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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

Overcoming Problems

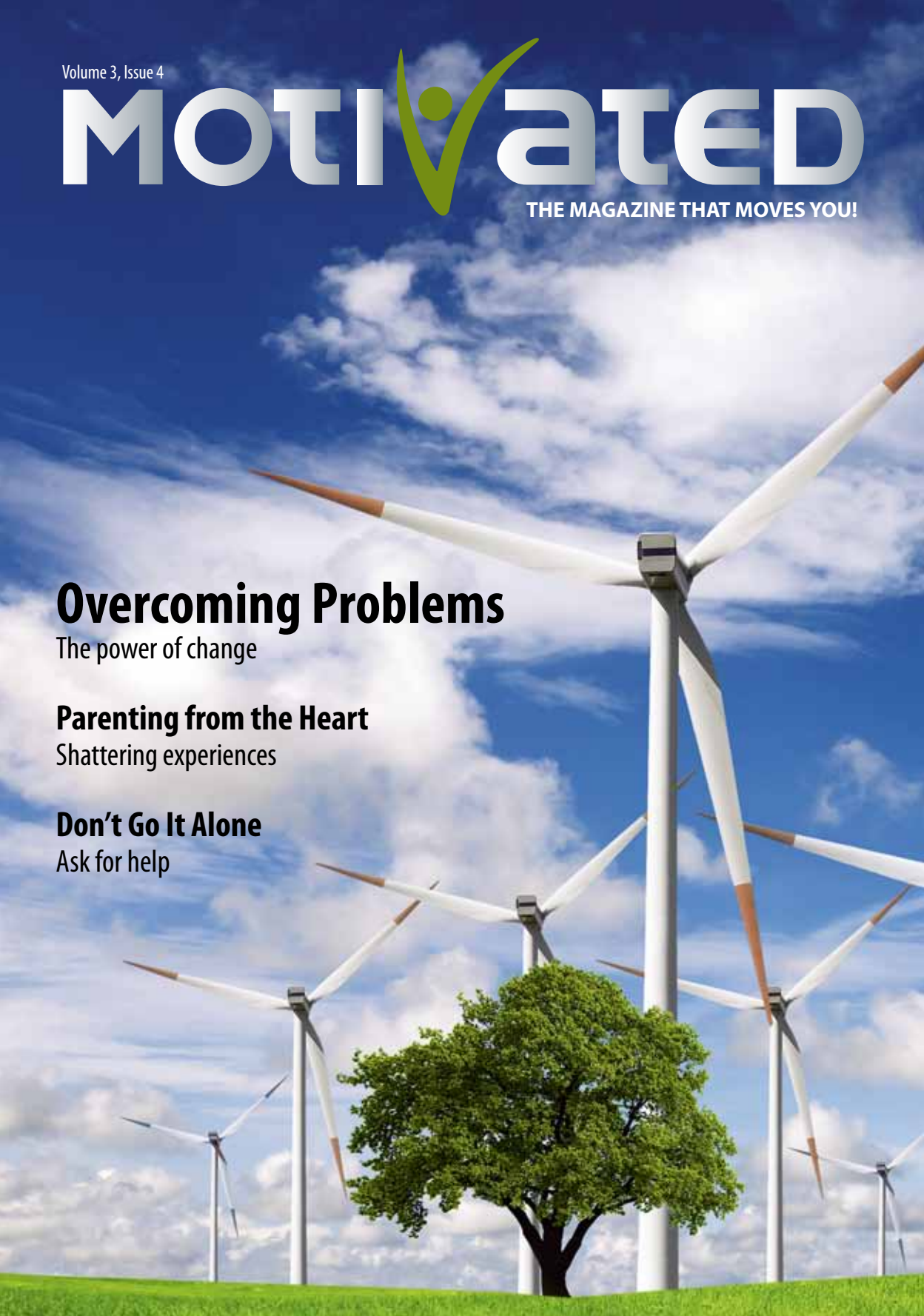
The power of change

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Many years ago, some of the most terrifying scenes on the big screen were when someone stepped into quicksand. No movie was complete until the hero had rescued some innocent soul from certain death in that awful ooze, or the villain's final breath had gurgled to the surface.

