

Taking the Next Step

By Karel Murray, CSP

Excuses. Lots of them.

Not enough time - No money - My health is bad - No energy - I've worked hard - I deserve this - Menopause (a personal favorite)

The use of excuses to stop me from realizing a personal goal is a particular skill of mine. For example, it happens every time I prepare to eat a Chicken Alfredo lunch complete with two breadsticks from the Olive Garden menu. The meal point count is 29. Never mind that my entire daily allowance in Weight Watchers is 27 points. Somewhere from the start of sitting down at the booth and giving my order to the waitress, I have fully determined that I deserved to have this meal because I worked so hard that morning. Then as the day progresses to the evening meal, I indulge in the Ben & Jerry ice cream, since my daily points were already blown, I might as well go big for the day.

Rationalization is such a powerful thing! It is the result of looking at the impact of cause versus effect and then making the emotional decision which is in direct conflict with the rational one. My mother used to marvel at my thought process and now my husband continues to be speechless at the choices I make. His danger zone is acute when I complain about the weight I'm carrying while eating a movie theatre hot dog and popcorn and then have the audacity to say, "I wish I could take off some of this weight!" Poor man – his face registers a look of complete dismay as he slowly backs away from the conversation or adroitly changes the subject to the weather.

In December 2011, I had surgery on my right retina and the recovery required that I had to lay face down for 95% of my day for three weeks. During this period of being trapped face down, I had time away from distractions and a list of "to dos" started to surface. Originally, I thought I would have to be tranquilized after a couple days since my energy level is so high, but to my surprise, I created a routine and then mentally adjusted my attitude to align with the restrictions. In short, I emotionally overrode my anxiety by "giving in" to the situation and doing what needed to be done.

I learned I had self-control and that I could do what I set my mind to do - that rationalization couldn't fix the situation I was in. If I wanted to see again out of my right eye, I had to adhere to the recovery schedule and process.

I learned of the power of self-talk and that I could apply those positive messages to other areas of my life. I discovered that if I wanted to lose weight, all I had to do is make better choices and keep the end result in mind.

Thus the journey began in January. One simple project – me – was assigned as my priority for the year. I have at least thirty more years in front of me and how I will live them are entirely up to me. How much of me I'll carry around for those years is also within my control. And maybe, just

maybe, my husband will grin at me and give me the thumbs up for a job well done when I back away from the concession stand empty handed.

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