

THE POWER OF PAIN

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Pain is an emotion most people avoid at any cost without realizing it can help us accomplish goals that seem impossible. As crazy as it sounds, once you learn to focus pain in the right direction, you will have control of your decisions. As a life coach, I have had the opportunity to confirm this theory with many of my clients, as well as with myself. It was thanks to pain I accomplished one of the most challenging goals in my life.

Newly wed and with the goal in mind of continuing my college education is how I arrived to Michigan back in the summer of 2003. I enrolled on Eastern Michigan University. I knew it was going to be a challenging endeavor since most of my formal education was received while I lived in Mexico. Additionally, I was transferring from a community college on the border of south Texas where the majority of the students are Hispanic; therefore, I did not have to speak much English outside of class.

At first, everything was tough in Michigan especially understanding the locals since their accent was quite different from that on the border of south Texas. I thought I would get used to it in a couple of months. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. I realized my English vocabulary was not as extensive as I thought. It was then that the dictionary became my best friend.

Due to my lack of vocabulary, I forced myself to dedicate extra hours to every single course. By the end of the first semester, I was

exhausted. Finally, the time to get my grades had arrived. Upon opening the envelope with my shaky hands, the most discouraging thing happened. The results did not reflect the extensive amount of time I had dedicated to my studies. I broke down in tears. At that moment, I considered myself a failure and an uncontrollable force of pain and fear embraced me.

Many negative thoughts invaded my mind such as It was not worth it, all the time I invested, maybe there is something wrong with me, and why can't I learn English? Am I stupid? These destructive thoughts were in my mind day and night. I was debating between continuing or quitting school. It was painful to continue my college education because the challenge was more complicated than I initially thought. At the same time, the idea of quitting without accomplishing my goal seemed to be even more painful than continuing. With the support of my husband and friends, I decided to keep fighting for what it looked like one of the most challenging goals to accomplish in my life.

According to the motivational speaker Anthony Robbins, there are two major forces that drive the human being, the force to avoid pain and the force to seek pleasure. Your inner voice tells you to avoid something since the idea of been hurt or rejected seems even more painful. The worst part is no matter what your situation is, you end up not feeling satisfied because your emotions controlled you instead of you controlling them.



What to do? Here are four quick steps to start.

Chose the action or actions you want to change

Write a list of the things you would like to change. Choose something you have been putting away for a while. In my situation back in Michigan, I chose to stay in college in spite of the massive amount of work that it represented.

Once you have your list, write the reasons of why it is painful doing it

Be as clear and honest as possible. For me, the most painful ideas about continuing college were the amount of extra hours I had to dedicate after school and the embarrassing moments I had to go through every time I had to present in front of the class.

Ask yourself this question and write the answer down: how would it make you feel if you decided not to take action?

How would you feel in one, five, or ten years if you do not take action? The sole idea of my family feeling sorry for me because I could not graduate due to my limited English was killing me. I could not imagine feeling sorry for myself

the rest of my life. When I evaluated both options, either continuing or quitting, quitting made me feel even worse.

What would the pleasure be if you decided to go for it?

Write a list of the possible positive outcomes that you will obtain by committing to your goals. The visual image of me wearing the cap and gown in front of the American flag, the day of the graduation, was enough reason to keep going. For me, that was the representation of victory.

Analyze your answers, and you will find the courage and determination to pursue your goals. It is all about what you focus your attention on. If you let your brain link pain to the things that are going to help you grow, chances are that you are not going to succeed.

It took me three years to graduate with a major in marketing (I graduated with honors). The pain of putting the extra hours and the difficult moments that I had to go through every time I had to present in front of the class, not only pushed me to reach my dreams but also forced me to give it my best. Graduation day arrived, and as I had visualized it many times before, I wore my cap and gown in front of the American flag while the photographer was asking me to smile. I thank God for that blessed moment.