Like quicksand, problems sometimes threaten to suck us under. The harder we struggle, the deeper we sink. But things are rarely as bad as they seem. Laws of physics make it nearly impossible for a person to sink more than about waist deep in real-life quicksand. It may be difficult and take awhile to get unstuck, but the person won't go all the way under. Likewise, those who have faith and a positive attitude can only sink so low or stay so long entangled in their problems.

When we Google "how to escape from quicksand," we will find a few pointers that, when put together, form a basic plan. Those points can also help us approach problems in a positive way. They go something like this:

- **Don't panic.** Panicking will only cause us to sink deeper. Try to relax.
- **Shed unnecessary weights.** Major on the majors and don't let less urgent things distract.
- **Ask for help.** Don't try to solve every problem alone.
- **Be patient.** Slow, deliberate actions produce better results than frantic activity.
- **Rest periodically.** Clearing our mind and thinking positively help put things in perspective.

If the articles in this issue help to apply those principles, then we've accomplished one of the main aims of *Motivated*, which is to motivate and encourage people, and to help us be better prepared to handle whatever life sends our way.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

What Are You Made Of?

Retold by Gabe Rucker

A young woman went to see her mother and told her about all her troubles. Life was hard, and she felt like giving up. No sooner had one problem been resolved, it seemed, than a new one took its place. She was tired of the constant struggle.

Her mother took her into the kitchen and filled three pots with water. In the first pot, she placed a carrot, in the second, she placed an egg, and in the third, she placed some ground coffee beans. She lit the stove and set the three pots to boil without saying a word.

Twenty minutes later, she fished the carrot out and put it in a bowl. She pulled the egg out and put it in another bowl. Then she ladled the coffee through a strainer and into a cup. Turning then to her daughter, she asked, "What do you see?"

"A carrot, an egg, and coffee," the young woman replied.

"Feel the carrot," the mother said.

The daughter tried to pick it up, but it fell apart between her fingers. It had turned to mush.

"Now the egg," the mother said.

The daughter cracked the egg on the edge of the bowl, peeled away the shell, and pronounced it hard-boiled.

"Now try the coffee."

The daughter smiled as she lifted the cup toward her mouth and breathed in the aroma, and she smiled even more broadly after the first sip. It tasted rich and full.

"So what's your point, Mother?" the young woman asked.

"The point is that the carrot, the egg, and the coffee all faced the same hardship—the boiling water—but each reacted differently. The carrot went in hard, strong, and unrelenting, but became weak and fell apart. The egg had been fragile, but after sitting in the boiling water, it became hardened. The coffee beans were different. When they sat in boiling water, they changed the water.

"Which are you?" the mother asked.

"When adversity knocks at your door how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean? What are you made of?" ●



Beat Anxiety

We all suffer anxiety at some stage in our lives. Some stress and anxiety is actually good and improves our performance, but when the stress levels reach the anxiety or panic attack level, we can feel overwhelmed and worried that we might not be able to manage.

There are things that we can do to help resolve a tense situation and create a calmer attitude. Here are some tools that can help us learn how to beat anxiety:

Take Some Deep Breaths

When stressed out, we're more likely to take shallow breaths. This is because our chests tighten up with shoulder and muscular tension, which alters our breathing. We might feel fatigued, unable to concentrate, and tense. Instead of letting stress take over, we can try to breathe deeply to calm ourselves.

Stop for a Few Minutes

When our To-Do List is making us sweat, we often tend to push on through anyway. As we continue with our responsibilities, our body creates more stress hormones, making us

prone to react more aggressively to additional stress. Think about it. When we're upset about something and then someone comes up to us with more bad news, we feel even worse. We can stop the cycle of stress by sitting back and meditating for a few moments.

Write It Down

We often tend to overstate the anxiety we feel and think that we have much more to worry about than we actually do. If we cannot concentrate because we are anxious, it can help to write down everything we are fretting about. When we write down all of our tasks or the things that are on our mind, and see

our responsibilities in front of us, we will get a clearer idea of how we can tackle them –often in a less stressful way.

