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## HOW TO BECOME MORE EMPOWERED

*The choices we make*

by Rowena Morais

It's strange to write these words down now, in my forties, and think back to my twenties to the person I was then. It was a time when everything was new and raw, when I didn't have enough experience to look back on nor internal strength to guide me forward. I was afraid of many things. When things didn't go my way, I spent my time wishing and praying that things would go in a certain direction rather than look for ways to make that so.

I can't say I've made a leap in the complete opposite direction but I am today, more certain of who I am and what I want. I recognise that the things that have come my way are as much a product of my effort as it is a case of good fortune, a strong family, clear values and a touch of serendipity. I feel empowered and maybe, that's all we need sometimes.

I'd say, however, that there are a few things you can do to begin to feel empowered yourself.

**Just begin.** There is nothing quite as empowering as just beginning. Simply taking that first step, no matter how small or insignificant, towards the direction of your goal is powerful. That first step is indeed the hardest and when you cross over, the weight and burden of uncertainty and fear begins to dissipate. Action empowers you.

Take a chance. I've done the pros and cons list, I've argued back and forth about the merits of things and even taken a clinical approach at times. But since we never fully know outcomes beforehand, there's often an element of chance. I take chances, I put myself out there but I also

prepare. I do the research and the legwork to get to where I need to be. And if you're not keen to take a chance, ask yourself what you stand to lose by doing that and whether you can live with it.

**Be clear about what your goals are.**

The unique thing about goal setting is that it helps to show you a side to yourself that you may or may not like. I came across an interesting book over the weekend called 'The Book of Questions' by Gregory Stock. It contains a whole range of interesting and often difficult questions, for which there is often no right or wrong answer – only honest or dishonest ones. And goal setting is a little like that. When you set goals and find yourself not really working hard enough to meet them, then that's a side of yourself you begin to discover. There's no right or wrong – only whether you want to be honest with yourself as to what you really care about. And sometimes, discovering that the goal you had is now not really the goal you want can be quite liberating.

**Making choices.** Which comes to my next point that everything we do is about choices. Truth is, we face too many choices – every minute and every hour of the day. Minute, detailed choices at times. Hard choices at other times. And we don't have the mental stamina to keep making decisions, do we? But we do face these choices, whether we like to call them that or not. Being clear about my choices has been about knowing what I will say yes to as much as what I will say no to. It's about what I give up in order to do what I feel I must. And that makes things clear and shows you where you are. It frees your mental bandwidth and emotional energy

to concentrate on the things that matter.

**Personal responsibility.**

Making choices is linked to personal responsibility. It's what I told my kids this year – that this was their year of personal responsibility. The idea that you take charge of what happens. That you take ownership of what's in front of you. That in taking responsibility for it, regardless of whose fault a thing may be, you can feel empowered to make changes in the way you think, act and feel about it. Because what would be the opposite of that? That you would blame someone or something and where would that leave you? It may make you feel better about the situation knowing you could pin it on something but it would leave you powerless to fix it and isn't that what we'd want to do?

**Be open and go with the flow.** I think there are people who are probably not cut out for this approach because it does not fit their personality. 'A' type personalities would definitely be out of their element just going with the flow but I find that it's hard to always be in control of every element. It is a

losing battle in many ways. And how tiring it is to constantly be fighting an onslaught that sometimes, when you do give up to it, it is restful. Albeit for the moment.

**Live your own life.** It's clichéd, I know but it's also true. It's taken me a lifetime to discover that my job is to be the best possible version of myself. It takes practice, patience and a whole lot of different experiences to discover the varied facets of yourself and yet, you can find yourself still growing and discovering at later stages in life. It's taken having children to learn that I am not the teacher so much as I am the student. Some of us live dormant, waiting to be discovered, waiting to discover and if we do this, we do so at our own loss. The loss that comes from possibility unrealised.

At a meetup I ran some months ago, I heard the saying, "You can't make grass grow faster by pulling it." True. Everything needs time but also the right combination of factors to grow, to manifest. Realising that you can do things yourself to become empowered is about understanding what you need to do to help yourself grow and manifest. Don't you think?

*Editor and Programme Director at VerticalDistinct.com, a media and learning organisation, Rowena Morais focuses on curated learning, communication and content. An editor, LinkedIn profile writer, and most recently, a TEDx speaker, she supports Human Resource and Technology professionals in their career development through articles, podcasts, interviews and a range of internationally accredited, in-demand technical and professional courses offered throughout Asia Pacific and the Middle East. Tweeting at @rowenamoras, she is a ghostwriter and can be found at rowenamoras.com.*



*Rowena is running small capacity free LinkedIn Primer sessions from Jan – June this year, contact her to sign up. Rowena also runs monthly meetups for Thrive Kuala Lumpur, a networking and support group for career women. For more info, visit meetup.com/Thrive-Kuala-Lumpur*

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