

## When You're Stuck

Most people who come to see me are stuck – stuck in maladaptive patterns, unhealthy relationships, depressed moods, storms of anxiety, unproductive ways of thinking, poor decision-making, and unhealthy lifestyles. They too often feel frustrated, demoralized, helpless, and ashamed.

Most people who come to see me are looking for ways to become unstuck. Here is what I tell them.

Because you are stuck does not mean 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 which 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 the obstacle there. Was it you or someone else?
- 3) Think about how big the obstacle really is, and if your perception of its size has been influenced by where you are standing. Hills sometimes look like mountains if you are standing at the base.
- 4) Determine the nature of the obstacle. Is it psychological? Is it physical? Is it both?
- 5) Develop an understanding of the obstacle's purpose or function.
- 6) Learn what the obstacle needs to stay alive, and if someone is feeding it.
- 7) Feel out its weak spots.
- 8) Determine if you are dealing with one big obstacle or a collection of small ones.
- 9) Think about what you need to overcome, remove, or circumvent the obstacle.

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

- 1) Map out a series of steps to get past the obstacle in front of you.
- 2) Order the steps in a manner that fits for you as an individual.
- 3) Move forward until you meet resistance.

- 4) Nudge the obstacle to determine how strong the resistance is.
- 5) If the resistance appears too great, back up and see if you can find a chink in the obstacle's armor, then try again.
- 6) Continue to nudge and probe until you notice movement.
- 7) Keep heading forward until you have either moved the obstacle out of the way or you have passed it.

Not all obstacles can be maneuvered easily, particularly those that are complex. If you have examined the obstacle and made attempts to get past it without success, you may be dealing with an obstacle that you cannot overcome without help. You may be dealing with an obstacle about which you need special knowledge if you are to overcome it. In that case, you would do well to:

- 1) Consult with someone with experience who is honest, truthful, frank, and on your side such as a good friend, a loving family member, or a mental health professional. Ask that person to take a look at the obstacle you are trying to overcome to see if you have missed something. A fresh perspective can often provide additional ideas about how to get unstuck.

- 2) Make sure that you have what you need to move forward. Some obstacles, for example, are actually deficiencies. Make sure that your system has what it needs to grow and develop in a healthy manner.

- 3) Check to see if there are drains on your system that are impeding your forward movement. If you are carrying baggage from the past, it may be difficult to pick up new ways of doing things in the present and carry them with you. If you have been wounded and your wounds have not healed, it may be difficult to move forward without limping.

- 4) If another person is benefiting from your staying stuck, it will be necessary for you to examine your relationship with that person. If it is a reasonably healthy relationship and the other person truly cares about you, you may be able to get the other person to move out of your way by simply asking. If it is an unhealthy relationship involving someone who doesn't love you, you may need to get rid of the relationship if you are to become unstuck.

- 5) If you are living under the influence of an unhealthy system (politically, socially, occupationally) you will need to speak with others who are of like mind and determine if you are able to change it so that everyone can become unstuck.

- 6) Be sure that you are not making the obstacle appear simpler than it is. What looks like a single obstacle is sometimes a conglomerate with many pieces that you must address individually. If that is the case, it may take overcoming multiple obstacles to

become unstuck. And that takes time. Give yourself the time you need to work on it before you quit in despair. The odds that you will overcome the obstacles that are keeping you stuck are very good.