Visualize

If we really can't manage everything, we can stop for a minute and visualize the way we wish things were. It will help us think more positively. People who think they're in a warm place, and those who actually are in a warm place have the same brain activity. The brain can't distinguish between what it senses and what it is "told" by the thinker. If we are feeling overwhelmed, try "telling" the brain that it is calm and peaceful.

Walk Away Or Use Distractions

When we are feeling anxious about a project, we can walk away from our desk for five minutes, or talk to someone else in our office. This distracts us from our concerns and helps us focus on something more calming. Once the body begins to feel calm again, we can return to whatever we were working on.

Take Control with Planning

Too often, we fail to organize and plan. When we organize our desk, work area, study, home life, etc., we can immediately decrease our anxiety levels. When we are under a lot of stress, cleaning up our work area can help us to feel more in control—because we will be.

Talk to Someone

One of the quickest and easiest ways to reduce stress is to talk to a friend or family member. By simply communicating, we can begin to change the way we think about our stress, and how we react to it.

Anxiety and panic disorders don't have to run our life. Anxiety can be avoided and diminished with these simple tips, most of which only take a few minutes, allowing us to get back to the work we need to do or the people we need to talk to. We can be in control of anxiety, instead of letting it control us. Managing the way we deal with anxiety and stress will help us make better decisions and will help us beat it. ●

Overcoming Problems

The power of change

By Chuck Gallozzi, adapted

Some say life is a struggle. If it is, every problem we face leads us to one of two choices. Either we choose to be victorious, or we choose to be a victim. Either we choose to be responsible for the life we create, or we shirk our responsibility by blaming others for our failures and unhappiness.

Those who choose to be victorious don't find life to be a struggle. They find it to be exhilarating. They don't encounter problems; they merely face things they wish to change. When they find something blocking their way, they look for a way to get around it, or to overcome it. In a word, they look for, and find, solutions.

On the other hand, those who choose to be victims are experts at looking for excuses. They almost delight in finding others to blame for their self-inflicted misery.

Let's take a look at two real-life examples:

Carl is in his fifties and claims he wishes to recover from a long string of failures. To this end, he enrolled in a college course to update his skills. One day, when the instructor was writing on the blackboard, he shouted from the back of the room, "Write larger! I can't read what you're writing."

Carl was miffed when the instructor ignored his pleas. A few weeks later, he complained to his classmates, "I'm afraid I'll have to drop out of this course. I have bad eyes and our teacher writes too small. How can I take notes and learn the material? Our instructor doesn't seem to care about my disability."

"Why don't you come to class early so you can get a seat in the front of the room?" suggested a classmate. "Because the bus in my area runs only once an hour. If I took the earlier bus, I would arrive much too early." replied Carl. "Get a pair of glasses." another classmate advised. "I have a pair," said Carl, "but they are not very helpful." Exasperated, another classmate asked, "Well then, why don't you get a pair of opera glasses?" Carl had an answer for that too: "I can't afford opera glasses. I can barely afford to pay the bus fare to get here."

Carl had an answer for every question. Although he could never find solutions for whatever was troubling him, he was proficient in finding excuses for his inaction. He was convinced he had certain "disabilities" that warranted special treatment. The world should conform to his "special needs," he reasoned.

Kyle Maynard is an entirely different breed. Born with stumps in the place of arms and legs, he believed it was his responsibility to adapt to the world rather than demanding the world change for him. The challenges that Kyle has to face make Carl's pleas for special treatment embarrassing at best and laughable at worst.

Despite the enormous obstacles facing Kyle, his lack of arms and legs did not

prevent him from learning how to write and type. Neither did it prevent him from becoming a defensive lineman on a football team, a university student, and a top wrestler. Though still a university student, you can add to his list of accomplishments author, world traveler, and motivational speaker.

“No Excuses” is the title of Kyle’s book (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2005), and it points out the difference between him and Carl. Kyle realizes that making excuses holds us back, while assuming responsibility moves us forward. He understands that responsibility is empowering, and the more of it we take on, the more we will be, do, and have what we want.

