

The simple fact is you can't accept anything - not yourself, your circumstances, or your life, if you're living a life of avoidance.

Acceptance is a skill or a group of skills learned and applied.

It's turning toward the pain (whatever the pain is) instead of running from it.

Avoidance is easy.

It's a default mechanism that most of us don't even realize we do.

You might be an avoider if you've ever done any of the following:

- procrastinated
- denied the existence of anything
- pretended all was just "fine"
- been unable to take any criticism
- binged on anything: food, booze, TV, games, etc.

We avoid stuff for a variety of reasons and, as we discussed a few weeks ago, procrastination isn't because you're lazy, it's because you're in the midst of COPING.

The thing about avoidance, though, regardless of HOW you try to pull it off, it's still not going to clear the decks to help you ultimately feel good...

It actually makes you feel worse!

So why are we avoiders in the first place?

- Goals are flimsy. Maybe they aren't well defined, maybe they aren't constrained by any kind of timeline, and/or they may be way too far off in the future.
- We have no connection to our Future Self. (We did a whole series on our Future Self the first week in January, if you need more clarity.)
- It feels overwhelming. We need to do a big picture analysis to see the scope, but the hope is in breaking it down into smaller tasks - for example, you don't lose 100lbs in 12 weeks, but you can lose 20 easily!
- We're indecisive. Can't make a decision? A lot of folks avoid making a decision and then allow "natural" circumstances to make the decision for them. This avoidance mechanism is STILL A DECISION, and yes, you are still responsible for a non-decision.

- We put off tasks that we don't want to do. No one loves cleaning toilets, but they don't clean themselves. That phone call you've been dreading? Late fees? Expired food? Something you can no longer return? This is all task aversion!
- Perfectionism - does it seem not good enough? Do you fear making a mistake? Failing? Succeeding? Someone seeing your flaws, tender side, or vulnerability? Perfectionism is protecting you again...
- We're overly optimistic or pessimistic. Whether you're a "plenty of time" or a "not enough time" kinda gal, NEITHER one starts AND finishes.

A lack of motivation can fit in here too - although motivation, as you recall, comes a-calling only after you've actually done something!

This is especially true when it comes to a disconnect - I was not especially motivated in college to do well in math because I didn't see the value in it - I wanted to be a writer after all.

Now that we're clear on avoidance, how do we make way for ACCEPTANCE?

1. Clean up those fuzzy goals - fuzzy goals are as helpful as fuzzy slippers on a big hike - they're inappropriate for the task at hand and will frustrate the living daylights out of you...change 'em up and now you're a hiker!
2. Create a plan once you've pinpointed the problem or the avoidance of the problem.
3. Schedule your time - regardless. Do you have an overwhelming amount of to-dos on your list? Scheduling is imperative. Are you retired with all the (seemingly) time in the world, STILL scheduling your time...it's precious!

TIME is an unrenewable commodity. Treat it with care, cherish it, and invest your time. Don't just spend it, or worse - waste or "kill" it!

Awareness is the first step!