

Marriage and Family Corner: Just do it

Mary McKinney | Posted: Thursday, August 27, 2015 9:09 am

In my mind, I hear Mama singing Roger Miller's, "You Can't Roller Skate in a Buffalo Herd," (1966). I see the smile that would fill her face as she moved her shoulders and hips in rhythm, belting out her favorite part: "But you can be happy if you've a mind to . All ya gotta do is put your mind to it, Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it!"

She emphasized the "do it, do it, do it!"

As this refrain echoes in my memory, I also hear messages from Daddy, urging me to ensure my performance is worthy. These messages about the value of work stuck with me. Self-responsibility and self-awareness form a sturdy foundation for work.

Being responsible means seeking needed information and support. It means listening to feedback from trustworthy people and engaging in self-evaluation.

The idea of "trustworthy" people is more useful in this discussion than that of "trusted" people, because it can be easy to place trust in people who don't merit it. Sometimes, trust is misplaced because of loyalty or enthusiasm. It can be easy to confuse someone being "likeable" with being "trustworthy."

Trust can be merited in one area and not another. A person might be trustworthy to deal with money matters, but unable to provide caring feedback. It is important to seek feedback from trustworthy people and to spend time obtaining information and evaluating its use.

Self-awareness is important for self-evaluation and is part of the foundation for good work. It involves the ability to understand your drives and reactions — and to understand yourself in relation to other people.

Self-awareness shouldn't be confused with self-consciousness, which is about being excessively aware of yourself.

Self-consciousness impedes awareness of how your mind is working and of how you relate to others, because awareness is overshadowed by concerns about something negative, such as fears of being ineffective or unlikable.



Just Do It!

Self-awareness promotes an ability to observe mental events, such as hope, determination, pain and fear, with a detachment that allows for clearer evaluation of the experience and options.

This detachment boosts awareness of self, in relation to other people. Detached self-awareness, a form of mindfulness, means observing the way the mind is working, noticing without judgment.

Self-responsibility and self-awareness are triggered by compassionate observation. These patterns can be refined to develop habits of working harder and smarter.

There are techniques and resources to develop this mindset. The simplest technique is to ask the question, “What would I think/say/do if this was _____.” (Filling in the blank with the name of a beloved person usually facilitates logical examination.)

So, in evaluating your progress toward a goal for which you have set, it might help to ask, “What would I think about this progress if it were the efforts of my child? What would I say to my child? What would I do?”

If you have compassion toward people, the answer to the questions about you will also include compassion.

If you are able to assess the quality of others’ work, you are also able to assess the quality of your own work.

I find it useful to fill in the blank with my daughters’ names because I feel endless compassion for them and I know they are capable of responsible and high-quality work.

By asking these questions, I am usually able to determine if I am shirking any of my responsibility or failing to consider how my mind works. This assessment allows for behavior change.

With my daughters’ faces in mind — and Mama’s singing in my ears — I consider Daddy’s words to look toward myself for success.

I remind myself that I am capable of quality work that is worth my time and effort. I can evaluate if I have my mind set to being happy.

I can evaluate if the people who depend on me are getting my best efforts. When I identify any area for which I need to gather more information, request more feedback, spend more time, challenge myself to try something different, or make any improvement in my efforts, I can do that with the integrity and a sense of patience for myself.

I would want nothing less for the people I love, so I should settle for nothing less for myself. When I identify these plans, then it is time to “Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it!”

For more information on available services or to discuss information in this column, contact:

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