

Choose the Challenge

Murphy's Laws of Combat Number 4: "There's always an easy way."

Murphy's Laws of Combat Number 5: "The easy way is always mined."

When I was a child, my father was happy to tell me about his general philosophy about whatever it was I was attempting to do: "Lazy man works the hardest."

Apparently he thought my childlike attempts at finding a "better" way were just attempts at getting out of work.

Perhaps he was right.

Since that time, I've learned that while there are better ways to do things (and I taught my father some better ways to do things around the print shop he owned), the best ways are rarely the easy ways.

In fact, I've learned, somewhat grudgingly at times, that the easiest ways are usually the wrong way -- at least where we are talking long-term emotional and professional growth. Few good things come without effort of some kind, and where personal growth is concerned, whether it be professional growth, emotional growth, human relationships, family matters, or personal learning, the easy way almost always has a tendency to lead to disaster.

As people, we are not wired to settle for the easy way to do thing. We are wired to look for the challenge, find the opportunity, and keep getting better and better. Some of us lose sight of that fact -- and choose the "I would rather sit at home on the sofa and eat Cheetos" mentality rather than the "I can be someone special if I only try" approach to life.

But casting aside the many virtues of Cheetos, most of us soon learn that the path of least resistance is really no path at all. The well-worn paths rarely lead to new vistas; there are rarely easy ways to any great summit (Pikes Peak excepted), and the challenges we take in life are the things that wind up defining us for who we are, who we will be in the future, and what we will become.

It reminds me of the old adage, "It's better to shoot at the stars and miss than to shoot at nothing and hit it."

Too many times, people choose the easy way -- for whatever reason, they choose a path that will never challenge them, never force them to grow, and as a

result, never really satisfy them. They (and sometimes I) choose the path of least resistance -- and as a result, our destinations wind up being the commons ones.

As a kid, my family had a cabin in the mountains. The paths around it were well-worn, but occasionally, I would set off through the brambles and brush, and find new ways to get to my destination. The new ways were often difficult to find at first, but they always were faster in the end. The old ways, the paths of least resistance, were always farther, but easier to take.

If you realize it, if the people who settled the United States, as well as other countries, took the path of least resistance, few discoveries would have been made, few places found, few glorious vistas would ever have been seen. It was the explorers, the pioneers, the trailblazers who made the world a better place, created new paths, forged new opportunities, and made a difference in the world.

And you can do so as well.

Decide right this minute that you will never allow yourself to blindly follow the path of least resistance when you are making decisions for yourself. Choose the more difficult way -- the more challenging way, and do a little bit of growing in the process. Become more than you have been -- make a difference in your future, and the lives of those you love. Challenge yourself -- choose the challenge for the future, and choose a challenging, and fulfilling life.

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