

FIVE KEYS TO LIVING AN EMPOWERED LIFE

Learning to Live Your Life on Your Terms

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What is an “empowered life?”

It is a life where you feel that you have some sense of control over. It is also feeling content about your life and where you are in life. No, it is not that your life is *free* from stressors, strife or bad events, or that you will *always* be happy, or that you are complacent and not wanting to improve your life. Rather, an empowered life is one where you are able to feel “in control” instead of “being controlled” by the events, circumstances, or people in your life.

Now, you may be thinking, “that’s totally impossible . . . there’s never going to be a time in my life where I’ll be stress-free, or when ‘bad things’ are not happening.” You may also feel, “there are always going to be events or circumstances that are out of my control.” And you are absolutely right. There is no such thing as a “life devoid of stress,” unless of course, you live in a monastery (although I think even monks have some type of “stress”), and there are circumstances that are indeed beyond our control. However, it is possible to have a life where in which you feel “empowered” rather than one that you are “resigned” to live. Mind you, it’s not easy, but doable, if you follow the keys outlined below. Also, keep in mind that this is a *process* (i.e., something that you will always be working on), as your life is constantly changing.

Key #1-Figure out what is truly important to you and prioritize this accordingly.

Not everything in your life is *truly* important to you, at least not all at the same time. While you may think that “it’s ALL important now,” when you really sit down and consider all that you may be doing or the relationships that you are spending time in, chances are you’ll realize that not everything is in line with what is most important to you. So, the question is what’s really important to you? Think about this for a moment. Is it your family, your marriage/relationship, your friends (in this case, what type of friends?), your job/career, etc. Get really clear on this.

You may realize that your life is “cluttered” with tasks, people, activities that may not be productive or relevant to be on your list of “what’s important.” For most people, there are only going to be just a few (maybe 3-4) areas that will be important enough to be on your list. Living an empowered life is about *choices*. It is learning to prioritize the areas in your life that are important to you. No matter who you are, you can not do everything. And if you try to do this, you will soon find yourself feeling overwhelmed and out of control. When clients tell me that they are overwhelmed with ALL they have to do (i.e., having a “full plate”), I ask them first to list up to three areas in their lives that are most

important to them. For example, they may say that their family, career, and friendships are the areas that are vital in their lives. We then look at their day-to-day activities to determine whether the activities they are engaging in are relevant to the areas of importance that they have identified. If not, the task is eliminated. A “productivity expert” stated that what’s on your *not-to-do* list is just as important as what’s on your to-do list.

Key #2-Take personal responsibility.

You are personally responsible for your life. You are responsible for the good, the bad, and anything “in between.” Yes, you can say, “but I had no control over how I was brought up” or “there are things/events that just happened to me.” While that may be true, you now have a choice---“Do I continue to use these incidents/events/circumstances as an excuse, or how will I live my life from this day forward *in spite* of this?” To live an empowered life, you must take responsibility for the decisions you make, how you respond to situations, the relationships you choose, etc. Until you acknowledge this and embrace it, you will live a life that is disempowering rather than empowering. Keep this in mind: When you take personal responsibility, you are in control. Therefore, you have the power to make changes where necessary. When you blame your situation on others or circumstances, you relinquish your power and control.

Key #3-Learn to respect yourself.

If *you* don’t do this, no one will. We “teach” others how to treat us by how we *allow* them to treat us. That is, how others treat us is an indicator of how much we *respect* ourselves. When we allow people to treat us badly, we are basically teaching them that it is “okay” to treat us in this manner. Many people may not be fully aware of this. One of the ways to look at this is to ask yourself, “What am I tolerating in my relationships or in the situations that I’m in, and what does this say about how I feel about myself?” Begin treating yourself with respect.

Key #4-Figure out what you can and can not control.

In life, we are faced with many challenges. You’ve probably encountered people, events, circumstances that you feel you have had no control over. Some of you may feel compelled to control every aspect of your life and feel frustrated, upset, stressed, and anxious when you can’t. Well, the truth is (if you haven’t figured this out by now): You can’t control everything, and there is no sense trying to because it will cause you to feel disempowered rather than empowered. You can, however, control yourself (your thoughts, actions, and even feelings). You have a choice as to how you can respond to situations, circumstances, or people.

Key #5-Live life with a purpose.

Are you living a life with purpose or “by default?” Are you going through life just waiting for things to happen to you? Are you just going through the motions day after day, or are you consciously planning your day and living it with intention? People who have a life purpose are happier and enjoy their lives more. Take some time to figure out your life purpose. You don’t have to come up something that is monumental or profound. A life purpose is like your mission statement. It could be as simple as “to be the best person I can be” or “to live everyday helping others” or “to be the best _____ (parent/spouse/partner) I can be.” Write your life purpose on a piece of paper or index card and carry it with you to remind yourself of what matters to you most. Take a look at it regularly and ask yourself whether your decisions and activities are consistent with this.

To summarize, living an empowered life consists of the following: (1) Identifying and prioritizing areas in your life that are truly important to you, and making sure that your day-to-day activities are in line with this, (2) Taking personal responsibility for your decisions, actions, and behaviors, (3) Respecting yourself even when others may not be doing this, (4) Learning to differentiate between what you can and can not control, and (5) Having a life purpose. Using even one of these keys will help you to create a life where you feel more empowered.

Psychologist Dr. Linda Inatsuka provides strength-based, solution-focused counseling and coaching services to empower individuals to solve problems such as overcoming depression and grief, finding relief from anxiety and stress, changing unhealthy behaviors, and rediscovering the joy in their relationships.

If you’d like assistance with creating an “empowered life,” please contact Dr. Inatsuka at (813) 985-6121 or via e-mail at drlinda@liveempowered.com.

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