

Session 3.15 | 5 Things to Remember In Tough Times

In the last few sessions, we have looked at the reasons why leaders struggle to apply learning...

1. Investing in Other People because we're spending so much time investing in other people, it's difficult for us to invest in our own development.
2. Busyness & Distraction and how they keep us from our own development.
3. Don't take time to fully recharge. And we looked at two key disciplines for leaders to follow to maintain energy - Rest and Time Away.

In this session, we are going to look at reason #4. Obstacles. Specifically, What do you do when you're dealing with something incredibly challenging at work or at home that is distracting you?

We've all realized that tough times are inevitable. It's the one thing that we can count on that something is going to happen to you that you didn't want to happen - you didn't expect to happen. What are you going to do about it?

Several years ago, I visited the George W. Bush Presidential Library on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. It was my first visit to a presidential library, I was reminded of the difficult moments, days, weeks, and months following the September 11, 2001 attacks on our country.

In one of the exhibits, I watched a short video in which the former president said:
I never wanted to be a wartime president.

There are going to be things that happen to you that you didn't want - or expect to happen to you.

Let's face it - Life is going to deal you a hand that you don't want to play. And the fundamental question is - how are you going to play it?

That's just the way life is.

Like you and our 43rd president, I have been confronted by some of the most challenging and difficult circumstances I've ever experienced.

Some of those times were the byproduct of my own poor choices. But many times, it was not.

When we face tough circumstances or situations, we often want to go right to solving the problem or addressing the person that's responsible.

This often escalates the problem.

Has that ever happened to you? You thought you were handling it appropriately and making progress only to realize that the situation is now worse than it was before.

This happens for several reasons - We may not have all of the information necessary to fully address the problem, or we often don't have the margin to solve it in a productive way, and that's what most leaders miss. Without the proper margin or time to devote to resolving the challenge - there's a good chance that we'll make it worse rather than solving the issue.

Rather than wasting precious time and enormous amounts of energy regretting my path and actions, asking why or what if. Asking why am I experiencing this, what if I haven't experienced this? I have chosen to focus on these 5 things when I'm faced with tough times...

1. Keep going.

Acknowledge the pain, no matter what it is - a bad boss, a challenging team member, an unexpected diagnosis, trouble at home. Make time to reflect on it. But no matter what - don't give up. Keep going!

Obstacles occur to help you determine if you really believe in the vision for your life for your work, for your relationship, for your career and yet, most people when they experience the obstacle or the challenge, they never get past it. So, they never accomplished significant goals in their life and work and they live unfulfilled lives. Because instead of moving past the problem, we calculated the size of the obstacle or the challenge and we didn't keep moving.

Quit calculating the size of the obstacle and remember the size of the vision. Remember how important those individuals, and relationships are to you. Keep your eye on that vision, and you will be far more effective if you focus on the vision and keep moving forward. When you're faced with challenging circumstances, ask this question, What is one thing that I can do today to move forward in a productive way with this challenge? Keep going!

2. Keep growing.

So many people struggle when their visions and plans aren't clear. They don't have clarity on where they're headed. They don't know where to start or how to move forward especially on

challenging situations, and they do the absolute worst thing they could do - they stop growing.

When you're feeling unsupported, blocked, or stuck - keep growing intentionally. When it doesn't feel like your team is making progress, and if they even pushing back against the work you're trying to do- don't stop, keep growing. Keep investing in them. When your life and work seems like it's designed to frustrate you and thwart your plans, keep growing intentionally.

Don't stop. Keep going. Your breakthrough is closer than you think if you will keep growing.

3. Keep evaluating.

Your success is dependent upon your understanding of why you do what you do. It's what we talked about in the last session when we looked at the Time Tracking Journal, you're evaluating how you're using your time so you can be more successful in your life, work and leadership. Do you have a purpose? Is that purpose compelling? Are you following that path that you have prescribed or laid out?

Revisit your purpose, your vision, and your goals. Clarify them. Rewrite them. Make them memorable. Make them meaningful.

