

The problem is...

"The most self-destructive thought that any person can have is thinking that he or she is not in total control of his or her life. That's when, 'Why me?' becomes a theme song." - Roger Dawson

How many times a day – at work, at home, at play or in relationship - do you hear someone say, "the problem is..." in a way that communicates: "I'm a victim;" "someone's doing something to me;" or "I'm powerless?" In fact, how often do you make such a comment?

It's not a fact that a "problem" means defeat. That's a characterization you're choosing to make. Like beauty, "problem" is in the eye of the beholder. Unfortunately, many react in a knee-jerk manner and tack towards the negative whenever a "problem" arises.

"We focus on the negatives, losing ourselves in the 'problem.' We point to our unhappy circumstances to rationalize our negative feelings. This is the easy way out. It takes, after all, very little effort to feel victimized." - Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Rather than assume a "victim consciousness" mindset in the face of a "problem, what would it be like if you stopped, took a breath and consciously asked your heart to help you out? Our heart always has our best interest in mind. Learning to ask and trust our heart is a life-affirming practice that can relieve stress and negativity while leading us to a sense of expansiveness, lightness, equanimity, self-trust, harmony and self-confidence. The next time you feel the tendency to exclaim, "The problem is...!" stop, take a breath and consider these seven suggestions:

1. Know that there is no such thing as a negative "coincidence" or accident. While your mind might want to create the "problem," the Universe aligns every event with a reason and a meaning and presents these events FOR us as learning and growth lessons. Every experience is purposeful, if we choose to seek out that purpose.
2. When confronting a "problem" explore what "competence" the problem is asking you to manifest. When something negative occurs, see it as an opportunity to demonstrate your competence. No one is completely and totally "useless" when facing a problem. You may have to reflect some, maybe long and hard, but the Universe has presented you with this opportunity as a way for you to "show up" and use your talents, skills and abilities.
3. Problems are opportunities presented for us to grow in self-confidence. While our mind might want us to shrink, go invisible and move into denial, our heart will give us the strength and courage to move forward, if we ask and trust.
4. In addition to strength and courage, facing problems also affords us the opportunity to express other essential heart qualities: understanding, love, compassion, will, steadfastness, patience, discipline and support.
5. One of the greatest benefits a problem affords is to the opportunity to learn: who I am and how I am in this moment. "What am I seeing in all of this?" is a powerful personal growth question. Viewing opportunities in this manner supports you to live a life that is meaningful and purposeful.
6. Facing problems allows us to take control of our life, to have our power and be in control. Caving in, and moving into a helpless, victim consciousness results in giving our power away and allowing something or someone to control us in a way that is self-limiting, self-sabotaging and life-alienating.
7. Finally, know that your soul has created this opportunity for you. Consciously or unconsciously, we attract what we need in order to grow and develop. While we may

hate, detest or resist the "problem" in the moment, nothing is ever happening TO you; it's happening FOR you and your heart and soul know this. It's a question of coming to terms with this awareness from "mental" knowing as well. There's some part of you that requires further growth and maturation and "problems" are opportunities, are "life's lessons" providing the continued growth and learning that support us to see the meaning and purpose of our life.

So, the next time a problem presents itself on your life's journey, rather than resist, hide or blame, be curious about what issues may be arising within yourself – issues you need to own and work with. Curiously enough, when we deal with our issues – honestly, sincerely and self-responsibly – various types of "problems" seem to disappear over time.

"We are continually faced with great opportunities which are brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems." - Margaret Mead

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Do you spend much of your time feeling like a victim and blaming others for what's happening in your life? If so, what does spending your time that way get you?
- If you've been facing your problems responsibly over time, what have you seen/learned about yourself?
- Do you believe the world is a fearful and dangerous place? Do you find yourself always being vigilant and watching out for potential danger? If so, why?
- Do you believe your inner life creates your outer life? Have you ever considered this?
- Do you know the difference between fate and destiny? If you do, or when you find out, which one more clearly defines the way you orient to your life?
- Do you feel your well-being is largely in the hand of others?
- How did you and your family deal with "problems" when you were growing up?

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