



Stepping Stones for the Good Life

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How to Empower Yourself by Taking 100% Responsibility (Make that Response-Ability)

From the Desk of Glenda Haskell, *Life Coach*

I see the look on your face. “Are you crazy?” it says. “How could I possibly be 100% responsible for what happens to me? If I get hit by a drunk driver and end up paraplegic, am I responsible for that? If I get cancer, are you saying it would be completely my fault? And what about horrors on the scale of slavery in the United States or the atrocities of the Holocaust? Aren’t you just blaming the victim?”

If this is your gut reaction to the title of this piece, it means you’re normal. We tend to equate responsibility with blame, shame, or guilt. (Guilt, by the way, is one way to avoid responsibility. If I *meant* to do better, I must be a good person after all.)

In *The Success Principles: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, authors Jack Canfield and Janet Switzer offer a very different take on the matter. In the book, they describe in detail 64 principles for success. What’s the very first principle on the list? You guessed it: Take 100% Responsibility For Your Life. So what’s this about?

What led me to write this piece was exposure and active use of the book and companion DVD *Tapping Into Ultimate Success* by Jack Canfield and Pamela Bruner, which draws heavily on the principles outlined in *The Success Principles*.

[In this context, *tapping* is short for “meridian tapping,” which I have found to be an easy-to-learn and powerful technique for reducing negative emotions and changing limiting beliefs to more empowering ones. Although I was exposed to tapping a number of years ago (in a form called the Emotional Freedom Technique), it’s only during the past year that I’ve begun to practice it regularly—with, without fail, a 100% success rate.]

One of these months, I plan to write a *Stepping Stones* piece that gives my readers a basic introduction to tapping and directs them to additional resources where they can learn more. If you want to learn more right away, I highly recommend the Canfield/Bruner book and DVD, which includes almost three hours of tapping demonstrations.]

With regard to the principle of taking 100% responsibility for our lives, Canfield and Bruner touch on **three key reasons** for making a shift to this belief.

1. When we claim 100% responsibility, **we open ourselves up to learning and personal growth.**

How might I have contributed to the problem (perhaps inadvertently)?

What can I learn from the situation?

What would I do differently next time?

What action steps can I take from here?

2. When we claim 100% responsibility, **we empower ourselves.**

In response to calamity or a string of “bad luck,” some people become paranoid, seeing the universe as out to get them. In this way, it’s easy to fall into a “victim” mentality. When we victimize ourselves

in this way, we give up our power to others. In victim mode, our brain literally shuts down our ability to see possibilities.

By perceiving of ourselves as being fully responsible for a situation, we can consciously move ourselves into a position of power. If we're responsible for creating the situation in the first place, then we must be able to *change* it.

3. When we claim 100% responsibility, **we take control of how we respond (our response ability).**

Victor Frankl's story from the Holocaust in *Man's Search for Meaning* continues to be a source of inspiration for people across the globe. Despite his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp, during which time he was blind to the fate of his wife and other family members (only a sister, who had escaped before the Holocaust, survived), Frankl came to realize that he had—as all human beings have, he believed--the capacity to find meaning in even the most deplorable of circumstances.

Through my tapping practice, I've adopted as one of my daily mantra: It's not what matters; it's how we *respond* that matters.

If another driver cuts me off suddenly, causing my car to swerve, am I responsible for that person's behavior? Well, I *can* consider how I might have contributed to it. Maybe I was distracted, not paying careful attention (heaven forbid, talking on my cell phone). I may have let myself drive in the driver's blind spot even when I had the option of moving more into the other driver's view. Like a lot of people, all too often I get upset with other drivers (better known as "those jerks")--as if I never make mistakes or use poor judgment when I'm driving. Do I have some say over how I react emotionally? For sure.

Was I *to blame* for my mother's death from cancer at age 44, when I was nine years old? Of course not. Can I choose how I respond to it, how I interpret this loss in the grand scheme of my life? Can I learn from the experience? Can I shine a light on the ways I've grown from losing my mother at such an early age? Most definitely.

I hope you've found food for thought in the ideas and approaches offered here. Which would you rather be? A victim of circumstance? Or someone with strong (and empowering) *response ability*?