

Self-Discipline

We should every night call ourselves to an account. What infirmity have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abort of themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift. ~Seneca, 1st Century Roman Stoic Philosopher

Last month we talked about creating habits of excellence and how we grow through a disciplined approach to learning, training, and self-mastery. Discipline is the spark that ignites the fire of a habit. The fire must be lit daily, and discipline provides the original source energy. The word discipline literally means to be a disciple to a higher purpose. That purpose being to become a person of virtue and integrity, one who possesses habits of excellence. Habits of excellence, or right character, produce right behavior.

Men and women, by their nature, tend toward not being self-disciplined. Instead our propensity is to act in our own self-interest, seeking to do what makes us feel good and brings us pleasure, rather than what is right. Thus, the undisciplined person is a slave to his or her own weaknesses and passions. Freedom is born out of self-discipline. No individual, no nation can achieve or maintain liberty without self-control. We have two choices: freedom or bondage. How we choose has everything to do with the kind of leader, spouse, parent, and friend we will become. And, collectively, what kind of organization we work in or country we live in.

Teddy Roosevelt once said: With self-discipline almost anything is possible. Thus, Roosevelt echoes the thoughts of Seneca, examine yourself daily, reinforce the virtues you are learning, and remove the weaknesses and bad habits. What are some tools we can employ in developing self-discipline?

- Set clear goals and then work toward them every day. This will do more to assure your success than any other factor.
- Commitment to these goals. Remove all excuses.
- Subordinate impulse to a value. Never react in emotion but put time in between a situation and your response.
- Feelings have nothing to do with actions.
- Focus. Remove temptations and distractions.
- Finish what you start.
- Manage your time. Focus on the important and not the urgent.
- Forgive yourself. You will inevitably fail in your efforts. When you do, forgive yourself, move on and resume your efforts. Don't give up. You aren't perfect.
- Congratulate yourself on successes. Reinforce positive behavior.

Habits of excellence are developed through a lot of hard work. Discipline, drive, and determination are themselves habits and form the foundation for developing yourself into a person of virtue. Virtue means excellent habits. And, excellent habits produce excellent behavior, which directly impacts the results you produce and your influence with others.

~WGG