

CHOOSE YOUR PAIN

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If only I had started that a year ago, things would be different now.” How often have you said that to yourself? I have kicked myself in the backside hundreds of times for not “getting started sooner”. It doesn’t matter whether its homework, a project at work or saving for retirement, the sooner you start the better off you will be. One of my former employers had the words “**Do It Now**” inscribed at the bottom of all the company documents and personalized note pads. At the time I did not truly appreciate the power in those three little words; the power to inflict pain.

Consider with me, if you will, that there are basically two types of pain in life. One is the pain of action and the other is the pain of inaction. In other words, there is the pain of self discipline and the pain that comes from a lack of discipline. Let’s say you are 35 pounds overweight. You have a choice to either deal with the pain of exercise and disciplined eating habits or you can choose the pain that comes with serious health issues and a shorter life span. Likewise, you can choose the pain associated with saving a portion of every paycheck in preparation for retirement, or you can choose the pain that comes from making ends meet on a small government check that barely covers your expenses at the public housing project you will be spending your “golden years” in. Either way, it is totally your choice.

The other day I saw a parody on those success-oriented posters. It had a beautiful picture of a man standing on the beach, tossing a stone into the ocean. The caption read: “**PROCRASTINATION! Hard Work often pays off over time but Laziness always pays off now**”. It is funny because we perceive it as true. But it is NOT true. Procrastination never pays off. It may feel good at the time, but there is always a price to pay in return. We often choose to enjoy the moment and put off our responsibilities until later. Then, when the stuff hits the fan, we bemoan the “bad luck” that has fallen on us and look for someone (or the government) to bale us out.

Sorry, I don’t believe in luck. I believe in preparation. Bad things happen to all of us. The difference is how well prepared we are to handle the woes of life as they come our way. I recently spoke to a group of high school seniors and stated that each and every one of them has the ability to become a millionaire before they retire. I explained that if they saved \$50 per month until age 65, they would have a net savings of 1.3 million dollars (this is assuming they start at age 18 and net a 12% return over time, compounded quarterly). Did they “get it”? I know I didn’t think too much about the future when I was their age. However, if just one of them decides to choose the pain of saving for retirement at such a young age, it will have been worth my effort.

So, pick your poison: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret? If you can already look back on the things you wished you had done, it’s not too late to change the equation.

What will you potentially look back on a year from now, wishing you had started today?
Decide what you really want out of life and then go get it. It's ***your*** choice.