

Find Your Inner Strength to Tackle Any Challenge

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Everyone faces challenges during their life, from suffering the death of a loved one to being laid off from a job. But the challenges themselves aren't holding you back; rather, it's how you react to the challenges that determine your ultimate success and happiness.

When faced with any challenge, you can react one of two ways: with your mind or with your heart. And if you're like most people, you are much more attuned to your mind than to your heart. In fact, you probably seldom think about your heart, unless you feel it pounding as a result of exercise.

Because the mind is primarily a reactive system, it is driven by the ego's need for power, control, and approval. As such, it reacts impatiently to challenges and then justifies any rash actions by turning to logic and reason. The heart, on the other hand, is driven by spiritual concerns. It seeks connectedness, self-expression, and fulfillment of your deepest needs. When a challenge arises, the heart "feels" for the right course of action based on your body's needs.

When you listen to your heart and draw upon its energy, you develop an inner strength that guides you and sustains you through any challenge. Use the following suggestions to develop your heart connection.

Get to know your heart

Getting to know your heart is the first step to overcoming a challenge. When you are in tune with your heart, you understand who you really are, what you love, and what your life's mission is all about. Most likely you are already familiar with your physical heart. It beats wildly when you get excited and pounds when you're scared. But to get connected with your spiritual heart, you must be willing to look deep within yourself and challenge your own beliefs. Only then will your heart give you the energy to persevere through challenges.

The following questions will get you started toward identifying the path that will help you overcome your challenge. As you consider these questions, other questions may present themselves to you that will further stretch your thinking.

- What makes you feel connected to your heart (some people refer to this as feeling "spiritual")?
- What does happiness mean to you?
- When do you experience connectedness?
- Which activities make you lose track of time?
- How have your life aspirations changed over the years?
- What life events have prompted your emotional growth?

When you truthfully answer these questions, you'll develop a deeper connection to your heart and a greater understanding of what you must do in the face of adversity.

Tap into your heart's intelligence

Your heart has an intelligence all its own. We all think, speak, and reason with our heart, especially when facing a challenge. We also rely on our heart's intelligence whenever we make an important decision. For example, no matter how carefully you may weigh all the options, ultimately something serves to make you decide one way or another. In most cases, this is your heart speaking, giving you the "feeling" that you should do one thing rather than another. So whether you realize this or not, you consult with your heart every day as to the wisdom of the choices you need to make.

Your heart's intelligence is very different from your mind's intelligence. The mind seeks victories; the heart seeks solutions. The mind is judgmental; the heart is forgiving. Material matters drive the mind; values drive the heart.

To discover your heart's intelligence, you must consciously choose to silence all the other voices that are seeking your attention. These voices are the voice of power, the voice of control, and the voice of achievement - all the voices of the mind. Sit quietly and think about your challenge as you focus on the voice of your heart - the voice that connects you to silence, to inspiration, to comfort, to peace, to contentment, and to love and meaning. As you hear the answers your heart gives you, your mind will silence and the challenge's resolution will be obvious.

Create an "island of peace"

Some people view a strong heart connection as having peace of mind. But how do you achieve peace of mind in a world that's in constant motion, endless activity, and pressed by demands and expectations? The solution lies in the interruption of our daily activities with "islands of peace." These are moments when we let go of stress and regenerate ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It's during these times that we can better hear our heart and understand its message to us.

One way to create an island of peace is through meditation. Because we are constantly entertaining so many thoughts, feelings, and emotions, especially during difficult time, we need a way to quiet our mind so we can hear our heart. When we meditate, we are able to discover a silence within. It is this silence between thoughts where we often find the solution to whatever challenge is before us.

There are various meditation techniques. One is to observe your breathing and be mindful of it, because breathing and mental activity go hand in hand. When you are excited, you breathe fast. When you are relaxed, you breathe slowly. So just observing your breathing quiets your mind and allows your heart to speak. Another technique is using a mantra, which means "instrument of the mind." A mantra is a word that, when repeated in your mind, leads to the same quieting of the voices. It disconnects you from the constant desire to be active and alert. Meditating helps you discover an inner peace that re-energizes you, enabling you to tackle any challenge that comes your way.

Your Heart's Strength

When we experience a challenge, the way to handle it is to take refuge in our heart - to be aware that we have a safe place where we can analyze the problem without being overwhelmed by it. If we gain this sense of detachment from the challenge, we can gain control over it. So whenever you are facing a challenge, connect with your heart. It will give you the support and guidance you need to overcome your obstacles, continue in life, and achieve your dreams.