Problems, difficulties, challenges, or whatever we choose to call them, shouldn’t stop our progress. Rather, they should cause us to ask the following three questions:

- 1. What do I want from life?**
- 2. What is preventing me from getting what I want?**
- 3. What am I going to do about it?**

Let’s focus on the benefits that change will bring, make a plan, and force ourselves to take the right steps towards reaching our goals. There may be setbacks, but when that happens, don’t get discouraged.

Let’s pick ourselves up, brush ourselves off, and say, “I’m not going to give up now! I refuse to choose to be a victim! I’m getting back to the program of change and regain control over my life!” ●





Shattering Experiences

By Flor Cordoba

My four-year-old son, Ricardo, is “on the Lego trip.” Maybe it’s his age or the fact that he’s artistic and loves building things, but not a single day goes by that I don’t find him building something with his Lego. Sometimes I sit with him and build too. I am quite impressed with his cars, spaceships, and whatnot, so I put up with the fact that I have to go hunting around the house for tiny missing pieces almost every day.

One day he came running to show me a new spaceship he had built, and accidentally bumped it against a doorway. The hapless little spaceship was thrown into what seemed a thousand pieces that went everywhere—across the floor and under the table, chairs, couches, and every other hard-to-get-at place in the room.

Ricardo’s face registered total dismay. I tried to comfort him. “It’s okay. Now you can build another one and I’m sure it will be even better. Don’t get discouraged. Just pick up the pieces and build a new one.” But poor Ricardo was so downcast that he said he wasn’t going to try again. He slowly picked up the pieces and went to put them away.

A few minutes later, he came bounding back with a brand-new spaceship. “You were right, Mom,” he said. “This is way better than the last one!”

I was so proud of my little boy, and it taught me a lesson. How many times have I worked to build a dream, only to have it fall to pieces! Picking up the pieces and starting over is often even harder than getting started the first time, but with the faith of a little child, all things—even better things—are possible. ●

Don't Go It Alone— Ask for help

Author Unknown, Web Reprint

There's so much to accomplish throughout the day that it can become overwhelming. Getting help is often the solution, but asking for help can be difficult. Some feel like it will bruise their ego to ask for help, while others are just too shy or feel awkward. We need to learn to take the pressure off ourselves and ask for what we need. We'll save ourselves from stress if we do, and will gain more time to do what we need to accomplish.

1. Know to ask for help before frustration and anger take over.

This is the first and most important step. If we're "over-doers" and want to handle things by ourselves, it may not be as easy to identify what exactly we need help with. Take a few minutes to think about this.

2. Leave behind feelings of shame or embarrassment. Just because we're asking for help doesn't mean we're a failure. It's actually wise and a very successful strategy, because it will save us stress and time.

3. Talk to someone. We can approach a friend or family member if we're feeling a bit intimidated asking for help from someone else. Maybe they can point us in the right direction. Think about what will happen if the situation is not dealt with, and all the weight is on our shoulders.

4. State clearly what is needed and be specific. People generally want to help, they just need to know exactly what is expected of them.

5. Abstain from complaining when overloaded; it turns people away. When we are positive, we will have the support of people around us. They will often pitch in on their own if they feel we're deserving of help because of the kind of person we are.

6. Say thank you. We should always be grateful and appreciative when someone has done something to help. That way if we need to ask for help again, they will be happy and willing to give a hand. Remember to help others too. ●

Tips to Communicate with Patience

By Judith Orloff, M.D., adapted

In communication, patience is a powerful emotional currency. If we are patient, our relationships will function on a higher level. When upset or frustrated, it's better to leave a discussion until later when we're calmer. At that time, we can use this approach:

Focus on a specific issue—don't escalate or mount a personal attack.

For instance, "I feel frustrated when you promise to do something but there isn't follow-through." Don't threaten or insult. In an even, non-blaming tone, we can lead with how the behavior makes us feel rather than how we think the other person is wrong.

Listen non-defensively without reacting or interrupting.

It is a sign of respect to hear a person's point of view, even if we disagree. Avoid an aggressive tone or body language, and try not to squirm with discomfort, or to judge.

