

No pain, no gain? by Stewart Blackburn

I was shocked when I first heard that there were two ways to do anything: the hard way and the easy way. “What *easy way*?” I cried out! I had always been taught that to get what you wanted, to succeed in anything, or to learn anything important you had to work hard and be willing to suffer and sacrifice in order to attain your desire. I found that there are lots of other versions of this idea because it is so pervasive.

“Without struggle, there is no success.” Frederick Douglass

“Dreams are not easy. Dreams are painful. They force work and commitment. They are challenging and motivating.” Robert Kiyosaki

“This pain you are avoiding is a very necessary pain that will make you strong again.” Stephen Richards

“Transformation without work and pain, without suffering, without a sense of loss is just an illusion of true change.” Paul Young

“Sometimes you must HURT in order to KNOW, FALL in order to GROW, LOSE in order to GAIN, because life’s greatest lessons are learned through PAIN.” Alicia Taylor

There’s no question that pain is educational. I like to say that we all pay for our education one way or another and pain is certainly one of the ways in which we pay. But all these ideas about pain being the true path to success assume a physical-only world, one where cause-and-effect rules and the mind is essentially just the observer of our existence.

Pain is obviously very popular; it almost seems that everybody’s using it. But, is it the only way to succeed? Do we have to go through pain to get what we want? And what is the mechanism at play here that pain is an integral part of?

Quite simply, no, we don’t have to experience pain to gain things. For one thing we can learn from others. For another thing, we can use our imagination to evaluate options to help us choose the most

effective one for our purposes without necessarily experiencing all those options ourselves. There is also the element of luck, something that can be cultivated and enhanced.

But most importantly, we have the ability to choose paths that don't necessarily involve pain or distress. This is the *easy way* and I recommend it. It is about programming our future for ourselves, not paying the price for someone else's programming. It also includes trust. We (the great Huna "we") often remind ourselves that Everything's Working Out Perfectly – EWOP. It may not be exactly as we wanted, but it is invariably beneficial.

The idea that we can influence the world with our choices and our beliefs runs up against the notion that "things happen" and we have no say in the matter. If you don't believe that the mind has an influence on experienced reality, then all you're left with is observing the world as it appears and trying to accommodate that reality as much as possible. But that's very disempowered! And it's a shame to ignore our very substantial power.

If we are open to it, we have the ability to shape our future, first with how we envision that future, and then with the energy of our enthusiasm, our passion, and our focus.

But both systems work! If we work hard consistently, we generally get rewarded for our efforts, at least to some extent. And if we program our future and do so on a regular basis, we also generally get what we're after. So, what do these two very different approaches have in common? They both rely on an unflagging focus.

When we hold our attention on what it is that we want, it generally comes to us. If we decide that it comes only with hard work, then we will get abundant evidence that that's true. And if we decide that a more magical approach works, then we will get the evidence for that as well. But either way it's the focus that seems to be the driving power here.

And what is it a focus of? It's our personal energy. Whether we think of it as life force, vitality, chi, or love, it is what we're made of and what we use to shape our lives. We focus that personal energy with our

thoughts and our feelings. And we have access to an infinite amount of that energy, if we ask for it and can handle it.

Then, do we have to work hard and suffer to get what we want? We can if we want to. If we decide to find a less painful way, then that's available as well. It seems to me that these lives of ours on Earth are largely about learning how to get what we want the easy way. Peace and harmony work just as well if not better than struggle and war. But I certainly have a lot of compassion for those who make a different choice!

“I have a saying ‘train, don’t strain.’ The Americans have the saying ‘no pain, no gain’ and that’s why they have no distance running champions. They get down to the track with a stopwatch and flog their guts out thinking that it’ll make them a champion, but they’ll never make a champion that way.” Arthur Lydiard

“Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.” Old Buddhist saying

“Success is something you attract by the person you become.” Jim Rohm

“If you can dream it, you can do it.” Walt Disney