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Make Your Own Decisions

By:

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Should you or could you? The rationale that supports 'I should' (and 'I should not') allows us to hand over the responsibility for our lives to others. It is a childlike stance and gives the decision-making power to someone else. Believing the 'should', inhibits change, risk-taking and assertiveness. It is part of your comfort zone but also severely limiting.

Whenever we question our basic beliefs we are also questioning our status quo, our safe solutions, and this can feel threatening. Personal growth is a courageous process, to provide that courage we need to recognize the benefits of opening up our options. We will reclaim our own life and be our true self that's really the only way to be genuinely and soundly happy.

The first step is to identify the inner voices that tell you that you should do this and not to be doing that. An inner voice that nags you in this way is likely to be an internalized parent or someone who is important to you, that you gave authority to in the past or currently.

Some 'shoulds' and 'nots' make sense of course, such as legitimate rules to live by, and if violated they harm the results to yourself or others. However many 'shoulds' and 'nots' act to undermine the strength and directness of what you think and do.

Make a list of all the things you think that you should or shouldn't do, should have or not have, should be or not be.

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Take each listed item read it out loud and then ask yourself, "Why should I?"

Here are some typical answers to the "Why should I?" question:

- "Because everybody has to,"
- "My father said I should,"
- "What will happen to me if I don't?"
- "Otherwise people won't like me anymore,"
- "Because I'm too fat, stupid, lazy, careless etc."

The answers to "Why should I?" questions demonstrate how we can limit ourselves by holding certain beliefs. Try ending an "I should..." statement with, "because I really want to."

The sentence doesn't make sense because the word 'should' implies reluctance and feelings of guilt or fear. Do we really need to burden ourselves in this way? The word 'should', however, can be replaced by the word 'could' and this restores freedom of choice. So go through your list of shoulds and rephrase each item: "If I really wanted to, I could..."

Another approach is to ask the question, "Why should I?" repeatedly until you genuinely and sincerely answer it with "Because I really want to." Or you decide to give it up because you really don't want to!

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Looked at this way, by changing your thinking, things will seem much more possible and at the same time you will no longer feel you "have to." So give yourself permission to run your own life. You don't need taped instructions from the past; right now you can make your own decisions and create your own experiences.

Brenda Herzog is the author of the book, *Soulful Inspirations*

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