



SURRENDER

This book is about taking charge of our lives. It's about taking responsibility for our choices. It's about ways to stop being the victim and start being the victor, no matter what life tosses our way.

With that in mind, it might sound illogical to include a suggestion to surrender.

That's right. It is illogical. But life is larger than logic. Sometimes one of the most powerful ways to deal with challenges is to stop our futile attempts to control events and other people. We can quit fighting what's happening. We can ride the horse in the direction it's already going.

There are times when life backs us into a corner and brings us to our knees. Someone we know is killed in a car accident by a drunken driver. Another person who has fastidiously taken care of her health is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Almost all of us have experienced times when our most valiant attempts to solve problems fell utterly flat.

At those times it's wise to bend. We can admit we're stumped. We can admit that we're hopelessly confused and overwhelmed, or that all our ideas and energy are spent. We can give up our old habits of thinking and acting like we have to be in control of everything. We can stop acting as general manager of the universe. And we can admit that we'll never make it by ourselves. That's the moment of surrender.

Surrender opens us to help

There's magic in surrender. Once we admit we're at the end of our rope, we open ourselves to receiving help.

There are countless examples of this.

A student raises her hand in class and admits that she's totally lost, with no clue as to what the teacher is talking about. Now the teacher can help her frame a meaningful question.

A couple who want to have a child admit that they've been trying for years without success. After telling the truth about this, they're able to seek out support groups for infertile couples.

Someone else slowly develops an addiction to alcohol and vows to quit drinking scores of times. Each time, he fails. Finally, he surrenders. He admits that once he starts drinking, he can't stop. By entering a treatment center and joining a support group for recovering alcoholics, he gets the help he needs to keep from taking that first drink.

We can surrender knowing that an ultimate source of help is available for us. The name and nature of that help varies for people, depending on their beliefs, preferences, and spiritual practices. Names given to this power by different cultures include God, Allah, Higher Power, Jesus, Yahweh, the Creator, Mother Earth, the Tao, or simply the human community. The point is that there's always something or someone in life we can trust and count on during times of adversity.

Surrender in ordinary ways

Surrendering doesn't just work on life-and-death matters. In fact, we've probably experienced it in ordinary ways.

For example, you try to remember the name of someone you met at a party last week. For five minutes you rack your brain. No name. So you give up. Then, the next day when driving to work, the name suddenly pops into your head. When you stopped working so hard to remember, you let your subconscious mind deliver the name, with ease, in its own time.

Artists know that surrendering is one way to access the hidden reserves of the mind.

A person learning to play a Bach fugue on the piano worries about the fingering for a particularly difficult passage that's coming up. She starts to flounder at the keyboard until she remembers something her teacher said: "Practice hard and work out those fingerings before the performance. But while you're performing, forget all the technical stuff. Stop trying so hard and just let the music sing." Suddenly she relaxes into the composition, and the piece starts to play itself. She's surrendered to the music.

A writer is tackling the first chapter of his novel. He's painstakingly outlined the whole plot on 3x5 cards. Three sentences into the first draft, he's spending most of his time shuffling cards instead of putting words on paper. Finally, he puts the cards aside, forgets about the outline, and just tells the story. The words start to flow effortlessly, and he loses himself in the act of writing. The result is something far better than he could have imagined.

Surrender with care

It's easy to misunderstand what surrendering is all about. If you want this suggestion to work, then remember that surrender does not mean becoming resigned or inactive. We can surrender and, at the same time, continue to search for solutions and take decisive action. Some people surrender to a toothache. That strategy makes sense only if they're driving to the dentist's office.

When we choose to surrender to life's challenges and adventures, we can also choose to trust. We can trust dawn to follow darkness. We can trust sunshine to follow rain. We can trust that we will come out on the other side of our problems with new strength and wisdom. We can trust the process. We can surrender.





Practice surrendering

In the space below, describe a difficult problem in your life right now. Look for a problem that persists despite your best efforts to solve it.

Now describe in writing how surrendering might help you deal with this problem.

Practice asking for help

Think of something in your life that is missing—a fact, skill, service, or resource that could solve a continuing problem.

Now think of someone else who could provide what you want. It could be simple (asking someone else to do the dishes tonight so that you can rest) or significant (asking someone to be your personal and professional coach).

Write about your request by completing the following sentence:

I intend to ask _____ to ...



