PSYCHOLOGY | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Feeling of Getting Nowhere

I once believed that progress required a steady, consistent forward motion toward perfection.

by **Donna Bellacera**

828 words | 4 pages

If I were to look back at my life thus far, as I often do, I'd notice a pattern of events and feelings resembling the activity on an EKG monitor.

For every peak, there's been a valley. For every leap forward, there's been a stumble backward—sometimes just an inch, and other times, what seemed like miles.

Recognizing and embracing this has brought me a tremendous amount of peace, because I once believed that progress required a steady, consistent forward motion toward perfection.

If I struggled with something I'd struggled with before, I felt I'd somehow failed. If I experienced a personal or professional setback, I thought I'd done something wrong.

Growing, to me, meant always doing and feeling better than I did the day before. But I've realized that's not growth; and when I believed it was, growth wasn't what I was seeking.

> **I was seeking permanently better. I wanted persistent happiness—a reprieve from difficult, overwhelming feelings, and a sense that every day of my life, I was one inch closer to that permanent happiness.**

I'd say that life's about the journey, but in the back of my head I believed it would have no purpose if not for the destination, which made it hard to truly pull my focus from it.

In this mindset, always fixated on **getting there**, and deeply upset by any seeming break in momentum, I constantly felt angry with myself.

But I wasn't supposed to be feeling angry—I'd been planting seeds of peace for years.

I wasn't supposed to doubt myself—I'd been building my confidence for years.

All this emphasis on where I should be made it difficult to ever experience those elusive positive feelings I wanted to feel.

Then one day, I considered that maybe this mindset was paralyzing me. I wondered if maybe I was actually hindering my growth by expecting growth to be paint by numbers.

It's often in our struggles that we stretch and come to better understand ourselves. They're part of the growth process—not a departure from it.

We grow when we do our best to learn from and move beyond our challenges instead of obsessing over them and making ourselves feel stuck.

This may sound simple, but for a long time, it was hard for me to wrap my head around this idea, mainly because of all the messy emotions that came up when I thought I messed up.

Isn't growth supposed to feel good?

> **That's the thing, though: Just like a muscle needs to tear to grow stronger, sometimes we need to wade into our own darkness to find a brighter light.**

We don't need to worry that every setback indicates something's wrong. So long as we're making progress on the whole, we can trust we're doing just fine.

We will all make mistakes in life. We all go through phases when we need to relearn lessons we've already learned, and that can be frustrating when we're in that moment, feeling regret, remorse, or impatience.

But if we looked back on our lives, despite the peaks and valleys, we'd recognize how far we've come. We'd see we've learned and grown, as we do every moment of every day.

We'd see we're not the same people we were before, and know we won't be the same tomorrow.

Still, while we're always becoming, we can't ever experience happiness if we're fixated on who we could or should be.

> **We can only experience happiness by being who we are, because it's only available right now.**

We may never attain the permanent happiness, but maybe that's okay. Maybe our purpose isn't just to grow—maybe it's also about growing to love our perfectly imperfect selves.

Donna Bellacera is Founder & CEO of Mastery for Women
Successful Thinkers Network, Inc
December 2012 – Present (3 years 6 months)Sacramento
Mastery for Women is a division of Successful Thinkers Network™, where building relationships is the key. Our groups are designed to foster a sense of community where we, as women, can grow.

It is a call to action, a movement, a safe place where women can support each other to reach their goals and desires that tug at their hearts and souls.

It is more than just socializing – we provide a blueprint for making the lives of others better and in the process enriching our own lives. We have just begun!

We can serve one another best by putting our egos aside, by listening to one another and by supporting one another. We are a sisterhood sharing together.

Mastery for Women is dedicated to providing the tools necessary to help reach out and welcome more women into our family. We are a family of supporting, building and mentoring. We are all beautiful, intelligent and all have something to contribute.