Ten Steps of Personal Empowerment

A very effective control over one's life can be obtained from how we feel about ourselves and what kinds of impacts we have on our life. The question is do we feel empowered to effect change or are we simply a puppet controlled by others? Even if we do not possess the power to change a particular situation the way we want we do have the power to influence and contribute to change in the direction we desire. Here are ten ways you can begin experiencing empowerment in your life.

1. Start from where you are and take one step at a time.

   When you think about it, that's the only place you CAN start from, i.e., where you are at this moment. Begin with your present perceptions, understandings, and strengths and move forward, one step at a time. In this world of objectives, goals and plans, we often focus too much on the future with the result being that our ability to concentrate fully on the present is severely compromised. Yet, it is only in the present that we can make a difference.

2. Examine your resistance points--the things that irritate you, limit you, or cause you to react.

   We often resist what we most need to learn. The next time you find yourself resisting new information, a particular situation, or something someone else is saying, ask yourself: What is it that is really bothering me about this? Is there something that I need to learn?

3. Recognize that whatever you are experiencing at this very moment is appropriate for your need to grow.

   Implicit in is the concept that there is a larger plan of which you are an integral part. Until you're willing to acknowledge the possibility that such a plan exists, you will never be able to see it!

4. Stop worrying about whether others are getting theirs!

   It's easy to become preoccupied about what the other person is doing, getting, achieving, etc. This kind of worrying is useless and wastes time and energies that are better spent on yourself.

5. Realize that often times it doesn't matter what happened to you or who did it to you; the only thing that matters is what you do about it.
What happened and who did it to you are in the past. You can't change the past; you can understand what happened to you and why. You can then learn from it to better understand your part and learn not to have it repeat.

6. Learn to refrain from having judgment.

To refrain from judgment is to accept what is. How often in conversations do you find yourself mentally correcting, criticizing, or re-phrasing what is being said? When you do this, you risk missing the real message which may not be in the words themselves. Rather than saying to yourself, "that's inaccurate" or "he/she is incorrect", try accepting the statement as simply a representation of the way that person thinks, feels or what he/she intends to convey. This simple technique can open up a whole realm of hidden meaning, and it enables you to respond more objectively and dispassionately.

7. Learn to operate holistically by opening up to the other possibilities that are always there.

There is always more than one way to solve a problem. You're most likely to get "stuck" when you foreclose your options by setting up conditions, expectations, fears, positions and prejudices.

8. Finish your unfinished business.

Most of us have "unfinished business"--failures, a relationship gone sour, or a good deed left undone. Getting beyond (fully resolving) is not always easy, but there's a three-step process that, if followed, can do wonders for your psyche.

(1) Acknowledge the wrong, mistake, screw-up, etc. to yourself,

(2) Admit it to one other person, preferably the person you've wronged and, in the latter case, apologize and ask simply: "What can I do to make this right with you?" (Sometimes there really isn't much you can do, but the simple act of asking is healing in itself).

(3) Move on. You've admitted your mistake, taken whatever corrective action you could, and now it's time to go forward. This third step takes discipline.

9. When faced with an apparently hopeless situation, take action, any action.

There's something called the "logjam" theory that applies here: when logs in a stream become all jammed up, moving ANY ONE log frees the others
to move, because the act of moving a single piece creates space which in turn allows the other pieces to move. It’s important to recognize that you’re not trying to reach a final solution in a single move; you’re simply taking "one step at a time"

10. Consider the wisdom of doing absolutely nothing!

We each possess an inner wisdom that is always available if we know how to tap into it. We all have a small internal voice that is only audible when we are very quiet. Sometimes our voice is telling us to do nothing and be patient. Doing nothing means exactly that: nothing physically, nothing mentally, nothing at all!

Dr. John Wayne Wilson

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