

Our Greatest Challenge Is Ourselves | Allan Besselink

Written by Allan Besselink
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Life provides us with a myriad of choices and interactions on a daily basis. While we rumble along on our daily journey, we carry with us our hopes, our dreams, our perceptions, and our very own map of reality.

Each and every day, our greatest challenge isn't the difficult patient, or the perplexing business project, or even the difficulties we may face with a spouse, friend, or family member. Those are minor details in the grand scheme of things.

Our greatest challenge is ourselves.

Much as we can be our own saving grace, we can be our own worst enemy as well.

We all select "data" that supports our beliefs or our side of the debate. We select "evidence" based on that which fits our current map of reality. In the end, it is pretty easy for all of us to become self-fulfilling (or self-limiting) prophecies. Case in point: if you are a Republican, you surround yourself with FOX News; if you are a Democrat, you find yourself immersed in MSNBC. Why? The data that is readily available supports your belief systems.

We've all experienced a discussion or debate that triggers some deep-seated emotional response. It could be about politics, or religion, or training methods, or treatment approaches. It doesn't matter what the topic is because they all have the potential to make us uncomfortable if our beliefs and comfort zone are broached. More often than not, it's not the words of the other person that cut deep – it is the broaching of our own comfort zones that creates the discomfort.

Our greatest self-limiter is the inability to challenge our own beliefs. The internal tension can stem from the voice within us that says “that’s just the way I am – I can’t change” or the same voice that screams “no, no, I refuse to believe it”. Sometimes when we look in the mirror, we don’t like what we see. It happens every day, day in and day out.

The solution is simple, yet demanding of extreme vigilance. Each and every step along the path to personal transformation and growth demands presence in the moment at hand. It requires self awareness of when the boundaries of our comfort zone are being pushed and when our belief defenses are rising. We can then choose our responses and actions wisely.

People rarely want to willingly put themselves in a position of discomfort, so they choose to maintain their own personal status quo. But it really is alright to be uncomfortable and to accept that for what it is. As a matter of fact, that discomfort actually tells us that we are where we really should be.

That’s not to say that life is all about remaining in a limbo-state of discomfort. Far from it. But there is an inherent beauty and peace to understanding that if you can stay present, if you can reflect on the guttural response before you open your mouth or put pen to paper, you then have the potential to be one step closer to true understanding – of yourself, and of others. With every great challenge comes even greater reward.

Each time this happens, we are provided with the opportunity for growth and a launching pad for greatness. But it is not an easy task. It isn’t easy pushing the envelope of your thinking. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it.

What a wonderfully liberating world that would be.

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