

The Quest4Life Podcast Show Notes:

Season #3, Episode #17: Stop Giving Your Power Away

Podcast Host: Dr. Ed Slover

One of the things I've been wrestling with lately are the reasons why people don't believe their thoughts and feelings are valid in addition to allowing others to negatively influence their lives. In short, I've been wrestling with why people give their power away and the connection to the inability for these people to realize their full potential.

For clarification, what I am NOT talking about is empowering others. For example, as leaders in business, it is to our advantage to give our decision-making power away to those in our charge – to the extent we can give our decision-making power away – because it fosters an environment of trust and enhances the relationships between leader and follower.

What I am talking about with regard to giving your power away is how you define your self-worth, how it relates to letting guilt drive your decisions and actions, how it relates to self-limiting beliefs, and how it relates to the need to establish or reaffirm boundaries in your relationships with others and, more importantly, your relationship with yourself.

And by learning and applying ways to take back your power, it allows you to level-up your mindset and gives you a credible shot at achieving peak performance and realizing your potential.

Giving Your Power Away

You give away your power when you don't speak up when something is wrong. When you choose to stay silent, you become a participant – actively or passively – in the situation you find yourself in. Rather than exercising your power to speak up or state your opinion, you choose what you perceive to be the path of least resistance. The reality is that you always have the power to speak up, especially when something is wrong with you or your relationships.

Another example is that you wait for someone to give you permission and by doing this, you effectively outsource your power. You fail to negotiate on your own behalf by simply waiting for someone else to “green light” your next move or next step. The reality is that if you wait for others to negotiate on your behalf, you're going to be waiting a long time. But, when you give yourself permission to go after what you truly want, you exercise your power to create your OWN life.

Another way you give your power away is by procrastinating or avoiding making a decision. Ironically, when you fail to make a decision, you are, in fact, making a decision...a decision not to choose this or that. From there, a negative feedback loop gains momentum and you become a victim to whatever unfolds, which invariably leads to feelings of anger, bitterness, and resentment. The reality is that advocating for yourself by exercising your power to take decisive

action allows you to regain your power and not play the victim in your own story (Check out Season #2, Episode #19 of The Quest4Life Podcast – “The Stories We Tell Ourselves”).

A final example – and there are innumerable examples of how you give your power away – is that you play small. Said differently, you know you have the potential for more. You have the intellect and the skill to make more of a difference in your life and the lives of others and yet you don’t go down that road because it’s scary or uncertain. You don’t go down that road because you desire the safety of certainty more than taking risks to pursue and attain your potential. By doing this, you give away your power because you aren’t using your strengths, gifts, and talents to their fullest. In those moments, you might not feel you’re ready, but you’re ready enough.

Why You Give Your Power Away

We don’t set out to give our power away, right?

Interestingly, there are plenty of ways you give your power away and you might not even realize you’re doing it. Here are some signs:

- 1) You give into guilt trips. When someone “guilts” you, it tugs on your heartstrings, and you want to be seen favorably by that person. And so, you give into their guilt trip and, as a result, you give your power away (Check Season #1, Episode #22 of The Quest4Life Podcast – “Guilt Trips”).
- 2) You place your self-worth in the hands of others. You let other people’s thoughts, ideas, and perspectives about you define how you feel about yourself.
- 3) You have difficulty setting boundaries. You may not be aware, but setting clear boundaries are an integral part of a healthy, positive, productive relationship. And I’m not just talking about physical boundaries. Accordingly, establishing boundaries helps create a psychologically and emotionally safe environment. By not doing so, you subject yourself to unhealthy relationships.
- 4) You hold grudges. What’s funny about holding grudges or holding onto anger, bitterness, and resentment is that, in almost every case, doing so doesn’t affect the other person, but it wreaks havoc on you. Whether someone wronged you yesterday or hurt you 10 years ago, holding grudges takes up space in your life and disallows you from exercising your power in other areas.
- 5) You’re hypersensitive to criticism, which can lead to self-limiting beliefs. What’s fascinating about this one is that we intuitively know that getting feedback from others can be instrumental to realizing our potential. The obvious challenge is that if you internalize feedback as criticism, it can prevent you from living your best life because you will limit yourself by having given that power away.

And, speaking of space, self-limiting beliefs take up an inordinate amount of space. Said differently, you place so much emphasis on what you can’t do or can’t accomplish, there is no room left for those things that are well within your power to control. A bitter irony to be sure.

Regaining Your Power

First, take responsibility for your life. Acknowledge that when bad things happen to you, it's not your fault...BUT...it is your responsibility to deal with it or overcome it. In today's day and age, however, this is quite challenging, as society has grown to accept that everyone is a victim and taking responsibility requires much more energy and effort than the attention people get from playing The Blame Game and the Victim Card. By taking responsibility for your own thoughts, decisions, and actions, you reclaim power over your life.

Next, according to the organization, Better Help, the world's largest online therapy service helping people work through issues like depression, anxiety, relationships, trauma, grief, and the like, cognitive reframing is the process of shifting your perspective by replacing negative or flawed thought patterns with more realistic and positive ones, which help to improve your mood, mental health, and general well-being. This is important because negative or flawed thought patterns, also known as cognitive distortions, show up as "all-or-nothing thinking," "mental filtering," and "mind reading."

By reframing your thoughts and focusing on solutions to the problems in front of you allows you to take back power of your life. In effect, reframing allows you to stop externalizing your reality, which can lead to a victim mentality, and allows you to start internalizing your reality by being able to find the good or opportunity in situations that can still lead you to accomplishing your goals.

Still another way for you to reclaim power in your life is to set an intention for your life. You may think of these as short- or long-term goals. No matter how you conceive of it, setting an intention for your life gives you an aim and human beings are goal-oriented creatures by nature. Unfortunately, our society has become far too accepting of people being listless and aimless. If you want to take back power over your life, set an intention and spend your time and attention on that intention.

The trick to this is to make sure that the intention you set is BIGGER than any excuse you can come up with to not show up and push toward what you intend. Another way of stating this is that life is about incentives and payoffs. For this, if the incentive of pursuing what you intend and the perceived payoff of achieving what you intend is equal to or less than any alternative, you'll continue giving your power away because your excuses are greater than the intention.

For example, if you intend on changing your lifestyle by losing weight and eating healthier, this must be MORE important to you than coming home from work and lounging on the sofa eating a bag of salty snacks or sweets. And until it's more important, nothing will change, which relates back to the previous comments about reframing your mindset. Until the excuses are less important than your prioritized intention, nothing will change.

Final Thoughts

Give some thought to how you define your self-worth, how it relates to letting guilt drive your decisions and actions, how it relates to self-limiting beliefs, and how it relates to the need to

establish or reaffirm boundaries in your relationships with others and, more importantly, your relationship with yourself.

From there, consider ways that you knowingly or unknowingly give your power away and what it would mean for your life if you reclaimed your power. Then answer the question: What is the downside? And when we come across those things in life with little-to-no downside, we should probably do them.

Doing this work – and it is work – will not only level-up your mindset, but it will give you the best shot at achieving peak performance and realizing the call of your potential.

As usual, it's food for thought, Fellow Questers.

