

Changing approach

I don't know what it is about humans -- even though it's usually quite clear when we've goofed up, so much of the time, we go and do the same thing over again!

Some might say it's self-destructive. Others might suggest it's just plain dumb. Even others would say it's some deep-seated psychological need that's not being met.

You know what I think it is? A mixture of habit, fear, and lack of training.

Most of us learn various ways to do things. In fact, Tiger Woods, now currently in the news for various indiscretions, trained with a golf pro a few years ago. Even though he was one of the most proficient golfers ever to take up the sport, he wanted to change the way he held the club, and so he worked on it until he learned how to do it. While he was learning, it affected his golf game (although presumably not other sort of games) in a negative way. He had learned how to golf in the "old way" and golfing in the new way took some getting used to. Supposedly, when he learned the newer method, his game improved.

For most of us, though, we get into ruts -- and those ruts keep us on the same path, going the same places, making the same trip. We don't get better, we don't get worse. We just stay where we are, when we're going.

A few years ago, my wife and mother-in-law were riding with me when I pulled out of a truck stop. I've been to that truck stop hundreds of times, and for some reason, I always seemed to hit the same pothole every time I headed back to the road. There was just something about the path I took across a wide-open parking lot. Well, I hit the pothole. My mother-in-law, easily one of the nicest persons in the world, was alarmed. I would have been too -- she was riding in the back seat at the time, and it was the back wheel that hit the pothole, giving her a bit of a jolt. "Oh, that's just a pothole that I occasionally hit," I said. "I wish they would fix it." "Fix it? I wish you would stop hitting it!" my wife said. And you know, I haven't hit that pothole since.

Sometimes, we need a push in the right direction to get us out of our ruts -- and it's better that push come from within. We're better off if we do our own self-evaluation, our own decision, and make our own changes. We're better off when we choose to change, and put that change into place. We're better off choosing not to hit the pothole, time and time again. After the first time, we change, move, learn, and go on.

But altogether too much of the time, we not only keep hitting those same potholes on the road of life -- we actually reverse course and hit them a second or third time for good measure.

You know people like that -- perhaps you are someone like that (sometimes I am -- I admit). I know a couple of people who keep burning through relationships -- they date (and sometimes marry) the same type of person each time, and they don't get along. Rather than trying someone different (or admitting they need some help), they keep making the same errors. They've hit that pothole every time, no matter what. Abusive spouses or critical partners, they keep lining up the same types of people every time.

Others make the same sorts of errors in their personal lives. They (perhaps I should say "we") eat the wrong food, or go to bed too late, night after night (and wonder why they're so tired all of the time). No change happens, until the heart attack hits, which knocks them out of their rut, and sometimes into a much deeper rut, six feet deep.

If life is what you make of it, then we should aim to make our lives great. If we only "go this way but once," then shouldn't we concentrate on making mistakes only once? If we are trying to become better, shouldn't we seek to dedicate our lives to quality -- becoming a little bit (or sometimes a lot) better each and every day?

If we were piloting a plane, we would make certain we were on the right heading -- and when we went to land, we would line up so we are on the right approach vector. In our lives, we should make certain we are on the right approach -- and not on a path full of potholes that we hit time and time again.

Copyright, 2010, by Daryl R. Gibson. All rights reserved. Permission is hereby granted for the non-commercial redistribution of this document as long as it remains intact with this copyright and all other lines. This license does not extend to the use of this material in a compilation, whether for profit or non-profit use. Join us at <http://www.weeklywisdom.com>.