

## Try This—Not That

### Overcoming Common Stumbling Blocks

*Here are 6 common situations that can leave you feeling stuck, uncomfortable or just frustrated. Do any of this sound familiar? If so, read on!*

#### 1.) Experiencing a challenging experience or crisis and not learning from it.

★ **Try this instead.**

We learn resilience by going through tough times and coming out on the other side with new ideas and different ways to approach a problem. It can be hard, however, to look back at a crisis we've experienced. If it's too hard to think about right now, wait a bit to get some distance on the situation. When you're ready, ask yourself if you would do anything differently and why. Your answers will point you to the wisdom you've gained.



**2.) Continuing to use an approach that doesn't work.** Henry Ford, the inventor of the assembly line, once said, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." There are many reasons that we use the same approach over and over: it used to work, we're determined to make it work, doing something different is scary, or it's hard to admit that it never really did work.

★ **Try this instead.** Remind yourself that you've had other good ideas, and *kindly ask yourself, "What else might work?"* Posing a question like this to yourself challenges your mind to consider other ideas -- and you're a lot more likely to come up with some good ones.

**3.) Ignoring the things you do that hurt you or get you into trouble.** We're human, and most of us have found a thing or two about ourselves that we'd like or need to change. If we routinely avoid addressing our behaviors, those not-so-helpful behaviors can begin to control our lives more than we'd like, even if we don't see it happening.

★ **Try this instead.** Learn to *respectfully acknowledge to yourself* those troublemaking aspects of who you are and how they may be hurting you. This is usually not an easy thing to do, and it does require some courage. But you don't have to go it alone. This is a good time to get some support - let your EAP help.

**4.) Telling someone what you think they should do, even if they ask you to.**

Your first reaction might be slight panic: “Oh no, they want me to fix their problem for them!?!” The reality: unless it’s a critical emergency, most people really don’t want **or** like to be told what to do. If someone is asking you this kind of question, usually that person already has some thoughts about what they want to do. Have you noticed that people tend to do what they want to do, even if they ask for advice?



☀ **Try this instead.** First, realize that the person probably wants you to listen to their ideas and give them support. So help them go down that path. Start out by asking them, “What are you thinking of doing?” or “What ideas do you have?” Don’t get heavy-handed with advice. In this situation, asking good questions helps the other person to expand on their ideas and lets them work out better solutions. Having a conversation with them allows them to think through the situation. Remember to keep the focus on *their* ideas. **Bonus:** practicing the fine art of listening may prevent an awkward conversation from happening!

**5.) Declining a request and using the tired excuse. Example: “I’m (really, too, awfully) busy right now,” when an acquaintance asks you to do something. (Followed by an awkward silence.)** Most people will recognize that the reason is evasive.

☀ **Try this instead.** Be upfront but gentle. Say something like “I can’t (help you, do that, etc.) now.” Then give them an alternative - something that you are willing to do, such as “Can I help you with that on Friday?” or “Let me know the next time you need help,” or “I’d like to help; can you give me more notice next time?” **Note:** If it’s your boss asking, and you decline, you’ll probably need to explain why you can’t assist as well as provide alternatives.

**6.) Multitasking.** Research has shown that the brain can focus on only one thing at a time. Very, very few people can truly multitask, which requires thinking about two things at the same time. What actually happens in the brain when we attempt to multitask is “task switching” - focusing on one task for a brief period, then focusing on something else for a brief period, and then going back and forth and back and forth. While some amount of task switching is unavoidable these days, *deliberately trying to do more than one thing at a time when you don't have to* results in mental and physical exhaustion. Also, you often don't get much accomplished. It takes time for your brain to readjust. If you're interrupted *while doing deep thinking* - which almost all of us are required to do at work - it takes some time for your brain to get back to that level.

★ **Try this instead.** Give yourself the luxury of doing one thing at a time. Let your mind focus on what you are doing now. We can't control every interruption, but we do have control over interrupting ourselves and stressing out when we don't need to. The trick is recognizing when you're on 'multitasking autopilot.' That pause allows you to get out of autopilot and be more deliberate about what you're doing. Give it a try!

*As a reminder, when you're working on changing a habit or learning to do something differently, it does take time, and having support can help what you've learned to 'stick.' You've got this—give us a call!*



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for you & your family.**

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