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By **RIA STORY**
editor@leaderonomics.com

VIKTOR Frankl was a neurologist, psychiatrist, and a Holocaust survivor. He spent three years in concentration camps and lost most of his family, including his wife, there. He suffered intolerable abuse, starvation, freezing cold, and exhausting physical labour. He lost everything, including a manuscript he was working on.

With every *reason* to give up, he continued to have a positive outlook and find meaning in the suffering. One of his theories was man could withstand nearly anything if there was a reason for it – a ‘*why*’ – behind it.

After Frankl was released, he published several books, writing about his experiences and what he learned from them. In one of my favourite quotes, Frankl states, “*When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.*”

He went on to explain, “*Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*”

Regardless of the situation we find ourselves in, we can choose how we respond to it. Even if we cannot change the situation itself, we can choose to change how we look at it and how we respond to it.

“You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.” – Jim Rohn

When we choose to rise above our circumstances or our environment, we find the ultimate freedom in personal growth and development.

Stephen R. Covey talked about this concept in his book, “*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*” In the book, Covey explained that when we choose our response based on values, we are proactive. When we choose our response based on emotions or feelings – we are reactive.

2 WAYS TO DEAL WITH CHANGES IN LIFE

HOW WE CHOOSE TO REACT TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINES US

Viktor Frankl certainly didn’t *feel* like rising above his circumstances. He certainly could have blamed many people for his suffering. Instead, he responded to his situation based on his values – choosing to be proactive, grow his personal strength of character, and rise above his circumstances to be positive.

In one of the best examples I have seen of someone choosing to be proactive, he chose to share his thoughts about learning from one’s hardships, and overcoming them. He recorded his observations on tiny scraps of paper and hid them, so he could keep writing. Those scraps later became a book, “*Man’s Search For Meaning,*” after his release.

When we choose our response based on values – we are proactive. When we choose our response based on emotions or feelings – we are reactive.

The proactive person will rise above his or her situation, take personal responsibility, and choose to be proactive by developing their character. The reactive person will blame anything and anyone else for their circumstances and choose to do nothing.

Often, we don’t feel like being proactive. When the server gets your order wrong at a restaurant and your steak is well done instead of medium rare, how will you respond?

A response based on your feelings of frustration and disappointment would cause you to blame the server, blame the restaurant, get angry, and become demanding. A response based on your



values (assuming you value people) would cause you to assure the server you understand mistakes happen and politely let the restaurant correct the mistake.

Easier said than done? You bet. But, we all have two choices when it comes to dealing with change. We can be proactive, respond based on our values, and choose personal growth; or, we can be reactive, respond based on emotions and feelings, and choose to abdicate our personal responsibility for growth.

Here are three reasons why we should always seek to be proactive when responding to change:

1. Being proactive will help you manage your emotions.

Your happiness is not dependent on your circumstances. That doesn’t mean

you aren’t striving to improve, but it does mean you can learn to be grateful for what you have.

2. Being proactive will allow you to stand out as someone who is a leader or who has leadership potential.

Those around you will realise you have good character and take responsibility for yourself and your growth. You will shine because not everyone can embrace change.

3. Being proactive will help equip you to meet the challenges of change and turn them into opportunities.

Changes are not something to be afraid of but rather something to be hopeful about because there is potential for something better.

■ *Ria co-founded Top Story Leadership, a consulting company offering keynote speaking, leadership training, and coaching. They work with organisations to unleash leadership potential by taking the complex and making it simple. Raised on an isolated farm in Alabama, Ria suffered sexual abuse at the hands of her father since she was 12. At 10, she escaped her home without a job, a car, or even a high school diploma and learned to not only to survive, but also to thrive. She shares her story to inspire hope and teach others how to apply the same success and leadership principles she applied.*

By **JESSLYN LAI**
editor@leaderonomics.com

HAVE you thought about trying something new but haven’t gotten to it yet? When was the last time you delayed doing something that its priority gets constantly pushed back? How many times have you felt a prompting within, but did not do anything about it?

