

Potatoes, Eggs, and Coffee Beans

by Brian Hazelgren

On a sunny day in the Southwest, a young daughter complained to her father that her life was miserable and that she didn't know how she was going to make it. She was tired of fighting and struggling all the time. It seemed just as one problem was solved, another one soon followed. (No, it wasn't during the pandemic of 2020, but it felt like it to her)!

Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed potatoes in one pot, eggs in the second pot, and ground coffee beans in the third pot.

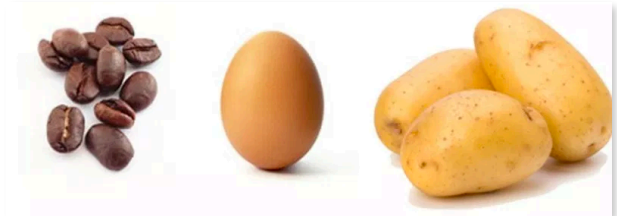
He then let them sit and boil, without saying a word to his daughter. The daughter, moaned and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing.

After twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He took the potatoes out of the pot and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the boiled eggs out and placed them in a bowl.

He then ladled the coffee out and placed it in a cup. Turning to her he asked. "Daughter, what do you see?"

"Potatoes, eggs, and coffee," she hastily replied.

"Look closer," he said, "and touch the potatoes." She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face.



"Father, what does this mean?" she asked.

He then explained that the potatoes, the eggs and coffee beans had each faced the same adversity – the boiling water.

However, each one reacted differently.

The potato went in strong, hard, and unrelenting, but in boiling water, it became soft and weak.

The egg was fragile, with the thin outer shell protecting its liquid interior until it was put in the boiling water. Then the inside of the egg became hard.

However, the ground coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to the boiling water, they changed the water and created something new.

"Which are you," he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a potato, an egg, or a coffee bean? "

The moral: In life, things happen around us, things happen to us, but the only thing that truly matters is what happens within us. Does the adversity we face change us in some ways that we cannot see or even control? The potato went in hard and become soft.

The egg went in fragile and came out strong. The coffee beans changed everything around them and created something new.

Which one are you? I guess that depends on what/who you would like to become?

Speaking for myself, I know that one thing is true: When you need to stand up and take action, things happen. When you sit around and wait for things to happen around you, you end up losing control. So maybe we should be asking this in a different way. "Do you want to act (or take action), or be acted upon?"

You have the gift to make a choice, or exercise your own free agency in your choices. No one can make us feel angry, demeaned, or bitter. That comes from within. When this happens then we are being acted upon. People don't put a gun to your head and tell you how to make all of your choices (at least I hope not!).

When we do not take action and someone then makes a decision that affects us in some way - be it positive or negative, then again, we are being acted upon. We actually DO have the choice of how we respond to an offensive or hurtful situation. These choices can also dictate our happiness - or unhappiness because of the consequences that will come from our choices. Should I eat the apple, or should I eat the donut? Should I take a new job opportunity or stay where I am at? Should I date - or marry this person or that person? Some choices may be insignificant, while others are much more important on how we will live our lives and the consequences that come from our choices.

In this life we make many choices each and every day. It's estimated that the average adult makes about **35,000** remotely conscious decisions each day!¹ Are you kidding me? That is a lot of decisions that we face...and that in itself can be overwhelming. Each decision carries certain consequences with it that can be both positive or negative.

What happens when we make a bad decision? As long as it is not life threatening, or injurious to someone, then take it for what it is and learn from the bad decision. It will help you to be prepared for the next time you face a similar choice.

Likewise with a good choice - it can open up many new doors to you. BE grateful for times like these. The point is we can't make perfect decisions 100% of the time...that is not what life is about. The further point is to not become paralyzed when faced with a decision. Follow your instinct, ask questions, believe in yourself, and pray for strength to make the right decision.

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¹ <http://science.unctv.org/content/reportersblog/choices#:~:text=It's%20estimated%20that%20the%20average,are%20both%20good%20and%20bad.>