

Discussion Item 10: Choose two of the learning principles Waitzkin covers in *The Art of Learning* Parts 2 and 3. Describe the chosen principles and discuss specifically and at length how you might use those principles to make improvements in your personal growth.

Discussion Review

Desire, intention, focus, and sustainability (DIFS) help motivate us to succeed (Kiewra, *Kindle Locations 2043-2044*). Motivation to succeed involves active engagement in the daily practices of life. Two of Waitzkin's principles, the Power of Presence and Building Your Trigger, confirm that being present in daily practice and maintaining a good performance state will lead to a full and happy life. These two principles will be discussed below and methods for applying these principles to my personal growth will be shared.

The Power of Presence

Waitzkin shared a story about Jose, a man that grew up in the Amazon (p. 169). Jose was comfortable in the jungles of the Amazon and often ventured out alone to hunt. There was one time, however, that Jose encountered something that made him very uncomfortable, a black jaguar. Waitzkin shared the details of the encounter and how Jose stood his ground to keep the jaguar away. Unfortunately, Jose got tired and made the terrible mistake of backing away (p. 171). Obviously the jaguar saw this concession as a sign of weakness and moved in to claim it prey (p. 171). Luckily some villagers rescued Jose but he was never the same, "His spirit was broken". (p. 171). This powerful story started me thinking about concessions that I have made throughout my life that have proven to be fatal to my personal growth. Countless times, I have shown signs of weakness that another person could not help but take advantage of. It is for this reason that I want to improve my Power of Presence.

Waitzkin made the statement "The wise, after all, was only in my head." (p. 171). In so many ways, this is true for me. I am extremely critical of my own intelligence, abilities, and physical appearance, this prevents me from saying and doing things that I want to do. The secret Waitzkin shared was that "everything is always on the line" and the more present we are in our daily practice, the more present we will be in other aspects of our life (p. 172).

Therefore, I need to be present and practice positive self-imagery and self-confidence, while having a more positive attitude about myself. In order for my personal growth to benefit, I need to fake it till I make it! I will start complementing myself out loud when I demonstrate my intelligence and abilities. For example, when I successful finish a paper that I have worked really hard on, I will say out loud “You worked really hard, put a lot of effort into it, and knew what you were writing about! You did an excellent job at writing that paper.” This verbal recognition of my intelligence will help me be present in the successful completion of the paper rather than just happy that it is done. This verbal recognition would be helpful in other areas of my life like racquetball, golf, and pool. My view of my physical appearance would also benefit from a few positive verbal compliments. In order to attain excellence I need to be a positive reinforcement in my life and not be dependent on others for approval.

Building Your Trigger

For the last decade, I have been waiting for the moment when my real life begins (p. 187). For example, I have been waiting for the perfect job to fall in my lap when I should have been actively pursuing my dream job. Waitzkin claims that waiting is just life passing us by when we are not fully engaged in the moment (p. 187). If I want to be successful and happy, Waitzkin suggests I access a good performance state (p. 187). This entails developing a routine that leads to a joyful experience. Then I condition my behaviors by going through that routine on a daily basis, that way when the joyful experience is replaced with something negative I maintain control of the possibly stressfully situation. By creating my own trigger, I stay in control of every situation I experience (p. 190). In order to control future stressful situations I created the following routine;

1. 5 minutes of silence
2. 3 minutes of deep breathing exercises
3. 3 minutes of classical music
4. Go for a walk

Whether it's outside during the warmer months or doing circles in my living room, walking is a joyful experience for me. Once this routine has become natural I can practice the first three

steps before doing something stressful, like a work interview, to reduce my stress and anxiety about the situation. This same routine can be used in the future when I have my dream job and stress about leading a professional development for fellow educators.

Summary

Two of Waitzkin's principles, the Power of Presence and Building Your Trigger, attest to the importance of being engaged in daily activities. It is easy to be engaged when you have the motivation to succeed. Since motivation propels us to do unimaginable things, we need to find and activate that motivation in ourselves on a daily basis (Kiewra, Kindle Locations 2030-2031). If I want to have a full and happy life, I need to motivate myself on a daily basis (power of presence) and prepare myself (building your trigger) for roadblocks along the way (p. 185).

References:

- Kiewra, K. A. (2009). *Teaching How to Learn: The Teacher's Guide to Student Success* [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Waitzkin, J. (2007). *The Art of Learning*. New York, NY: Free Press.