

HERE WE GO AGAIN: BEING YOUR BEST IN TRYING TIMES BY BEATA C. LEWIS, JD, MSC

When you consider what is happening in your life, do you ask yourself “Who am I in the midst of all of this?” How are you “playing” in this game of life? You have surely heard the expression: Play to Win! What does that mean and what else would a person choose? It means going as far and as well as you can with what you have, rather than playing “not to lose.” It’s a creative stance rather than a protective or reactive one.

How we play to win is inextricably connected to the thinking and feeling state that we create within ourselves, regardless of circumstance. Indeed, from a creative mindset, the circumstances may offer a challenge, but the real work is in shifting one’s inner orientation to what is possible. The creative stance becomes our prevailing way of being as we practice. And opportunities for practice abound, daily.

I was recently reminded to deepen my own practice. The circumstance? I felt resistant and resentful about behavior I experienced from somebody else. That person hit a “hot spot” in me and I was thrown into major problem solving mode. My difficulty: how to orient myself with this person I disagreed with profoundly so that we could produce a positive result together.

The reminder to stay “plugged in” to my “best self” pulled me out of a trance of old conditioning. I emphasize that I was reminded; it was not new information. I was simply caught up in a situation in which my range of motion was inhibited by old patterning. Here we go again; it’s all practice. The sign posted on the road to mastery asks: “In this moment, how can I engage my creative, rather than reactive, Self?” The “how” is relatively simple to comprehend. The mastery shows up in recognizing when you are off center, restoring center quickly, and playing for a bigger win.

Evolution is like movement along a spiral. We are presented opportunities to interact with what may already feel familiar at new levels, with new qualities of consciousness. The spiral nature of growth can feel like “Groundhog Day” all over again – “I’ve been here before!” My intention is to grow and to lead from wisdom, joy and compassion. I love it when things hum along according to plan, or better. When they don’t, however, I get to encounter myself anew...consciously directing awareness, choice and practice to heal and to create new possibilities. I offer what follows as a reminder for when you need to source the awareness, choice, and practices that move you to thrive.

AWARENESS

Start with what is. What actually are my **MINDSET** (internal thinking state) and **MOOD** (internal feeling state) when I set out to do this (any) task or interact in this situation?

Starting with **MINDSET**, I can ask myself:

- What do I *believe or expect* right now? For example, ...
 - “This is going to take a long time, be hard and probably fruitless.” **OR**
 - “I can learn something as I do this that makes it easier and more fun for me.”
- What do I *intend or want* to happen now? For example, ...
 - “I intend to listen for what the other person cares about, even in moments when it becomes difficult for me to stay present in the conversation.” **OR**



COACHING FOR LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATIVE EXCELLENCE

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- “I intend to prove to the other person that I am right.”

My own thoughts set me up to experience what is in my field of awareness. They set a field of resonance. It’s a phenomenon of nature: if we set out to find waves, we find waves; if we set out to find particles, particles are what we find.

Now, let’s consider **MOOD**:

- What is my *emotional state or mood* right now? For example, ...
 - “I feel open, calm and alert.” **OR**
 - “I feel tense, numb and heady.”

Sometimes, just thinking about doing certain tasks or interacting with certain people throws us into a mood of resistance. Is it possible to shift my mood before I start and thereby create the possibility of a different, more positive outcome? YES. When I forget, I have to remember.

CHOICE

I pause and choose to set myself up to be conscious about how I proceed. The challenge is to do this when conditioned programming takes over. Here are some options:

- I *slow* myself *down* and disengage the gears of “automatic response” by consciously paying attention to my *breathing*. If I’m stressed, my breathing is probably high in the chest and shallow. I breathe low into my abdomen and connect the sensations of breathing to feeling the sensation of my feet on the ground.
- I *connect* with why I am moving towards this task or interaction in the first place. What about this is important to me and what do I *care about*?
- I *choose* a mindset that emphasizes the *affirmative*. Among the array of beliefs I may hold in a situation, I can choose to include another one that feels more positive yet still true. For example, I may believe that the other person is not receptive to the new approach I want to include. Connected to that, I may believe that this person is wrong and stubborn. If I interact with this person coming from that belief system, we’re in for a contest. Rather than somehow negate this belief (for which I may have considerable grounding), I choose to add another belief that is also true. Rather than hold to “either/or” I *open to* “*both/and*.” I may add that this person may be more receptive when she feels heard and legitimized in her concerns. Is there something I can do that allows us to meet there, without capitulating or forcing the issue? Am I willing to communicate what I have heard and to identify common ground about our concerns? If not, keep looking. If yes, then I’ve moved to a mindset that is more likely produce something positive.
- I choose a mood that lightens me, one that *feels better*. Feeling resentful or resigned, I feel closed. Is another mood available to me? What would I rather feel? More open, maybe? What would “more open” feel like in my body? Less tense, more at ease. I may be able to situate myself in a different mood with different sensations by remembering an instance when I naturally felt more open and at ease. Once I’ve really registered the new mood in my being, can I focus back on the situation I need to take care of now and still feel that more positive mood? The shift may happen in small increments. As my mood and sensations shift, so do my thoughts. Slowly, I am creating a new reality for myself to move from.



PRACTICE

As I pay attention to what works for me, I practice it over and over in ever more challenging situations. It's like weight training. We exercise our muscles in order to be better able to do something meaningful (e.g. ski down an open field of powder snow) with them. In work, for example, what mindset and mood empower me most to focus on the unique value of an offer I make. Or, what mindset and mood set me up to be more playful and creative? The mindset and mood set up a resonant field to attract those who want to connect with the quality I generate; they are more likely to perceive and move towards it. The more I practice making offers or being creative that way, the more it registers in my entire being as an option I can readily choose, even under trying circumstances. It becomes part of my muscle memory as much as other, less conscious, options have been.

How do wisdom, joy and compassion show up in this? Our attitudes, beliefs, skillfulness and self-motivation set the stage for the process and results that follow. I grow in wisdom as I put this knowledge into practice with conscious choice and intention. Compassion arises as I acknowledge what is true for me and trust myself. I cultivate compassion when I allow myself the freedom to risk, make mistakes and learn, accepting the challenge before me as “right” and on purpose for me now. I experience joy in accessing the resources, such as courage, honesty, patience, and insight, in myself that propel me to move towards what feels meaningful and enlivening in my life, step by step. It's a joy in being true to myself and awake to creating what I love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

As an Executive Coach and Change Consultant, Beata Lewis provides focused, pragmatic guidance to highly accomplished individuals and teams for intentional transformation. She helps clients achieve new levels leadership effectiveness and revitalized collaboration. Her field-tested experience in communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, change management and collaborative process facilitation combine elegantly with her expertise as a Master Somatic Coach™. The somatic framework is integrative and holistic in nature. With greater self-awareness and presence, clients approach new opportunities and challenges with greater clarity, resilience, compassion, grace, and power.

