

The Rubber Band Principle

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A number of years ago I created a keynote called The Rubber Band Principle. This article is a response to requests to have the main points and content written out. Here you go!

The Rubber Band Principle is "Do your best, let go the rest."

The rubber band is an analogy for resilience. It's important to have some time to be at rest, to feel light and peaceful. But we all want some stretch and challenge to give our life meaning. But if we have too much challenge and strain, we can snap, crack or break. It's important to be aware of and attend to your own rest-stretch experiences. Avoid comparing yourself to Robust Roberta or Hardy Harry who can stretch further and longer than you.

First Point: Listen to your body.

- Identify your body's message. The whispers such as an eye twitch, grinding teeth or indigestion tell us to slow down. If we listen to them, we won't get as ill with more serious problems such as irritated bowel syndrome attacks or heart attacks.
- Use 30 Second Quickies to attend to the distress in your body. They take 30 seconds or less to do. Examples include: tighten your facial muscles and breathe out, make a fist and let go, squeeze your shoulders to your ears, and yawn.
- Tend and Befriend Research: Women have 2 additional responses to distress that men usually don't have. They tend to those they care about and they reach out to their friends. Women actually psychologically need to fuss over others and connect with friends. (UCLA, 2000)

Second Point: Edit your Self-Talk and Talk

- The self-talk in your head either supports or beats you up. Most of us have a combination. But you can catch the "beat-up" chatter, take five and change it.
- Optimists live longer, are better liked and enjoy life. They think when something goes wrong it's a fluke. Pessimists think that when something goes well it's a fluke. A true optimist appreciates the pessimist. The optimist invented the airplane and the pessimist invented the parachute.
- There are two categories of blame—blame owners and blame throwers.
- Even when we believe we don't blame others, we find ourselves saying lines such as, "She makes me crazy." Not only is that a blaming line, it is giving away your personal power and thinking in a non-self-responsible manner.

- Fifty percent of communication is the message sent and the other 50% is how it is received. "I make me," and "you make you," is a useful reminder if only in your head.
- You have a huge influence on others but you can't change or fix others.
- Saying "no" is particularly difficult for women. Some men have trouble saying it too. Hearing "no" is often experienced by people as rejection. Hence, women tend to feel uncomfortable saying it because many little girls were socialized to care of other people before looking after themselves. They were told, "Now make sure everyone has a cookie before you help yourself." There are always exceptions to these gender tendencies. You have permission to appropriately say *yes, no, it depends* and *I'd like to think about it*.
- *Should, must* and *have to* are typically said when people feel uncomfortable with another's behaviour. Here is an example, "You should just stay quiet."
- Worrying is like being in a rocking chair. It takes up time but it doesn't get you anywhere. Designate a stand still on four legs, "worry chair" and discipline yourself to only worry when you sit in it.

Third Point: Take Yourself Lightly

- Sometimes the biggest joke of the planet is how seriously we take ourselves.
- Develop an attitude of gratitude.
- Smile, it may change, even save, someone's life. Smiling gives the message, "I like you." Laughter gives the message, "I feel joy when I am with you."
- Dr. Martin Seligman, in his book, *Authentic Happiness*, recommends that for developing true happiness you develop gratitude, take responsibility for your pleasure, know your strengths and find ways and places to use your strengths.
- Outside of the workplace, if you in-joy an activity but don't do it well or superbly, do it anyway. If you enjoy drawing, singing or dancing, do it. Just do it!

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