

Habits of Excellence

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit."
~Aristotle, Greek Philosopher (384 BC-322 BC)

Aristotle made an important distinction between an act of excellence and a habit of excellence. Most of us have performed an act of excellence in our life, even multiple acts of excellence. Excellence, as defined by Aristotle, however, means you are excellent in your habits and character. Acts of excellence flow out of character. Another definition for excellent habits performed consistently is integrity.

Our habits are the little actions we perform every moment, every day, in between the big actions that occur less frequently. Though many of these aren't necessarily bad habits, they may not be "excellent habits" either. In order to perform at your highest level of performance, in your chosen field, you must stay focused on developing yourself into a person of character. There are three habits essential to this development: discipline, drive, and determination.

When it comes to habits, the best approach is not to focus on eliminating unwanted behaviors but to replace them with new habits and drown out the old. For example, when trying to eliminate the bad behavior of interrupting, a new character habit of listening for understanding or empathy must be developed in its place. A void or vacuum cannot exist, something must fill it. Have an attitude of identifying the behavior and having the discipline to replace it with a habit of excellence.

Our habits define us: Excellent character habits define a solid character. I challenge you to begin

developing into habits the character traits that undergird this process: discipline, drive, and determination. Over the next three issues of *The Journal* I am going to address the development of these three habits.

We all can grow through a disciplined approach to learning and self-mastery. But we can grow even stronger by driving passionately toward our targets, facing hard challenges, and never quitting. Above all, we grow the most through quiet determination and perseverance, expressed through a commitment to developing habits of excellence. Do today what others won't, so tomorrow you can do what others can't.

The pursuit of excellent habits is a lifetime journey. On this journey, we must accept the fact that we will never reach perfection but that should not be an excuse for not seeking to be perfect. I am closing with one of my favorite quotes by Martin Luther;

This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not finished but it is going on. This is not the end but it is the road; all does not yet dream in glory but all is being purified.

~WGG