

Welcome to Quiet Courage – October 2009

The online newsletter helping you to live your life from a place of courage, intention and gratitude from Catalyst for Courage and Mary Ann Bailey, MC.

Feature Article:

Practice Makes Perfect: Do You Know What You're Practicing?

Practice makes perfect. How many times have you heard that phrase in your life? From the time we were small children trying to learn how to play the piano, throw a baseball, or ride a bicycle we have heard that if we practice long enough and hard enough we will be successful at achieving our goal.

I remember when I was about 5 years old trying to learn how to stand on my head. I would practice for hours until one day, to the horror of my mother, I mastered the feat while she was shopping in very upscale women's clothing store.

When she came out of the dressing room, there I was in the middle of the store standing on my head with dress hanging down, my legs were straight in the air and my Carter's underwear in plain sight for everyone to see. Although my mother was less than thrilled at my achievement, I was ecstatic and had proven to myself that practice actually does pay off.

My success with standing on my head is an example of very conscious and intentional practicing. It is the kind of practice that we put forth when we want to master a specific skill or behavior. We have a goal, we know what the end point to looks like, and we work hard to achieve that objective.

Yet, each of us has a whole other set of skills and behaviors that we have perfected that we may not be totally aware of. These are habits and actions that, through unconscious repetition, have become ingrained in our way of being. For example, one of my habits is to automatically say "no" to new ideas unless they are mine. It is an automatic response that, until recently, I practiced almost daily without being aware I was doing it.

It's what I call unconscious practicing. I was repeating, therefore practicing, a behavior which was making that behavior stronger; yet, there was no real intention on my part to do this. However, through constant repetition I got pretty close to perfecting the "no" response which obviously is a very annoying and useless skill to perfect.

What unconscious habits and behaviors are you perfecting? Do you sabotage yourself by procrastinating? Do you keep yourself overly busy in order to avoid issues in your life? Do you make a lot of great plans and then come up with a thousand reasons why you can't do any of them? Or do you take care of everyone else before taking time for yourself?

We all have beliefs and behaviors that sabotage how we truly would like to live our lives. The key is to become aware of what they are so that we can start putting our energy towards dismantling them, not feeding them.

Practice, or the repetition of any behavior, will make it stronger. So, we have to add the component of conscious awareness to ensure that we are focused on practicing and perfecting the things in our lives that we want to perfect, instead of perfecting things that keep our lives small.

Until next time,
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