

What To Do When Nothing Is Working

By Loretta M. Siani, Ph.D.

Where does one start to succeed when nothing is working? Nothing working = abusive marriage, a series of devastating accidents leaving one partially disabled & unable to work much at all, financial loss from medical bills, roof collapsed on house destroying possessions, friends have been scared off by disabilities I have. No savings, no money, family all recovering from illness (cancer, heart attacks, mental illness) so can't be supportive.

I hope you find some comfort in this response to the above question that you have submitted.

Sometimes things occur in life, divorce, illness, accidents, unemployment, etc. that seem overwhelming and leave us with the feeling that “nothing is working” or that we are victims of circumstances. The truth is we are not “victims” of anything – unless we *think* we are. Our egos would like us to *think* that we are victims and that our problems lie outside of us -- in our circumstances, in other people and beyond our control. But our problems are always *within*.

This is not as depressing as it sounds, because the good news is, if the problem is within, so is the solution. I know from personal experience that all of the wisdom that I have gained in my own life has come from what some would call “negative circumstances”. Looking back I realize that were it not for these “negative circumstances” (my own divorce, the catastrophic illness I suffered, the period of unemployment I went through) I would not have grown as a person. It takes these things in order for us to learn life’s lessons of love and forgiveness. It took me a long time to realize that I actually had chosen each circumstance that seemed to “happen to me.” I did this because some part of me needed to be a “victim” in order to be “right.” But the moment I changed my mind and assumed responsibility for my life, things began to turn around.

Everything happens for a reason. Indeed, everything that happens to us in life is what we have *chosen* to happen. It has been said that each choice we make is a link in the chain of our destiny. These choices are never unconscious. If they were they wouldn’t be a choice. What happens is they *seem* to be unconscious because we make them in an instant and then forget (repress the fact) that we have made them. This effectively renders them unconscious and allows us to act “as if” things are happening to us. As *A Course In Miracles* teaches: “...your plan requires that you must forget you made it, so it seems to be external to your own intent; a happening beyond your state of mind, an outcome with a real effect on you, instead of one effected by yourself.” We create our perception of the circumstances we find ourselves in as defenses against the truth – that we are responsible.

Real healing comes when we recognize that our problem is not that we don't have a job, or that we're sick, or in an "abusive" marriage, etc. etc.. Our problem is our investment in proving that the defense system against the truth that our ego has convinced us of is right. We hide this truth from ourselves because we are afraid to admit that we have done this to ourselves. Our fear then renders our faculty of perception completely unable to see the truth anymore. In Course terminology "Defenses make facts unrecognizable. They aim at doing this, and it is this they do." This causes us to suffer, feel impotent and "stuck."

The truth is all our suffering is merely our *interpretation* -- it is not a fact. Indeed, we suffer in our mind...not in reality. And, no matter how much we kick and scream and deny it, we are totally and completely responsible for the life that we are living. **When it comes right down to it there is no hypnosis, no pill and no magic wand that will change our lives until we decide to change it.** The way to change our lives is to accept responsibility and learn our lessons of love and forgiveness so that we can move on.

Most of us take a long time to do this. Why? -- Again, because we'd rather be *right* than happy. We'd rather hold on to our judgment of others than accept and forgive them. We'd rather stay in an "abusive" relationship than take responsibility for the part we are playing in it. Sometimes we'd rather stay in it because it's easier than leaving. In the same way we'd rather hold on to our perception that things are "not working" in of our life because it's much easier than doing something about it. Or at least we *think* so and so we once again render ourselves "stuck."

Until we learn the lessons that we have chosen for ourselves, we will be held back in the school of life to repeat the same lesson over and over again until we finally "get it". Some people never get it. They'd rather take their misery and their desire to be "right" to the grave with them. Others don't "get it" until they hit rock bottom. Only then are they willing, as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, to take a rigorous "moral inventory" of their lives and finally assume full responsibility.

All of our anger, depression and misery over our circumstances -- no matter what the form the circumstances take -- are attempts to escape responsibility. Sometimes even after we accept responsibility, we go through a period where our ego condemns us for getting ourselves into such a mess to begin with. It holds everything against us to prove to us that we are *bad* and obviously unworthy of success.

Of course this is a lie. You are not bad and you are never unworthy. You are a child of God and you have simply made a mistake. God does not hold grievances against you. You hold them against yourself. God loves you unconditionally. We would all do well to realize that all of our mistakes and all of our miseries are the crucible of our redemption. We are released from them the moment we take responsibility and make another choice. When we do this we awaken to a changed life.

Our power to choose again and change our lives can never be taken from us. Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning* and survivor of the Nazi holocaust tells us that “everything can be taken from us but one thing, the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

There are choices to be made every day and every hour, that determine whether we will continue to experience ourselves as victims suffering through a life that isn’t working, or powerful human beings making the most of our lives as choosing our attitudes and rising above our circumstances. Who we are and who we become is the result of these daily and hourly choices.

Again, I hope you find some comfort in this answer. May you find the power within you to choose again and change your life.