**When You’re Stuck**

Most people who came to see me when I was still practicing as a psychiatrist were stuck in maladaptive patterns, unhealthy relationships, depressed moos, storms of anxiety, unproductive ways of thinking, poor decision-making, and other states of ill health. They often felt frustrated, demoralized, helpless, and ashamed.

Most people who came to see me were looking for ways to become unstuck. Here is what I told them.

Because you are stuck does not meant that you are inadequate. It does not mean either that you are doomed. It means that you are temporarily blocked by one obstacle or another that is interfering with your ability to move forward.

To become unstuck requires that you take steps to free yourself. I recommend that you:

1. Step back and identify the obstacle in your way.
2. Determine who put it there (you or someone else).
3. Define its origin temporally. Is in an obstacle from the past or the present?
4. Determine how much of it is physical and how much of it is emotional.
5. Understand its purpose and function.
6. Identify what it needs to stay alive and who is maintaining it (again you or someone else).
7. Feel out its weak spots.
8. Decide how big it really is and how much of its size is a function of your perspective. Hills sometimes look like mountains when you are standing at the base.

Once you have taken a good look at what is getting in your way, you need to develop a plan of attack. The obstacle is not likely to remove itself.

1. Map out a series of steps to take to get past the obstacle.
2. Order the steps in a manner that fits for you.
3. Move forward until you meet resistance.
4. Nudge the obstacle to determine the strength of the resistance.
5. If the resistance appears too great, back up and see if you can find a chink in the obstacle’s armor, they try again.
6. Continue to nudge and probe until you notice movement.
7. Keep moving forward until you have either moved the obstacle out of the way or you have passed it.

Not all obstacles can be maneuvered easily, especially those that are complex and reinforced by others. If you have examined the obstacle and failed to get past it, you may be dealing with an obstacle that you cannot get beyond without help. You may need special knowledge to overcome it. In that case, you would do well to:

1. Consult with an experienced person who is honest, truthful, frank and on your side such as a close friend, a loving family member, or a mental health professional.
2. Make sure that you have what you need to move forward. Some obstacles are deficiencies. Make sure that you have what you need to grow past the obstacle.
3. Check to see if there are drains on your system that impede forward movement. If you carry excess baggage from the past, it will be difficult to pick up new ways of doing things. If you have been wounded and have not healed, it will be difficult to move forward without limping. If you suffer from a physical disorder, it may be difficult to grow emotionally.
4. If another person benefits from your being stuck, it may be necessary to examine your relationship with that person. If it is a healthy relationship and the other person truly cares about you, you may be able to get them to move out of your way by simply asking. If it is an unhealthy relationship with someone who doesn’t love you, you may need to get rid of the relationship.
5. If you are living under the influence of an unhealthy system (politically, socially, occupationally) you will need to speak with others of like mind and determine if the group can make changes so that everyone becomes unstuck.
6. Be sure that you are not making the obstacle appear simpler than it is. Sometimes an obstacle is a conglomerate with many pieces that must be addressed individually. The road to freedom is not usually quick and easy. Give yourself time to work on it before you give up in despair.

Even the strongest among us is unable to get unstuck without seeing an expert. Yes, I’m talking about seeing a therapist. They will not look down on you because you run into an obstacle. They know that overcoming obstacles requires help. After all, they are people, too.