

What's Really Stopping You From Walking Down Your Own Path

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TAKE THE ROAD
LESS TRAVELLED

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Take the Road Less Travelled: What's Really Stopping You from Walking Down Your Own Path

Lesson 1— PDF Transcript

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Give yourself permission to succeed (and fail)
- Identify and let go of negative thought patterns
- Overcome the fear of “not being perfect”

Hello everybody. My name is Olle Lindholm and welcome to the *Take the Road Less Travelled*. I'm really glad to have you with me.

Today, we'll be talking about what's really stopping you from walking down your own path. In my own life and in my work as a study coach, I've come across the biggest obstacle that's stopping most people from taking that next step on their journey.

And the biggest roadblock is giving yourself the permission to succeed and fail.

I see this all the time, both with myself and with my students. In our mind, we play certain tapes that go something like:

“I'm not good enough to do this” or “I don't deserve to be happy.”

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In this lesson, I'll help you shift those thoughts and remind you that they are not facts or accurate representations of reality. Instead, I suggest it's more healthy to think of your mind as the sky. And your thoughts are like the clouds. Sometimes, they're big and heavy. Other times, they are small and light, but the sky remains.

The glass of water

It reminds me of this story about a woman who held a glass of water in front of a class. Everyone was expecting her to say: "Is the glass half-full or is it half empty?" but instead she looked at the crowd and asked: "How long do you think I can hold this glass of water?"

Everyone went quiet. She answered:

"It depends. I can easily hold on to it for a minute or so. But if you ask me to hold on to it for an hour, or a whole day, well all of a sudden, even one glass of water becomes too much for me to carry."

The same goes for our thoughts. Holding on to even the smallest negative thought for too long can cause us unnecessary pain and suffering.

Whenever I have a negative thought, I think about that glass of water.

I observe the thought and picture it as a cloud passing through the sky. I let it come, stay for a while, and then let it go. At the end of the day, I decide how to respond to my thoughts, and the glass of water helps me to remember that.

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So, what's really stopping you from walking down your own path is yourself and your thoughts. You don't give yourself permission to succeed and fail. And that's why you're standing still.

Now, let's look at a simple yet powerful way to help us overcome that initial hurdle, because it does you no good. It's time for us to awaken our inner child.

Awaken your inner child

Your inner child can teach you many valuable lessons about letting go of your fear of "not being perfect". Take a moment now to remember when you were very little.

What did you like doing? What did you want to become?

Like most 5-year-olds, you didn't set any restrictions for yourself.

You wanted to become an astronaut and a doctor one day. Then the next, you wanted to become a police officer or a professional singer.

The point is, you used your imagination to try out new things. You played with these thoughts whenever you had the chance. You might have been cautious and hesitant at first, but your curiosity and passion took the upper hand and you chose from a smorgasbord of options.

Not once did you think: "Oh no, I'm not good enough to become a police officer!" or "I don't deserve to be an astronaut". 5-year-old you would laugh these thoughts off without thinking twice about it.

These thoughts strike you as a grow up because you've picked them up along the way — in school, at work, and at home. You've learned to set up restrictions for yourself. You've learned to fear mistakes and "not being perfect."

Restrictions are learned, fears are born

In school, you get punished for your mistakes and you learned that all that matters is getting a perfect test score.

Stanford psychologist Carolyne S. Dweck has shown through numerous studies the effect this has on children and adults. She calls it the fixed mindset and it gives rise to the fear of perfection that so many of us struggle with today.

The fixed mindset judges our innate abilities and locks us in between two extremes: either I'm smart or I'm dumb. Either I'm good at Math, or I'm not. Either I can solve the puzzle or I can't.

Solving puzzles or not solving puzzles... That is the question

In one of her studies, she compares a group of five-year-olds with a group of twelve-year-olds. She lets them solve puzzles and for each time, the puzzle gets harder and harder.

Many of the 12-year-olds, schooled in a fixed mindset, fear failing to solve the puzzle, and therefore they don't even *attempt* to solve it. Instead, they choose to solve puzzles they already know how to solve.

Most of the 5-year-olds, on the other hand, choose another path.

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They can't wait to take on the new challenge. Why waste your precious time doing puzzles you already know how to solve when there are harder ones to try?

Your inner child is a great example of what Dweck calls **the growth mindset**.

When you're in the growth mindset, you don't equate failure with a loss of self-worth. Instead, you enjoy the effort and value the work you put in to completing the task.

Dweck's research on children shows that you learn to set restrictions for yourself at a very early age. But by welcoming your inner child, you adopt the growth mindset and you no longer fear "not being perfect".

Overcoming the fear of "not being perfect"

Oh, that nagging thought of "not being perfect" stops you from doing a lot of important work and following your own path. So, let's see what your inner child has to say about it.

I want you to think about something that you really want to do, but that you're currently not doing because you don't think you're good enough, or that you don't deserve to do it.

Think about that for a second, and now let's turn it around by asking a very simple question: do you think 5-year-old you would give it a shot?

Chances are, she probably would. So, what's really stopping you? The short answer is yourself, or rather your thoughts of "not being perfect".

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But not giving yourself the room to succeed and fail is stopping you from taking that next step. It's stopped me a lot of times, and then I always think about 5-year-old me.

Your inner child is a lot smarter and braver than you give her credit for.

And embracing your inner child and the growth mindset will help you take that next step on your journey.

Taking baby steps

Just look at any baby who's trying to learn how to walk for the first time.

Have you ever seen a healthy baby give up? You're probably finding yourself giggling right now, because of course you haven't. The very thought is absurd!

That's because babies are so determined to master this activity called walking. Just see how they rise, and then fall. And then get up again. They take one baby step at a time, one foot in front of the other.

In the next lesson, we'll talk more about the "baby-step" approach and how you can harness that to gain momentum and really start walking down your own path.

Thanks for listening. This is Olle Lindholm with *Take the Road Less Travelled*.