

By Jeanne Erikson, PhD



Digging Your Way Out

It snowed all day yesterday, and today I awoke to eight inches of pristine, absolutely gorgeous snow. The problem is, I live in the suburbs, my husband is out of town, and there are about 80 yards of this lovely substance between my garage door and the distant but visible snow plow track! I have the choice to be trapped for two or three more days, or dig my way out.

This day is a great metaphor for life coaching. My clients come to me standing in their "garage", looking at their long, snowy drive. They can sometimes see their goal through a life transition like divorce, career change, illness, or retirement, but aren't sure how to start or are too intimidated to begin. They want to be happier, healthier, and wealthier in money and love, but are stuck. Does this sound familiar? My job as a coach is to help them envision, act, and succeed.

Please walk beside me, analyzing a goal of your own, while I demonstrate how to get something daunting done.

Step 1. Assess reality. This task is up to me. If I don't dig a car track, I am stuck. Connection with people is important to me. This can also be an opportunity to challenge myself and improve my cardio wellness. What is your reality?

Step 2. Define the change you want! This step begins by just admitting you aren't satisfied. I want my usual freedom of movement. This definition is easy with a driveway, but naming what we really want can be a confusing, or guilt-producing, step for clients in life transition. What do you really want?

Step 3. Assess your strengths. I am relatively strong, willing, have a ski coat and boots, a shovel, and can make the time. We all have strengths that can carry us through a life transition. What are your strengths?

Step 4. Find the first action, and don't plan too far ahead. Remember these familiar pearls of wisdom from the Tao Te Ching? "The giant pine tree grows from a tiny sprout. The journey of thousand miles starts with a single step beneath your feet." I will get on my gear and fill the first shovel. The rest will follow, and I will have to pace myself. It might take four or five hours, or an hour at a time four or five times. Finishing is a lot easier than getting started. Worrying about what lies ahead just adds to the barriers. A life transition action can be elusive without focused thought or someone asking the right questions. What is your first step?

Step 5. If you need help, ask for what you want. I can hire the neighbor kids to help if something unforeseen happens, but would like to accomplish this myself. Sometimes we can't anticipate all events or obstacles and have to roll with the punches. Knowing when to ask for help is wise. Being clear about what we want gets the right kind of help. Can you let yourself you ask for help when you are in over your head?

Step 6. Shine a light on your own accomplishment. Whether you go part way or have accomplished all of what you wanted, praise and reward yourself. I plan to drink aromatic peach tea, and read a novel by the fire after I shovel. I will choose rewards that lead to better wellness. How can you reward yourself?

I will end for now, and begin to dig myself to a better tomorrow. My wish for you today is to do the same in your life!

To your wellness!

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