

Do what you should do

Have you ever thought someone in your life should do something you feel is important? The fact that you think it is important is a tip that maybe it is you, and not the other person, that should do it. I have come to the conclusion that the thought of someone else doing what it is that I value is futile. In short, there is no truth in the expression, "I think someone else should do something." When you think someone else should act or behave in a certain way just because you think they should, that type of thinking is hopeless. Today I will try to eliminate stress in your life by realizing no one else should do anything. If you can understand and apply today's lesson, you will save yourself from mental stress and conflict.

One of the most common yet unrecognized ways that stress occurs in life is when we believe in thoughts that argue with reality as it is. When we dwell on thinking that is opposed to what is happening in truth, we suffer. Trying to wishfully think reality should be different than it is will cause anxiety and is ineffective. On a humorous note, it is akin to trying to teach a cat to bark. No matter how hard you try to teach a cat to bark, it will look at you and say, "Meow."

As crazy as it is to try and teach a cat to bark, if you pay attention to your mind, you will notice you have thoughts like this all day long. "My wife should listen to me." "The line at the DMV should move faster." "The dictator in Libya should step down." "My health insurance should pay for this doctor bill." Thinking something should happen is not living in reality.

Reality would acknowledge the following more truthful thinking. My wife has never listened to me. The line at the DMV always is slow. Gaddafi won't likely leave. Not everything is covered by insurance. These thoughts are more aligned with what is. Doesn't it make more sense to be congruent with reality rather than thinking it should be different?

Humor is a way to convey meaning and resolve conflict at the same time. The follow story of my wife, Michelle, and I hopefully will facilitate your understanding of today's message. I am a doctor and Michelle is a nurse, so there are times we share the lunch room at the hospital. Two years ago on tax day April 15th, I was scrambling to come up with the cash to cover the tax bill. I was under some stress and consulted my wife who was having lunch at the time with a friend of hers in the surgical department lounge.

I told her of our predicament expecting her to acknowledge my concern. True to her values, she instead turned to her friend and asked her which type of asparagus she preferred, thin or thick stalk asparagus. For a moment, I became upset. Shouldn't my wife care about taxes? I think she should, but she doesn't.

The truth is Michelle could care less about taxes. Now you may think she should care about taxes, too, but she doesn't. That's reality. Michelle is not concerned about taxes. Every time I think she should care about taxes, I become upset. I have been with Michelle

for seventeen years now and every morning I wake up and think she should do something. The reality is though, she never does. My thinking that she should is what is upsetting. I have seventeen years of experience that she won't wake up tomorrow and do what I think she should. Sound familiar?

Who should care about the taxes? Me. The taxes are what I value as important, so I should care and no one else. Thinking my wife should value what I think she should value is hopeless. Abandoning the thoughts that Michelle should be a certain way or do a certain thing strengthens our marriage.

The other funny thing is from Michelle's perspective I should care about asparagus. No kidding, she thinks I should care about the difference between thin and thick stalk asparagus. The reality she needs to integrate is the only thing I care about asparagus is how much mayonnaise I can slap all over it. Even though she thinks I should care, I don't. She also has seventeen years of experience that tomorrow morning I won't wake up and do what she thinks I should.

Reality is a lot less stressful for the both of us if we can always remember we should do what we think is important. If you think someone else should do something, first ask yourself who cares? If it is you, then maybe you should do it. This coming April 15th, Michelle only wants me to write the check. That same evening, I will say to her, "Pass the mayonnaise please."

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