

Getting Unstuck: 11 Powerful Tips to Mobilize and Get Your Life Back on Track

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

What are your demons of immobility? Depression, self-doubt, self-pity, fear, and inability to choose are all descriptors of being stuck. You don't know what you want, much less how to get it. How can you get unstuck when all your best efforts have brought you to this place? The answer might lie in your thinking.

You say you want to do something else, be somewhere else, or start something new, but you don't know what that "something" is. You might see what you want to do but lack the drive to get started. You may have started toward your goals before but couldn't stay the course. You could make a good first start only to lose momentum, get discouraged, and give up. Where does it break down for you?

You may resist change, telling yourself or others, "I need to make a change, but..." You might even ask others for help, then discount their suggestions with, "Yes, but..." You may have logical explanations for why their solutions won't work for you, often blaming others for your situation. You tell yourself you could do something different if your circumstances were better or your family were more supportive or less selfish.

You may have analyzed your situation and discovered the reasons for your immobility. You might know precisely why you are stuck and even what it would take to get unstuck. But how can you change when you lack the courage, self-discipline, or motivation?

Whatever the cause of your immobilization, you can begin to get unstuck today by making small changes. Start by examining how you think. What are the "shoulds" in your thinking that perpetuate doing what isn't working? You know what you're doing isn't working, yet you still believe it

"should" be. Your immobility is proportional to your emotional investment in being right about your expectations. Challenge these "shoulds" and any other distortions or unrealistic thinking that hinder your dreams and goals. You can only get unstuck by changing. Although change may be scary, you have to embrace it. Small, ongoing changes can make a significant impact. Try some or all of these tips and see what happens:

- If you tend to analyze without action, stop the analysis paralysis and do something – anything.
- Stop if you tend to act impulsively based on your current thoughts or feelings. Assess. Decide. Plan. Act.
- Examine your assumptions and beliefs. If they aren't helpful, challenge them. Ask yourself, "Are they realistic or reinforce my fears and inactivity?"
- Stop engaging in self-sabotaging behaviors like second-guessing yourself, procrastination, and negative self-talk. Replace these with positive, self-encouraging thoughts and behaviors.
- Give yourself credit for your efforts. Refrain from discounting your progress.
- Stay engaged in the process. Focusing only on immediate gratification or outcomes will cause you to give up. Learning to enjoy the process will empower you to keep moving toward your goals.
- Ask for help. You don't have to do everything by yourself. Accept help with, "Yes, but..." If you argue for your limitations, you will keep them.
- If feeling overwhelmed, break tasks into small, manageable pieces.
- List everything you are worried about, or that contributes to your stress. Also, list things you can do to feel better, get moving, or de-stress. Pick items from each list to tackle daily.
- Take action daily.
- Believe in yourself. Invest your time, energy, and resources in your own development. The return will be worth it.

Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2008 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language and concepts, clarity and accuracy.

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