

What Getting Out of Bed in the Morning Can Teach Us About Success and Human Nature

When entrepreneurs recently gathered for a retreat at an exclusive resort in Utah, one participant [expressed concern](#) about what he observed as a lack of commitment to achievement: “Everyone wants to work at SpaceX; no one wants to go to engineering school.”

On a recent walk, I encountered a neighbor who shared her concerns about her son, a bright high school student. “He wants to be an architect, but he won’t complete assignments or study,” the neighbor related. “When I encourage him to pursue his goals by studying more he says, ‘I don’t feel like it’.”

“The next time you have this conversation,” I advised, “ask him if he thinks you like getting out of the bed in the morning and going to work?” My neighbor laughed with recognition, so I continued.

I explained to my neighbor that her son was taking his “*I don’t feel like it*” feeling state as a guide to action. Feelings are a real-time signal of the quality of one’s thinking; thoughts lead to feelings. Her son was blind to the link between his thoughts and feelings. He was sure his feelings had more to do with his world, his teachers, and his textbooks rather than his own internal beliefs and thinking.

My neighbor’s son was sure “they” were keeping him from reaching his goal.

How You Do Anything, Is How You Do Everything

I wanted to convey the universality of feeling internal resistance to taking action, so I clumsily shared this joke

told by the late Jesuit priest and psychotherapist [Anthony de Mello](#).

[A] gentleman knocks...on his son's door.

"Jaime," he says, "wake up!"

Jaime answers, "I don't want to get up, Papa."

The father shouts, "Get up, you have to go to school."

Jaime says, "I don't want to go to school."

"Why not?" asks the father.

"Three reasons," says Jaime. "First, because it's so dull; second, the kids tease me; and third, I hate school."

And the father says, "Well, I am going to give you three reasons why you must go to school. First, because it is your duty; second, because you are forty-five years old, and third, because you are the headmaster."

De Mello adds an admonition for all of us: "Wake up, wake up! You've grown up. You're too big to be asleep. Wake up! Stop playing with your toys."

De Mello is right. Via our thinking, we all play the *I don't feel like it* theme.

Today, notice that no matter what you are doing, even if you have a dream job and a dream life, a part of your thinking is arguing that you should be doing something else.

Are you washing dishes? Maybe you're thinking the dishes can wait until the morning, or someone else in the family should do them.

Are you a salesman explaining something to a client? Part of your mind may distract you with resentful feelings over your client's "stupid questions." When you don't make a sales bonus at the end of the year, you are sure the cause is a lousy economy and an unsupportive sales manager rather than your mindset.

The neighbor's son may study halfheartedly. We wash the last pot and skip cleaning the counters. We may forgo going back to the client with important details.

At times, we are all the actor who phones in a performance. When we do, we harm ourselves.

Take heed, there is wisdom in the adage, *how you do anything, is how you do everything. If we think we can save our best for when we decide it matters, we are telling ourselves a lie. Our mindset matters.*

An Age-Old Affliction

In his [Meditations](#), Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius observed his own *I don't feel like it* mindset and provided himself an antidote:

At dawn, when you have trouble getting out of bed, tell yourself: "I have to go to work—as a human being. What do I have to complain of, if I'm going to do what I was born for—the things I was brought into the world to do? Or is this what I was created for? To huddle under the blankets and stay warm?"

Aurelius observed his mind complaining about it being "nicer" in bed:

So you were born to feel "nice"? Instead of doing things and experiencing them? Don't you see the plants, the birds, the ants and spiders and bees going about their individual tasks, putting the world in order, as best they can? And you're not willing to do your job as a human being? Why aren't you running to do what your nature demands?

Sinking into a *I don't feel like it* mindset, we lack respect for our gifts.

"You don't love yourself enough. Or you'd love your nature too, and what it demands of you," wrote Aurelius. "People who love what they do wear themselves down doing it, they even

forget to wash or eat.”

Almost two-thousand years later George Bernard Shaw echoed Aurelius in his play [Man and Superman](#):

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

The time may come when we bound out of bed “feeling like it.” Until then, we can choose to stop shadowboxing with the effects of our state of mind. We can stop blaming other people and our circumstances for our decision to not feel like it.

When we take more responsibility, our malaise lifts and we happily go the extra mile towards living a purposeful life.

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