Sense the feelings behind the words.

When we can appreciate someone's motivation, it's easier to be patient. Try to sense if a person is frightened, insecure, or up against a negative part of him or herself that they have never confronted. If so, we will realize this can be painful and find what change they're open to.

Respond with clarity and compassion.

This attitude takes others off the defensive so they are more comfortable admitting their part in causing frustration. Describe everything in terms of remedies to a specific task, rather than generalizing, and state the need. For instance, "I'd really appreciate you not shouting at me even if I disappoint you." If the person is willing to try, we should thank them and show how pleased we are.

In any interchange, we should always define what we're after. Is it to resolve a specific frustrating behavior? Do we want to say "no" to participation in a dead-end pattern? Or is it to simply convey our feelings without expectation of change?

Even if the frustration is irresolvable, patience sets the right tone to treat others and ourselves respectfully. ●

The Importance of Rest and Relaxation

By John Parks , Web Reprint

Life is busy and it seems each year it just gets busier. Work, family, school, and other commitments just eat the day away and leave us with no time to sit back and relax. However, rest and relaxation is very important. In fact, getting enough rest is imperative to living a healthy lifestyle and when we do not relax and get enough sleep, we are putting ourselves at risk for illness as well as other side effects.

The body needs enough rest each night to function properly. The amount of rest each individual needs every night differs, but the average adult needs approximately 7-8 hours of sleep each night to restore their body with the energy it needs to handle all of the demands of living each day.

However, most individuals cut back on their sleep to pack more activities into their day. Unfortunately, this runs the body down, allowing more viruses and diseases to attack the body because the immune system is not functioning as well as it should. Then, the individual gets sick and misses days or even weeks of all of those important activities.

When we get enough rest, our body runs as it should and our immune system is stronger and able to fight off infections more easily.

When we don't get enough rest we have difficulty concentrating, thinking clearly, and even remembering things. We might not notice this at first or blame it on our busy schedule, but the more sleep and rest we miss, the more pronounced the symptoms become.

In addition, a lack of rest and relaxation can really work a number on our mood. It is a scientific fact that when individuals miss good nightly rest, their personality is affected and they are generally more grumpy, less patient, and snap easier. Missing out on rest to fit in all those activities might make us a bear to be around, which is not much fun at all.

So the next time you think it is a good idea to stay up late to complete a task or hang out with friends, think again. Of course, one night is not going to hurt, but night after night of not getting enough rest really will. ●



The Outcome

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Jerome K. Jerome was a British writer whose father died when he was 12. At age 14, he had to go to work to support his mother and sister. His life got even harder when his mother died, but after many different jobs, the end result was that he became a writer—not of sad stories, but a famous humorist, writing funny stories to encourage others. After such a hard beginning in life, he said, “It is from the struggle, not the victory, that we gain strength.”

There is enough good and bad in everyone’s life—ample sorrow and happiness, sufficient joy and pain—to find a rational basis for either optimism or pessimism. We can choose to laugh or cry, bless or curse. It’s our decision: From which perspective do we want to view life? Will we look up in hope or down in despair? The only thing more powerful than negativism is a positive affirmation. —Rich DeVos, co-founder of Amway and owner of NBA Orlando Magic

Just as your car runs more smoothly and requires less energy to go faster and farther when the wheels are in perfect alignment, you perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, and values are in balance.—Brian Tracy

Most of our obstacles would melt away if, instead of cowering before them, we should make up our minds to walk boldly through them. —Orison Swett Marden

History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to be discouraged by their defeats. —B.C. Forbes

We must choose our attitude. Our choice of attitude can decide the outcome of our life. —Sheri Rose Shepherd, adapted

If constructive thoughts are planted, positive outcomes will be the result. —Sidney Madwed

I do believe that when we face challenges in life that are far beyond our own power, it’s an opportunity to build on our faith, inner strength, and courage. I’ve learned that how we face challenges plays a big role in the outcome of them. —Sasha Azevedo

It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult undertaking, which, more than anything else, will determine its successful outcome.—William James

