



Live Life Like You Mean It

by Paul Vitale

With each morning arrives a new day and the prospect of pursuing as much from life as it truly offers. *Live life like you mean it, or get out of the way.* This is an age-old adage I've heard throughout time; however, quite often it seems difficult to comprehend. We create exciting plans, set fresh goals, make new resolutions, and then somewhere along the line, we forget what we originally set out to accomplish. I would venture to say this pattern has eluded very few. Whether it comes from being passive, unmotivated, too busy or just plain lazy, the end result is consistent—good intentions lacking effective follow through.

I have the tendency to believe that on some days, we make life a little more difficult than it is intended to be. Three words that might help: *Keep Life Simple.* Make a plan and work the plan, then move on to the next task at hand. I realize this motto sounds extremely uncomplicated, but it is supposed to. Keeping life simple might seem like wishful thinking to some; however, each of us is in control of our actions and reactions during all situations encountered. If we choose to begin a task, it is up to us to either complete it or desert it. At the end of the day, it is our life to live—with or without the results planned for.

Not long ago, as I was writing an article about weight loss and thinking about the important steps to take in order to reach and maintain an ideal weight, I was once again reminded just how important a positive attitude is. We've heard it our entire lives...from parents, teachers and presidents such as Thomas Jefferson, "Nothing on earth can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong attitude." Like any other goal we set in life, with the right state of mind, anything is possible.

Many times, though, it is easy to get frustrated hearing all about having an optimistic attitude. Often this frustration is born from the fact that our attitude is not necessarily good or bad, it's somewhere in the middle. We have to take the leap and do our best to focus on thinking positively; be aware, though, at times this does not come easily. Disasters, large and small, real and imagined, happen daily. We live in a world where computers crash, you get laid off or you come home to find a letter from the IRS informing you that you are being audited. Natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes affect us globally, as well as on our home turf. On days

like these, we are more inclined to react negatively than positively. And that is understandable.

On the flip side—if you get a raise, your boss finally okays that two-week vacation or you come home to find a letter from your mortgage company telling you of an error in your favor, you are probably going to have a very upbeat attitude.

Examples such as these illustrate how we sometimes let external circumstances dictate our internal response. Obviously, many times events are completely out of our control; however, the way we respond is always something we have the ability to be in command of—our internal response is always our own.

Whatever your goal may be, remember that in all areas of life, we simply have to make a choice. Either we can flow with the current, or rise above it. I can personally guarantee that when you rise above it, you will see positive changes happening. You have the power within you to do whatever you set your mind on doing. Remember that success leads to success and that the little successes, albeit often accompanied by a minor setback or two, will always add up to big accomplishments.

When we make the choices to have a positive attitude and control the way we respond to expected or unexpected challenges, we have the chance to view circumstances such as change in a manner that is beneficial to us, regardless of whether we desire that adjustment.

Life shows us that change is inevitable. We have a choice to either embrace it or fight it. Larry Cole, Ph.D., author of the book, "Frustration Is Your Organization's Best Friend," shares insight on change that makes good sense. He writes, "It's difficult to remember that frustration, fear and confusion are your friends while you are being bruised by the process of change. But when you do remember, they become powerful allies." (1996, pg. 25) Change does produce a considerable amount of fear of the unknown as well as confusion; however, in order to escape mediocrity, change is inevitable.

My grandmother once told me a story about a woman who always cut off the ends of the ham before placing it in the oven to bake. She had done this for years. One day, her husband asked her why she prepared the ham that particular way. The woman thought for a moment and

then she replied that this was the way she had been taught by her mother.

This began to puzzle her, so she called her mother and asked why she always cut off the ends of the ham before baking it. The mother replied that was how her mother had always done it. More curious still, the woman then called her grandmother to inquire about the method. When she asked why the whole family did this, the grandmother responded with laughter. She informed her granddaughter that the only reason she always cut the ends off of the ham was because their oven was so small, the only pan that fit was not large enough to hold the whole ham!

Oftentimes, situations and circumstances never change simply because the past won't allow it. Or will it? As overwhelming as change can be, it is important to grasp the fact that not all change is bad. In fact, it can be quite rewarding. We, as human beings, have a tendency to live in a comfort zone and therefore develop all sorts of habits for different reasons. Thus, we often have a difficult time when the need for change arises.

The choice, ability and energy to transform any aspect of your life lie completely on your shoulders. Being satisfied or not is up to you.



Recognizing the need to make an adjustment and committing to do so hinge on having the discipline and patience to know which direction you are traveling and when you plan to arrive. Change does not happen overnight but it does happen, and the sense of accomplishment—big or small—that follows eliminates the frustration, fear and confusion. Where would we be without change and those who are willing to stand behind it?

None of us knows the exact number of days that will comprise our life; however, we do know that we can never reclaim our days lived. There is no better moment than now to forge ahead with passion and excitement and begin what we have only dreamed to see completed. This is our day to live the way we choose, embracing needed change, possessing the right mental attitude and creating a world that will define our legacy.

Remember, each day offers a new challenge and a new opportunity. Keep life simple and live life like you mean it...or get out of the way and simply watch as it passes you by. Whichever you decide, it's your choice to make. Why not answer the call of opportunity today, and together let's make a difference not only to ourselves, but to those who surround us.

REFERENCE

Cole, L. (1996). Frustration is Your Organization's Best Friend. Conway: LifeSkills.

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