stressed or guilty about it.

It's time to let that go, because it's not helping us.

We can build resiliency around this, with a little mental training. And it will help us in magical ways.

Think about whether you've done any of these things:

- Set out to do a certain habit (exercise, eating, meditation, writing) and then didn't do it as planned. You feel guilty, disappointed in yourself, or just stressed.
- Had a list of things you need to get done, and then didn't get most of them done. This just added to your stress.
- Planned to work on a project, or do some writing … and then procrastinated. Again, you felt guilty, disappointed or stressed.
- Hoped to change your patterns, like eating or how you talk to others or how you practice mindfulness. Then everything goes to crap and you feel disappointed.

There are thousands of variations on these, but the main theme is that things didn't go as you'd hoped, and that causes disappointment, guilt, stress.

Here's the thing: there's no problem with the failure to meet our expectations. **The real problem problem is the expectations. And the stress that it causes when we don't meet the expectations**.

In all the examples above, we have this ideal in our heads about how things should be, how we want to be. There's nothing wrong with that — we all do it, all the time — but the problem comes when we hold too tightly to the ideals/expectations. It causes difficulties: we feel let down, we feel anxiety, we feel anger or resentment at ourselves, we become unhappy.

This process of expectations and then not meeting them and then less happiness … it happens over and over, throughout the day. We are constantly doing this to ourselves.

This leads to stress, unhappiness, feeling overwhelmed, feeling like we can't change, a lack of trust in ourselves. This is the real damage. It hurts everything we want to do, making it more likely that we just give up, because we don't trust ourselves.

This is the problem.

The answer is to hold less tightly to our ideals. Become aware of our expectations (of ourselves, but also of others), and cling to them less. Toss them out, if possible, and just see what happens.

And love what actually happens. Love yourself as you are, not as you wish you'd be. Sure, endeavor to do good, out of love for yourself and others … but when you don't meet those expectations, toss them out and love who you are, what you've actually done. Love reality.

Here's the prescription, if you want one:

1. Set an intention to love yourself by exercising, eating better, meditating, being kind to others, doing your work in the world. Set the intention out of love, then do the best you can.
2. Whatever you do, notice your expectations, toss them into the ocean. Love what you actually do, love the moment and yourself no matter what. Let go of the useless guilt and stress and self-criticism.
3. See what held you back from meeting your intention. Make an intentional change in your environment so that it won't keep holding you back. Set another intention, out of love, but don't cling to it. Repeat, over and over.

By letting go of these expectations, by tossing them into the ocean, we can let go of our difficulties and actually be at peace. Actually find contentment. Actually love ourselves. And this leads to a happiness with the world and ourselves that is incredible and that fills the heart up.