

Welcome to Quiet Courage – April 2005

The online newsletter for navigating life's changes and transitions from Bailey Coaching and Mary Ann Bailey, MC.

FEATURE ARTICLE: Willingness is the Key to Change

A question I get a lot from potential clients is: "How successful are your clients in achieving their goals?" Clients hire me because they want to change or improve something in their life, and they want to make sure that they will be able to reach the goals they set.

Although most of my clients state that coaching has been extremely helpful in moving their lives forward, I do have clients who sometimes struggle with the change process.

My main goal as a coach is to make sure my clients reach their goals. Therefore, I am constantly examining what I do that either facilitates or inhibits the coaching process; and I am also watching for where my clients might be getting themselves stuck.

People might think that things such as intelligence, creativity, or problem solving abilities would be the key factors in determining a client's success. But through working with my clients, I have observed that there is something else that is a more reliable indicator. It has nothing to do with innate abilities and it is something that we can all access.

What I have found to be the best predictor of a person's success in making a life change is their level of willingness – specifically their willingness to:

- Take risks and try new things
- Trust in the process of change
- Believe in themselves and their ability to achieve their goals.

If a person is able to maintain an open willingness throughout the coaching process, they will be successful in implementing any changes they want in their life.

Willingness to Take Risks and Try New Things

Making any kind of change in our lives is going to require us to try new things. That is the very nature of change. We are going to have to learn new skills, try on new ideas, and practice new behaviors. Our safe zone, that place where we feel comfortable and secure, will need to expand to include these new ways of being.

On one hand this can be very exciting. It is what we asked for when we decided to make the change. But, as we know, all systems abhor change, and our body system is no exception. It will do everything it can to talk us out of taking these risks.

We will hear voices telling us how scary this is and that we are not strong enough for the challenge. Our muscles will get tense, our stress level will rise, and there will be a very strong urge to give up and return to the safety of our old way of being.

Many people can get stuck at this point. It is here that it's easy to lose touch with willingness we had at the beginning of the process. Thus, we need to reconnect with the part of us who originally wanted make the change – the part who is excited about learning new things, facing new challenges, and bringing more joy and fulfillment to our life.

If you can stay connected to that willingness and use its positive energy to overcome your resistance and fear, there is no doubt you will be successful in reaching your goals.

Willingness to Trust in the Change Process

We live in a culture that demands instant gratification. If we want something, we buy it. If we don't feel well, we take a pill. We have gotten used to not having to wait very long to get our needs met.

But, unfortunately, the change process doesn't work that way. It is slow. It is not linear, and it often takes its own circuitous route. There are also parts of the process over which we will have little or no control. And it is this combination of having no control and the often tortoise-like pace of change that can be excruciatingly painful for many of us to tolerate.

Yet, it is only by allowing the process to unfold naturally that we will be able to reach the goals we set out to achieve. We need to let go of our desire for speed and control and be willing to just trust the process.

Although this process may seem awkward and cumbersome at times, it works. And if we try and fight it, we will lose. But if we willingly follow its lead, the change we want will happen.

Willingness to Believe That You Can Be Successful

The last and most important factor in reaching your goals is our willingness to believe in our ability to succeed. Although this may sound obvious, there are many places along the way where we can lose our resolve.

First, we have to deal with the critical voices of our system telling us that there is no need for this change and that things are just fine the way they were.

Secondly, we have to deal with the ups and downs and slow pace of the change process. The light at the end of the tunnel is not always visible and it can be tempting to let our fear and doubt take over, disempowering us and leading us to believe that we don't have what it takes to make the change.

Lastly, we have to deal with friends and family members who keep asking us what we are doing and why we are doing it. Making a change in our life will affect those around us.

Their systems will sense that change and will go on alert. People who thought of as supports are now challenging our decision and questioning our ability to actually go through with it. It is not that they are really against us. It is just that they don't like their systems being out of whack.

Until next time, all the best,
Mary Ann Bailey, MC

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www.baileycoaching.com
maryann@baileycoaching.com