



Reaching for Utopia

Dismantle your personal status quo by throwing out old habits and taking personal responsibility to create meaningful societal change.

Imagine for a moment a community where correctional facilities are virtually empty, our government is flourishing, our schools are filled with successful students, people are happy, relationships work and, in fact, there is absolutely no need for an abuse shelter.

That's a pretty astounding image. The belief that each of us has the power to create a community like this is exhilarating. What could be more exciting than knowing

that collectively we can create this Utopia? The big question is: Why aren't we doing it? Tapping into that kind of power requires that each of us take 100 percent personal responsibility for our thoughts, feelings and actions by taking risks and making change. We resist this, naturally, because it's scary. Subsequently, we often choose to keep the status quo, which prevents us from reaching our individual potential. Over time, this affects our community, country and, ultimately, the world.

THE CHALLENGE

This month, I'm going to ask you to give up three things that will challenge your very own status quo, moving us all closer to being the change we want to see in the world.

WHAT WE CAN DO:

{1} GIVE UP EXCUSES

Excuses are faulty reasoning that keep us from getting what we ultimately really want. We

The circumstances we complain about are situations that we can change.

all use them! One that I fall back on all too often is "I ran out of time" or "I didn't have enough time." And really, excuses can be so good we convince ourselves that they're true. We use excuses, however, to avoid uncomfortable feelings. Begin noticing your favorites. Then ask yourself, "What uncomfortable feeling am I trying to avoid here?"

{2} GIVE UP BLAMING

We will never reach our goals if we blame others for our lack of success. It's true in every facet of life. We will never find the happiness we want in our relationships if we blame other people and things for



our unhappiness. Taking responsibility means no fault, no blame. The truth is it doesn't even matter whose fault it is... what matters is solving the problem, getting the job done or finding what makes us happy. To do that we have look at our role in the problem and how we are contributing to our own unhappiness.

Begin noticing if you're blaming other people or things and ask yourself, "What uncomfortable feeling am I trying to avoid?"



{3} GIVE UP COMPLAINING

Complaining is another common way we avoid personal responsibility. What we're really saying when we complain is that we believe that something better exists out there. If we didn't believe that there was a better job, a more loving relationship, or a better car or house, we wouldn't complain. What we're also saying, though, is that we're unwilling to make a change to create what we want. Think about it. The circumstances we complain about are situations that we can change. We can have a more loving relationship, eat healthier food and get the better job. All these things, however, require us to change. This is where it gets a little dicey.

Change involves risk. For instance, if you want your partner to be more attentive, you take a risk when you ask for changes in

the relationship. You risk not getting what you want, there may be conflict, and the greatest risk is ending up alone. No wonder we often choose to complain instead. Change is always uncomfortable at best and often confusing and difficult. For the same reasons we use excuses and place blame, we complain to avoid uncomfortable feelings. When we take responsibility, however, we can either make a change or accept the choice to stay where we are. Either way, the need to complain is eliminated.

As individuals, when we begin taking 100 percent personal responsibility for our thoughts and actions, we can have an amazingly positive impact on our own lives and the greater community. It's a simple concept but not particularly easy to abide by. However, by relinquishing excuses, blame and complaints, we can experience exhilarating rewards and can ultimately begin to create the change we want to see in the world. ☺

With more than 15 years of experience, Kathy A. Feinstein, M.S., is a licensed mental health counselor and certified consultant for the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.



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