Ask yourself, Where did I get off track and What's one step that I can take today toward getting back on track?

When you do, it will give you the energy to address the challenge that you are experiencing in your life, or in your work.

4. Keep producing.

Is there an area of your life and work in which you've not been able get the results you desire - the results that you know are possible?

We teach the Specificity principle and tool in depth in the Simple Leadership Course. So, I won't do that here. You can get more detail in the full course.

To get better results, get more specific. When you get more specific, you're able to see better results, higher productivity, and higher levels of performance. Get more specific about what you want to accomplish and when you want to accomplish it. Get more specific with how you're going to do it. Get more specific about the help you need and who you need help from.

Break the project down into smaller very specific tasks. Block out specific time on your calendar. Whatever the project, challenger, or issue is - get more specific.

Find a solution instead of letting the obstacle become an excuse. When you do, you'll experience greater productivity and efficiency!

What is it that you need to get more specific about today so that you can get that next best step for you?

5. Keep serving.

Interesting about serving is that, it is rarely the first thing that comes to mind when you are navigating a tough time. And yet the best way to get your mind off the bad that is happening to you is to focus on serving others.

When I was in college, a group of us would spend some time every weekend going to this independent living or these assistant living facilities. We often went there volunteering these facilities to be an encouragement to the elderly who were staying in these facilities often without their family to care for them. The thing that becomes so interesting for me was that, what's in my mindset is to get this place, to be an encouragement to this people in their twilight years of their lives. I often left those facilities on those weekend, feeling more encouraged than I feel like I encouraged them. I feel like they encouraged me more than I encouraged them.

When you genuinely care for others and do something about it, you'll often find that you are more encouraged than those you are serving.

While these steps won't directly solve the incredibly challenging situation that you find yourself in that you're navigating, they do provide the margin, motivation, and energy to solve it in a productive way. That's what most leaders miss and that's what most leaders need.

Give yourself the best opportunity for success by creating margin. When you do, you'll be more fulfilled in your work, and you'll end up with better connection, relationships and higher levels of productivity.

This week while I was traveling, I had conversations with several people about how tempting it is to compartmentalize areas of our lives like obstacles. Maybe it helps when we label these things, obstacles. Maybe it helps us to feel better about ourselves. Maybe it puts these problem areas into a neat little box so we can push them out of our sight and out of our mind.

Think about this - obstacles are inevitable. They're a natural part of our life, work, and leadership.

If they are to be expected, even unavoidable, why do we need to label them? The fact that we label these obstacles or we label these situations, it makes them scary. It conjures up anxiety.

What if we simply viewed them as a part of life and as an inevitable part of our work?

Here's the truth, you can prepare for future obstacles. If you don't, these obstacles and challenges will impact your progress.

Your life matters immensely and your work matters immensely. So don't give up and don't get stuck and don't spend enormous amount of time and energy in the midst of these challenges. Remember, you don't have to get it perfect, you just need to take the next step.

Next Session

We have been looking at the reasons leaders struggle to apply learning...

1. Investing in Others that we're investing so much time in other people, it's difficult for us to invest in our own leadership development.
2. Busyness & Distraction and how they keep us from focusing on our own development.
3. Don't take time to fully recharge. And we looked at two key disciplines for leaders to follow to maintain energy –Recharge and Rest, and we looked at Recharge and taking Time Away.
4. Obstacles and what to do when you're facing something incredibly challenging in your life, work, or leadership.

In the next session, I am going to show you the 3 challenges every leader must confront in order to apply learning in their life and in their work.

See you in the next session.

Fast Action Steps

1. Who can you serve or encourage today?
2. Stop right now for just a moment and call them. Write them a note. Send them a text. Purchase a small, simple gift for them. Don't just make a mental note to do it later. You will forget. Don't just write their name down to call them later. You won't do it. Just do it - right now.
3. Let them know that they matter. Encourage them to keep going. You'll be glad you did.