It might not be all about procrastination.

FORGOTTEN SEEDS

The lack of resources, knowledge, skills and opportunities are some real reasons we keep certain ideas and desires in the icebox. If they are kept aside for too long, they become seeds that are not planted; they have so much potential, but its fruits may never be harvested.

We may not have all that we need at the moment, but don’t throw these seeds away just yet. Instead, write down these ideas and desires even if we don’t know how to make it happen.

Slowly but surely, we can move towards our goals when we make it a point to take small initiatives. There will be obstacles along the way but as long as we are willing to press on, there will always be opportunities for creative ways to overcome challenges.

SETTING ASIDE FEARS TO CHASE YOUR DREAMS

AN ENDING MUST HAVE A BEGINNING

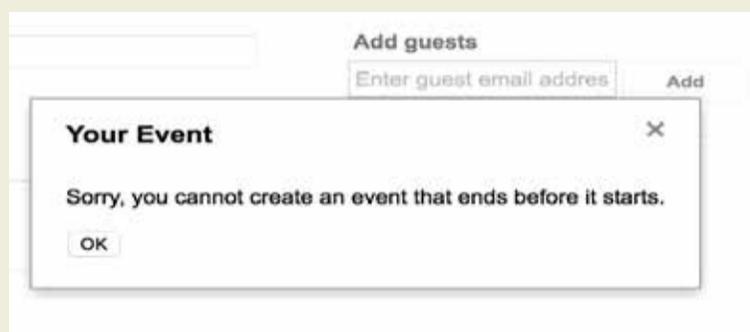
One morning as I was creating an event in my calendar, I accidentally marked an end date before the start of the event, and a pop-up window alerted me with this message: “Sorry, you cannot create an event that ends before it starts.”

I smiled to myself thinking that it’s so real how our doubts and circumstances can kill something before it even happens. If prolonged, we go into a circle of unfulfilled possibilities. It happens, but take courage!

A STIR IN OUR HEARTS

Something deep inside of us knows the things that we cannot reason with – desire, vision, passion, will. We are innately created that way.

By nature, we have preferences and interests that we want to pursue. But these things are often buried, and it takes circumstances to stir us to do something about it; an immediate need, an inspiration, an event, or a calling that hits like an arrow through the heart and says: “Let’s do this.” Suddenly, we’re able to make it a priority and we feel that maybe, we can do it after all.



Yes, there will be other urgent things that occupy our schedules. And we will constantly put these needs ahead as priority. However, we must also be aware of how much time we end up spending on these tasks.

When we look back a year later, would they still matter? How can we minimise the time and effort needed to complete those tasks so that we can do what may be more subtle, but important to us? Can we find a way to increase efficiency in a way that works best?

But first – we need to slow down, stop, and think before we accelerate again. It doesn’t have to be a getaway or a holiday. Micro steps, like being

still for five minutes to reflect on the bigger picture, can put things back into perspective.

IT STARTS WITH ONE TINY STEP

Recently, I’ve been inspired and encouraged by a few friends who picked up their interest in art again. For many, art may not be a priority at all, which is one of the reasons why it is easily shelved and forgotten.

But they did the smallest but most important thing – they got started.

It doesn’t have to be perfect, and it might not always turn out to be the best, but it is better to have started on something than do nothing at all.

All it takes is just a little step of

courage, and it gets us into motion. Once we’ve gotten into the flow, we will most likely want to continue.

BRINGING POSSIBILITIES INTO REALITY

Here’s a piece of advice: If you really want to do something, put yourself in a situation that would stir up that desire in you. Your instincts will do the rest. The road ahead may not be easy, but it will be rewarding.

Take courage!

■ *Jesslyn Lai is an artist motivated to live out whatever her heart feels called to do. She believes that our passion for something is there for a reason, encouraging others to live out the desires that are placed in their hearts. She is an introvert thriving to live beyond her comfort zone, fascinated and thrilled by new discoveries and connections. You can get in touch with her at editor@leaderonomics.com*

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