

TAKE YOUR POWER BACK

By: Stephen Clasper

You may not think of it in these terms, but everyday most of us give away our power to other people without even realizing it. And you have probably learned to do this, just as your parents did and their parents before them.

Guilt, blame, anger, frustration and all the other negative emotions that trip us up represent power that we have given away. Whenever we think, feel or act in a way that's different from how we would like, we have given away our power. If I frown as you're explaining something and you then worry that you've said something silly or something that upset me, you have moved from one feeling state to one less desirable. You have handed me the power to influence your mood. In this simple example, there may be no serious consequences, but that isn't always the case. We use phrases like "he made me so angry". He did no such thing. He may have said or done something that you didn't like, but your response to that is entirely of your own making. You've given him your power.

We've been conditioned by parents, family members and teachers to believe that happiness, success and joy will come only when or if something specific happens. We don't regard it as our birthright, so we leave our power "out there" somewhere, believing we don't deserve happiness or success or we're not good enough. We learn these belief systems in childhood and then go through life looking for people or situations that will confirm them.

If that's the problem, what's the solution? Well, as with everything else that we want to change, the essential starting point is to become aware of what we do to self-sabotage and then become willing to change. Begin by asking yourself what your contribution is to your problem. Once you're aware of that, are you willing to accept the proposition that you may already be perfect and may already have all the resources you need to lead a happy, successful life? Instead of looking "out there" for whatever you think will make you happy, you need to go within.

You may be thinking "that's OK for you because you probably already know how to do all this". Start by reframing or looking at what has just happened from a different perspective. My frowning at you in the example above may simply mean that I have a raging headache or I've just remembered that I left the gas on at home. It may have nothing to do with you. And, so what if it does? Surely, as long as you're satisfied that you've done your best, if I don't like what you just said that's my problem. Too often we react to the other person when there's no need. Take your power back!

Self-acceptance is key and begins with our willingness to forgive ourselves and others. Consider the idea that everyone, in every context and at all times is doing the best they can **with the resources available to them**. Note the bold type here, because your next step is to wonder what those resources might be. In your own case, the resources available to you right now may be the time you have at your disposal, your enthusiasm for whatever you're trying to do or how tired you are. Once you look at your "poor" performance in this new way, you will find yourself feeling more compassionate toward yourself. You may decide to allow more time in future or only

attempt it when you're full of energy. But instead of blaming yourself, you're taking control ready for the next time.

The same proposition applies to how we react to others who are not behaving as we would like. Once we consider what resources might be available to them, we find ourselves being more understanding and less frustrated or angry. Again we are more likely to maintain balance and be the person we would rather be.

Let's consider now our over-use of 'should' and 'ought', words we unconsciously select to meet our need to please someone else or follow someone else's rules passed on to us many years ago. As long as we hold on to words of obligation, we will feel guilt, anger, frustration and be ceding our power 'out there' somewhere. Be aware of using these words and deliberately stop yourself mid-sentence and substitute 'choose'. You will soon notice a resurgence of confidence and purpose as your power comes flooding back.

In short, change how you think and you change the results you get. We worry too much and take ourselves far too seriously. We would do better to just get on with life. To quote GK Chesterton: "Angels fly because they take themselves lightly."

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