

THE DISCIPLINE DILEMMA

Without order there is chaos, without structure there is instability, without discipline there is lack of personal growth. Discipline is so often described in a negative way, it is seen as a means of containing and controlling, usually someone's behaviour and is often associated with stern, harsh images. This is partly why we do not recognise the immense liberating value discipline has. Discipline does not get in our way, it opens the way, without discipline our words and intentions have only potential but lack realisation. Without discipline we have ambitions and dreams that remain elusive and unattainable, and we remain frustrated by our inability to achieve our goals.

Effort alone cannot take us to our destination. Effort is like having an engine without a vehicle to propel, there is simply power and potential but without a vehicle to harness that power and turn that potential into a useful and constructive force, it is of little use. So, applying ourselves energetically to the task of self improvement is not enough, we need something that helps us to harness that energy and create momentum, we need a vehicle. That vehicle is discipline. Discipline is the force that gathers up all our endeavour and converts it into progress. Discipline gives us structure, order and creates personal growth and it achieves this through consistency and momentum. Once there is consistency, momentum is achieved, and momentum is more than half of what is needed in order to reach our destination. Effort without consistency feels like we have done a lot and yet there is nothing really to show for it and so the fruits of fatigue and futility are conceived as a result.

The law of application is simple. If we put something into practice consistently then we are guaranteed success, however we must apply patience and perseverance to this process otherwise we will expect results before we have earned them. It is this impatience that trips most of us up, often at the first hurdle, and so we prevent ourselves from walking the path of progress whilst blaming other things for our lack of movement.

Discipline is a curious creature because most would say it is hard to put something consistently into practice (which can be true) and yet the moment we pass the first phase of actually 'doing' and engage in really trying, it becomes relatively easy. This is due to momentum. The momentum of our actions establishes a habit, and we are all familiar with how easy it is for a habit to take control of our lives. This is exactly what we want, we want to put beneficial, enabling and empowering activities into practice to such an extent that they become healthy habits propelled by their own momentum. So, the dilemma of discipline need be no dilemma at all, we simply need to realise that through discipline the task of imbibing all that we need, to reach our own highest point, is relatively easy, once we have a strategy and a structure that provides us with regular practice. Then, momentum will do most of the work.

Once we have established momentum our discipline needs to have a different focus. Our initial cultivation of discipline is about creating change but once our creation is in place our discipline then has to become a sustaining force. This is because our improved way of being cannot sustain itself, it needs help so we have to beware of complacency and arrogance because having acquired a momentum sufficient to keep us moving we may think the job is done, when it has only just begun. If we hope to hold on to the success offered to us through discipline and application, then it is important to realise the changes we have engineered are lifestyle changes, which need to be maintained if they are to become permanent fixtures in our lives. Then stability, peace of mind and meaningful growth will always be available to us, whatever life presents us with.