

What are You Choosing for Yourself?
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There are very few choices in life that are outside of our control. We may often blame others for our particular life situation without examining the personal choices that we have made that have brought us to where we are today. When we begin to see that we indeed are responsible for our life choices and accept responsibility for these choices, painful as this may be, we will start to feel empowered.

You have more control over your life than you think. If you were able to choose a path that led you in a negative direction, you also have the power to choose a path that will lead you to a more positive place.

If you know that you can create your own misery, it stands to reason that you can create your own joy. Susan Jeffers

It is easy to fall into the trap of playing 'victim'. There are those who blame others for everything that happens to them and always have excuses for their own behavior. They expect others to bale them out of their problems and refuse to see that their lives are based upon the choices they have made. Playing victim also allows one to escape accountability. This is the definite payoff for staying in this mode. And it is this attitude of "It's not my problem; everyone's out to get me," that pervades our current culture.

Very few people today own up and take responsibility for their decisions and choices. Listen to young children, "I didn't do it. It's not my fault." We need to help children at a young age to realize that they are responsible for their choices when they decide to go against a family or school rule. When your children find themselves in trouble from making bad choices, ask them if they think they made a good choice. Rather than scolding them over and over, talk about the choice they made. Help them to see that they chose the action that resulted in a negative consequence. Children need to realize that when you choose the behavior you are also choosing the consequence. Too many young people today are avoiding accountability. Parents who do not help their children take ownership for their actions and who encourage them to make excuses and blame others for their behavior, do their children no favor. Young people begin to believe that the whole world is against them, that nothing is of their doing, and that entitlement without responsibility is their right. Early lessons in accountability will produce responsible adults in the future. What ever happened to raising children of character?

We live in a culture of unaccountability. There is constant denial of individual behavior all around us. Look at some of our leaders, politicians, and corporate directors. They are usually trying to find some other person, committee, circumstances, or department to point the finger at, and they get very skilled at doing this. Think about all the dollars spent on inquiries to investigate various scandals when all it would take would be for one or two honest and responsible people to admit they made a bad choice. Integrity is rare. It is only a very few who immediately own up to their negative behavior and admit their mistakes.

To blame is much easier than to choose to change. William Glasser

Our life situations are created by our own PERSONAL CHOICES. There are very few things that are really beyond our control in life. We have no control over who our parents are, our race, our country of origin or our original sex determination and physical attributes at birth, as well as some unexpected illness, accidents and disability. That's about it. Everything else is within our control. We can choose our friends, spouse, job, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values, knowledge, wellness plan and problem solving skills. We are totally responsible for the life we are living now. It has, however, become common practice to blame others rather than look at what decisions and choices we have made that have led us to where we are. When we blame any outside force for any of our life experiences we are definitely giving away the power to take charge of our own lives. We become paralyzed to act on our own behalf. Blaming others for our situation keeps us helpless and will only keep our focus on the past, drain our energy and prevent us from taking new action for the future.

We are a product of our choices, not of our circumstances. Many people just drift along and never give much thought to the choices they are making in life. They truly can't understand how their life got to this point. Until we become aware that our everyday choices are constantly taking us in a certain direction, we will never understand how we got there. Awareness of what we are choosing for ourselves, or **not** choosing, since not choosing is still a choice, on a daily basis is key. No one else is in control of your life decisions but **you**.

Look back at your life over the decades.

- What positive choices have you made in life that are bringing you true joy and fulfillment now?
- What choices have you made in life that were not really in your best interest?
- Did you learn from these poor choices or are you still making them?
- Are you expecting different outcomes while you are still making bad choices?
- Do you look for the blessing and opportunity in adversity?

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten. Anthony Robbins

When you really start to realize that you do have choices and that it is only YOU who can make new choices, you will begin to feel very empowered. When you look back at some of your previous choices, although they may not have been the best choice, you must remember that that particular choice might have been the best you could have done given the person you were at that time. We will make many mistakes in life, but we need to look at these as part of a whole journey of lifelong learning. It is through our mistakes that we grow. What really is important is that you acknowledge that you made the choice. Only then can you begin to review its impact on your life. It may be time then for you to look at other options. **Yes you do have them.** It is up to you to exercise your personal power and move forward with them. This requires that you learn to overcome old fears, guilt and the need for someone else's approval. When you are convinced that you are in charge of your life and begin to reflect on new options, then you can start to work on removing the barriers that are interfering with your action plan. When we take full responsibility for our life situation, we will stop seeing ourselves as victims and begin to get excited about all the future possibilities. And that's a good thing. Start enjoying your new personal power.

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