

You've made your choice. Now, what do you believe there is to do?©

Originally Written by Jim Earley in 1998

Key Points:

1. Once you make your heartfelt choice, you will need a plan of action. In that plan you must either:
2. Do whatever you believe you need to do, or...
3. Stop believing you need to do it!

In a previous newsletter, I made the point that great things start with our choice to make great things happen. I called choices made at that powerful level "heartfelt" choices. As I mailed that newsletter, I knew there was more to say. I knew something was missing. Thanks to Terry McBride (see photo below), I've been able to fill in one of the missing pieces.

McBride spoke at a workshop I attended in July (1998). He spoke about what he learned during a three-year hospitalization with a severe e-coli infection he contracted as a result of back surgery. Over that stretch, he had a colostomy (then had it reversed) and was warned that he'd probably lose a leg and become impotent. The way he bounced around the room (on two legs), you'd never have suspected he had gone through such a medical nightmare.

As dramatic as his story was, what really grabbed my attention that night was something he said about planning:

When you create a plan, your plan must include one of two things:

- (1) Either what you believe you need to do,
- (2) or steps to change what you believe you need to do.

Are You Stuck?

When I'm coaching, it's not unusual to see someone get stuck when it comes to putting their plan into action. They have a plan, but they hesitate about getting started. It seems they assume they can't start until their plan is complete and that, whatever their plan includes, they seem to figure there must be one more step they haven't thought of. They believe there must be more.

Another thing McBride said is that what we already believe we must do is always enough of a plan to start.

Consider my friend Tony. He told me he's changed jobs every four years or so for as long as he can remember (he could remember seven or eight job changes). In thinking about it, he acknowledged that, after about three years in a position, he would start to get bored. As the fourth year in a position gets closer, he starts getting really restless. Finally he updates his résumé, and mails out a few copies.

Mailing résumés is what Tony believes he must do to get a new position.

Next, within a few weeks, Tony will have lunch with someone or get a call and find out about an interesting position that he's perfect for. Soon, he's in the new job.

The surprise here is that the résumés Tony mailed are not the cause of that luncheon or phone conversation. He usually gets the new position without anyone involved even seeing his résumé.

The point is that mailing résumés is the thing Tony believed he needed to do to get a new position yet it does not ever appear to be directly related to getting the actual job.

McBride says step one is deciding what you want. Step two is being clear about what you believe you must do to get it. Step three is either doing what you believe you must do or changing the belief that you must do it.

What if the stakes are high...seemingly too high?

What if what we believe we must do carries a huge potential cost in addition to the possibility that it won't work? Said another way, what if what we believe must do sounds crazy?

Look for a second opinion - someone who can "shoot holes" in your belief.

A very common occurrence in my coaching meetings comes when a client shares something that they believe they need to do. I'm not talking about a major statement like "I believe I must do blah, blah, blah." No, it's just a statement like "I need to let Bob go," or "hiring a distributor won't work for my business," or something like that. Maybe just because I don't understand why, I'll ask them to explain why. In the process of sharing that explanation, the explanation just doesn't hold up as we talk out loud about it and "presto," it disappears. With that believed-in-action off the table, the person is often freed up to take some other action immediately.

When the stakes seem high, find someone you trust who has pretty good listening skills, and explain to them what's going on and what you're considering. If your belief holds together, go for it, or look for yet another person to test it on.