

Lessons from Lockdown – A Mindset Renovation

Many of us started long overdue home improvement projects or cleaned out closets this March and April. I found myself organizing the strangest places in my home – under the kitchen sink, the laundry room, and those places in the house that had been forgotten (or never considered in the first place).

It is not that I had so much time on my hands, but rather the opposite was true. I was homeschooling my son and attempting to maintain my usual schedule as a full-time attorney while attending Zoom meetings with a kindergarten class. To say that it was a stressful time would be an understatement, but I was grateful for the privilege of continued employment and plenty of work to do.

I allowed myself one full day to completely lose my mind but kept it to that one day. Hysterics would not solve any scheduling issues or assist in creating a plan for juggling the new normal. It was clear that I needed more than a schedule or plan – I needed more resilience. Without having experienced anything quite like our lives in March and April, I had really never needed more resilience than I had to give, but here I was feeling a bit unprepared.

Aside from the Marie Kondo closet cleanouts, I set another type of goal – to find a way to develop more resilience. I found a book by Ryan Holiday entitled “The Obstacle is the Way,” which turned out to be just the incentive I needed.

Using historical figures and principles of stoicism, Holiday takes his readers through examples of individuals who faced tremendous obstacles and used those challenges to their advantage. Thomas Edison, Theodore Roosevelt, Steve Jobs, and Viktor Frankl, to name a few in his book, experienced setbacks that could have broken their spirits or altered their paths. Thankfully, rather than allow those obstacles to decide their outcomes, each figure highlighted in the book chose to use the lessons learned from the obstacles in their path as paving stones.

One quote in particular has stuck with me through the lockdown. In a chapter entitled “Follow the Process,” which describes “The Process” used by coach Nick Saban, Holiday quotes this from Heraclitus: “Under the comb, the tangle and the straight path are the same.” Coach Nick Saban teaches his players at The University of Alabama not to focus on winning the SEC Championship, but on getting the next play right and on finishing the current task. By focusing on executing each individual play the best they can, the team’s focus is on the present moment rather than the big goal. As a result of “The Process,” each well-executed play adds up to big wins.

Focusing on the Present Task, Rather Than the Big Goal

Taking this philosophy to heart, I created my own process. I got up earlier than usual, and rather than getting in my usual exercise, I started on my work. I focused on the individual tasks that needed to be accomplished instead of the entire project, and juggling my new work/home life became more manageable. Before I knew it, I had shuffled the last of my work tasks into my crazy schedule, and the work projects were completed, all in between Kindergarten Zoom meetings and client calls, closet organizing, and banana bread.

Now that things are returning to normal, I am glad that I spent some time on my mindset, as well as my closets. When an obstacle seems initially insurmountable, I will keep in mind that changing my perception of the problem may be the shortest route to its solution. Whether I am tackling a home remodel, a complex estate plan, or contentious litigation, any challenge can be broken down into its component parts and accomplished incrementally.

As a resource for my clients, I've seen tremendous success with this approach. While it is important to see the full picture, it's easiest to get there by taking single steps. For example, in a complicated estate administration, we follow a process and take the necessary steps to ensure a successful probate. When helping parents plan for the future, we ask questions and find important details in a variety of areas before coming to the holistic solution. By focusing on executing each component in order, clients accomplish their big goals without being overwhelmed.

Our Estate Planning team at Chambliss is ready to assist you with your estate planning goals. Perhaps you need to revise an existing plan or update financial or medical powers of attorney. Maybe you need an Advance Directive for Health Care so your quality of life wishes are known. These are small steps that can have a large impact. Please contact me or a member of [our team](#) to learn more.