

Purposeful Habits

There has been a lot of talk recently about living your life “on purpose”. What does this mean exactly? Well, it could mean that your actions are directed toward a particular goal or purpose. It could also mean that you are living your life under your terms, not someone else’s rules or belief systems. It also could mean that your actions reflect the true meaning or purpose of your particular life. It could mean all of these things or even other interpretations. Anyway you look at it you can’t deny that reciting this phrase: “Living my life on purpose” evokes a feeling of empowerment, fulfillment, or even freedom. It may also feel like an impossibility, and you wonder why you should even try. Like any goal that seems near impossible to attain, we start on the path with small steps.

- ✓ The first step is to accept your life as it is so far including the good, the not so good, your mistakes and your successes. You are where you areperiod. Take a deep breath and express your *glad-itude* for your life up to this point.
- ✓ Next, start to observe the things in your life that are “habits”. These are thoughts, feelings or actions (sometimes unconscious) that you repeat over and over that may or may not lead you in the direction you want. As you go through your day stop every few hours and ask yourself, “Why did I just do/think/feel that?” “Is this how I want to act/think/feel?” “Is this something I want to repeat in the future?” *Example: I reacted defensively when my boss criticized my work.*
- ✓ When you recognize a habit that is not effective for you, consider the possible reasons why you have developed this pattern. It is not always necessary to delve very deep into why you have this pattern or program. Just like that outdated computer program, your habit may have been effective at one time, but it may not be anymore. *Example: Expression of anger was modeled by my father and encouraged by others who did what he wanted.*
- ✓ Now imagine how you would like to change this pattern to be more effective for you. What pattern would you like to have instead? *Example: I want to calmly respond to my boss in a way that effectively communicates my perspective.*
- ✓ Lastly, try out your new behavior/thought/action in an upcoming situation. If it works, try it again in another situation. Soon you will have “installed” a new program. *Example: Next week at my annual performance review, I will calmly explain my accomplishments and graciously listen to my boss’s feedback.*

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