

More About Going with the Flow

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July, 2007

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As is the case with everyone who has just gotten back from a nice, lengthy summer vacation, I'm so aware of how great it would be to keep some of the relaxed, easy going approach that felt so good while walking on the beach, visiting quaint shops, and watching the sun set.

So, I was quite shocked to find myself scurrying around the apartment on the day I arrived back home, trying frantically to catch up with all the things that had not gotten done while I was on vacation (for example, dealing with the week's mail) or that needed to be done as a result of having been on vacation (for example, laundry). And my husband, David, and I, both eager to get things back on track, were driving each other crazy with differing expectations and priorities.

Aaarrrrggggggggghhhhhhhh!

After a mini-blow up with David, I had a little chat with myself about how I was wrecking the relaxation of a wonderful vacation, how it is unreasonable to expect to catch up with a week's worth of chores in a few hours, how my schedule in the upcoming week was unreasonably busy, and how I needed to "chill out." Instead of pushing against it all, I needed to "ride it" (like a wave, if you will). Instead of trying to jam things into my packed schedule, I needed to postpone scheduling anything new, and do things time permitting.

Well, it worked. That new approach to my post-vacation schedule chilled me out and helped me to maintain that great go-with-the-flow vacation vibe a bit longer. However, even though I got to a better place about it all, I was amazed at all the opportunities I had to blow it, to get overly intense and stressed out again. Here's what I encountered during the next few days:

- ❖ When leaving a doctor's appointment at approximately noon, I chose to pass up the scenic route and take the highway so that I could return to my office as soon as possible. As soon as I got onto the highway, I hit a huge traffic jam ("remember," I thought to myself, "go with the flow").

- ❖ A few clients called several times to reschedule appointments; playing phone tag while rescheduling is a particular pet peeve of mine (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ As my son-in-law’s dog jumped at me playfully upon entering the house one night, I waved my arms and stomped my feet to return the play, earning a stern rebuke from my husband (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ One morning at my computer job, I tried to install some new software, and it failed right in the middle of the process (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ That same morning, I thought, “No big deal!”, and I turned my attention to installing a second piece of software. That failed (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ Also that same morning, I decided that I would turn my attention to another piece of documentation that needed work, and I ran into a feature that I didn’t know how to use (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ Also that same morning, I thought, “Go get help!” But all the engineers were in a meeting (“go with the flow”).
- ❖ Toward the end of that not-so-productive morning, I thought that I would use my lunch time to run some errands. That way, when I got back, the engineers would be out of their meeting and could help me to get started again. I took my coupon to the pharmacy, asked to get a passport photo, and was told that the machine was down for repairs (“go with the flow”).

It was then that I chuckled to myself at my striking bad luck!

However, I also noticed that I hadn’t blown up in anger or gotten overly stressed about these events. Indeed, later in the afternoon, I figured out one of the problems on my own, got some help with the remaining problems, and all my tasks were completed by the end of the day.

When faced with a stressful situation, if we all can slow things down and ask ourselves, “How do I want to be about this?”, it can help us to go with the flow. Do I want to burst into a fit of anger? Do I want to play the victim? Do I want to exert my will harder (kind of like pushing in on the out door)? Or do I want to accept it and work with it as calmly and effectively as I can?

Those are rhetorical questions, of course. ;-)