

## Start Where You Are and Use Your Strengths

A fundamental principle in leadership is to do the things that only you can do, especially as your scope of responsibility increases and you find that the number of things that you're managing and the number of people you're responsible for continues to grow. If you aren't selective with focusing on those most important things that only you can do, you'll find yourself overworked, untrusting of those who work with you or for you, overstressed and burnt out. So, this is an important tenet of leadership and management for organizational growth and progress. But on a personal level, when it comes to growth and improvement, we tend to outsource much of what we should be doing ourselves. Today, I want to dig into that.

Let's rewind to the beginning of the year. Did you have goals for better nutrition? What diet plan did you seek out? Did you have goals for weight loss? What exercise or workout plan, or personal trainer did you look for? Looking to be a better parent or spouse? Over to the self-help section in the bookstore or on Amazon, right? Why do we so often envision our goal, then automatically look for someone else's solution for our situation? There's a disconnect there, and the disconnect is that we don't start with ourselves. We may start with our goals, but we need to consider our own starting point as well, because that will determine your path and approach. And that path or approach is usually not the same as someone else's.

You see, as you think about going beyond simply living a balanced life to one in which you're thriving in every area of your life, it's important to approach growth by focusing on the starting point of where you are, not just focusing on your desire for where you want to be. It's easy to get caught up in thinking that we need to make sweeping changes. A better approach is to start where you are, start with who you are, and make incremental changes that fit you. You can change habits. You can make new habits. Changing who you are is entirely more difficult...arguably impossible. You see, your goals represent who you want to be, but the best way to get there is by improving, not changing, who you are. Personalize your habits to fit you. What do you do well already? What do you struggle with? Recognize those things and simply look to improve. Asking, "how can I grow in this area" is better than the "what should I start or quit" approach. This causes you to start from where you are, vs. trying to be someone you're not. So, choose one or two things that you feel get you closer to being the person you want to be.

There's a quote from the Bhagavad Gita, one of the holy scriptures in Hinduism. One passage from this scripture states, "Far better to live your own path imperfectly than to live another perfectly." I love this. It's a reference to the common disconnect, the difference, and tension between who we are and who we want to be. Between what is, and what we wish will be. And this passage that reminds us to live our own path, to follow our own destiny is a reminder that we're all different and that we can't be someone

else. And when we try to be someone else, we're not playing to our strengths. Oscar Wilde said, "be yourself...everyone else is already taken." When you strive to improve in areas of your life, you'll find that it's easier when you start with who you are and where you are in life. What do you do well? Build on that. What are you no so good at? Perhaps you avoid approaches that involve those things or traits. Ask, "what habit(s) can I change, improve or cut back on," not "what can I start or quit?" This causes you to start from where you are, vs. trying to be someone you're not. In order to actually do this, though, you have to own it and embrace it. It's not enough for you to expect that someone else will give you the answer. We must create our own path by choosing our focus areas and deciding our own next steps. You are the most important person, the one with the biggest impact on your growth journey. It's not your doctor. Not your spouse. Not your trainer or coach. It's you!

So why do we sometimes allow ourselves to fall into the mindset of just going along for the ride? Maybe it's because we don't want to feel responsible in the event we're unsuccessful. But this is your journey...no one else's. Perhaps at times we feel like others are more qualified. And that may be true...professionals are trained in techniques, procedures and the psychology of change and growth. And we need good advice. I know that as a personal trainer and health coach. But here's the deal...nobody knows you better than you! You are perfectly attuned to your preferences, motivators and de-motivators. You know your history, your past attempts, successes and struggles better than anyone. You know your 'why' and that internal driver for change. Professionals may help you to uncover some of that, but it's all inside of you.

So, you have to be an active participant in reaching your goals for self-improvement. How do we do that? By setting your short- and long-term goals. By identifying your obstacles. By taking an active role. When you do this, your planned habits will be more realistic, appealing and fun, all of which are necessary characteristics for consistency. In practice, this looks like you choosing your focus area and not waiting for someone else to tell you where to put your time and effort. What fits within your life and what you can do right now? Get specific. When you're involved, you're bought-in. When you play an active role in planning your growth, acting on your plan and seeing results, your confidence grows and you start to recognize all that you are truly capable of. So, think about what fits within your life and what you can do right now.

Please don't fall into the trap of believing that you're helpless...that you are irrelevant in your path to personal growth. You're not just a person who hopes to realize change. You are more than a product...things don't just happen to you. You are a catalyst and a promotor in your change journey. God has given us strengths and characteristics that make us much more capable than we think we are. 2 Timothy 1:7 states that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love and of self-discipline. So, as you seek growth in different areas of your life, beyond just "making it" to actually thriving in all

aspects of living, consider where you're starting your journey, not just where you expect to end up. And as you do that, recognize that you have strengths that are unique to you, that you can build upon. Make better habits fit your life by leveraging those strengths.

That's all for now. Have a blessed one. Coach T, out.