

 Life is full of choices. Frost had to choose between the road less traveled and the road traveled. Neo had to choose between the red pill and the blue pill. Mere mortals like myself have to choose between the right and left fork in the road ahead. Every day presents us with choices and decisions that need to be made. And in the words of Rush, even if you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice. With each choice and decision comes an outcome, a ramification of some form or another - many of which will make us happy, and many of which will make us sad. Choices, choices, and more choices. But we're then faced with another choice, and that's where the real challenge is found.

The first decision is tough enough. The outcome of our choice becomes readily apparent, and some outcomes have far greater impact than others. My choice of dinner options may not be a game changer, but my choice of words in a discussion might change my life. Some ramifications are significant, and others are relatively insignificant in life's big scheme.

Either way, what we do with that choice and its outcome can generate a myriad of responses, some healthy and others not. This becomes all the more difficult when the initial choice(s) involve emotion, especially in difficult scenarios that involve people you care about or depend upon. We then have another choice, and that lies in how we respond to the outcome of or response to our initial choice. You can choose to own your own stuff and be accountable for your decisions - you made them, and the outcome is yours and yours alone. However, you can also choose to lay blame on someone else's words or actions - their response - even though the initial choice was yours.

We've all heard the phrase "you made me feel this way" or something similar, and I would suggest that this is a fallacy of sorts. Nobody makes you feel a certain way. Nothing forces you to respond a certain way. A trigger is yours, not the fault of the world around you. Accountability for our choices, especially within ourselves, can be a tough pill to swallow at times. Blame and guilt and shame are just a facade behind which we can hide, a means not to take ownership of my own choices and responses. And while it abdicates our self-responsibility quite nicely, it ultimately limits our growth.

But the beauty of it all is that we also possess the capacity to be responsible for our choices, including our responses, or as Covey noted, our "response-ability". Our internal feelings may be disrupted or challenged or hurt, but those are OUR feelings. I can choose to respond to something in any way that I desire - that's one of the great things about being human. We have a choice in paths, and we have a choice in how we respond to the outcomes of and responses to those choices.

Taking ownership of and embracing your contribution to an outcome - a response to a choice - is liberating. It accepts responsibility and expresses emotional investment and perhaps even vulnerability. It almost invariably promotes a healthier internal milieu as well as fostering dialogue. In the end, owning our choices, and being responsible for those choices, creates a much better world for everyone.

Life is full of choices - embrace them all.

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