

Living YOUR Best Life

Fear driven thinking and reactionary behaviors are an unfortunate facet of the human condition. Ingrained in our DNA is an animal like chemical reaction that begets a loop of anxiety in the modern age. Initially these types of reactions were vital for survival, and to some degree, they still are fight or flight mechanisms in dangerous situations. But for most of us, especially those living with mental health/addictive disorders, or those of us living with someone suffering from these diseases, this intricate biological system went awry. How many times have we sat and suffered in a panicked state, worried that someone we love would be lost if we didn't step in immediately and "fix" the situation? How often do we ruminate endlessly on our own shortcomings, or the dire situations of our friends and family? More often than not it seems.

Anxiety is the plague of the 21st century. Sociologically, psychologically, culturally, these types of ailments are commonplace in our modern times, and with a sigh of tired resignation, many people have accepted the normalcy of these types of issues on a personal level. Don't get me wrong; it is normal, to some degree, to experience these emotions and feelings. But what I am interested in, for myself, and humanity at large, is practical solutions or remedies to this type of thinking. Instead of expending our vital life energy worrying our days away, agonizing over fruitless mental loops of darkness, we can, together, truly live free with some simple implementation of disciplined steps toward better mental health. **And when we can walk through these struggles, and come out on the other side with a newfound freedom, this then allows us to better support others in our lives who are struggling. Put simply, you can't save a drowning man if you yourself are drowning.**

How often, looking back on this past year, did we engage in enabling or codependent behaviors with our loved ones who were struggling? Oftentimes these types of endeavors come at the cost of our own emotional and physical health. Fruitlessly attempting to cajole, bribe, or beg someone to get the help they so desperately need just leaves us more broken and disappointed. Through my own life experiences in recovery over the past few years, I've learned (the hard way) that the best way to help others is to first help yourself. There is a vast network of support and various tools at our disposal, often free of any charge, that enable us to begin this journey of empowerment.

First and foremost, what that looks like for me, is surrendering to whatever it is that may be holding you down, deadlocked, whether that's addiction, codependency, anxiety/depression, or all of the above. Admit defeat. Admit that you don't know everything and can't continue to fight a losing battle. When it comes to someone else, admit that you can't "fix" them or rescue them from their consequences any longer. Through support groups like PAL or 12-step, you'll find a blossoming community of hope and encouragement, along with practical education and strategies on how to firmly set boundaries and help others in a meaningful and positive way. This is directly mirrored in the 1st step of the AA program, in that, to move forward, to consummate recovery in any form, we first have to accept that we are powerless. Once we're there, we can then move forward on the broad highway of spiritual, mindful, and healthy emotional living.

Get involved in a support group and reach out to the people around you who have been where you are now, and have walked through the fire. They can help. There are a multitude of us freely living today. After you've taken these first steps, I firmly believe that a mind/body/spirit approach is vital to reclaiming your life and calming the fear-based reactionary behavior. Meditation, prayer, exercise and diet all go hand in hand when making a new beginning. Someone once told me when I was newly sober, that the only thing I had to change was everything. It's taken me several years to fully accept this as ultimate truth, but I can attest to the fact that once I did, my recovery was set into overdrive. I believe this holds true with all of us, whether its codependency and/or enabling behaviors we're struggling with, or addiction itself.

In this New Year, my hope and prayer is that we can deeply take a look at ourselves, our inner workings, our soul, the care we take with our physical form, and take steps toward getting better one day at a time. In doing so, we'll often find that the chains that we felt had bound us for so long were not imposed by others, or our circumstances, but by ourselves. Get yourself into a support group or therapy. See a psychiatrist if it's necessary. Start a new diet, experiment with eliminating sugar or massive amounts of carbohydrates that we tend to forage for when stressed. Try a daily meditation practice. Spend time with God every morning. Give him your worries, your fears, your everything and trust that He'll shoulder those burdens. Take a walk. Hike a mountain. Most importantly, do something fun and nice for yourself. All of these strategies will enable you to begin to accept fear. To alleviate that constant nagging anxiety. Hold yourself in loving kindness and you will be astonished with the ease in which you will be able to hold your brothers and sisters in the same. Radically forgive yourself for any past transgressions and look to the bright future ahead of you. Whether the people around you get better, or whether they don't is simply not up to you anymore. By taking responsibility for your own health, **by living YOUR best life on a day to day basis one step at a time, you'll be giving one of the greatest gifts you possibly could to the people around you, struggling or not: modeling a truly fruitful, fulfilled, positive and healthy life in recovery.**

God Bless,
Sean, In Recovery

*You can read, comment and ask questions for Sean to
address in his blog on the PAL website, Home page – www.Palgroup.org*