



# Escape prisons you've made yourself

Bởi:

Joe Tye

*“The box many find themselves in is self-defining and confining. The walls of the box are fear, anger, lack, and so forth. Some circle the walls, pacing like trapped animals, failing to look up from their feet enough to see just how easy the walls are to step over.”*  
Eldon Taylor: *Choices and Illusions*

Why is it that so many people fail to change the attitudes and behaviors that, at least to an objective observer, are so obviously not helping them get where they want to go – in fact, may be preventing them from getting there? The fact is that many of us are “stuck.” We’re caught in traps that we often don’t even recognize (or choose to ignore), traps which hold us back from realizing our dreams. No matter how hard we try to push, we just can’t seem to get ahead. This is the nature of a trap.

A coyote caught in a trap will gnaw off its leg in order to escape. It instinctively knows that it’s better to be a three-legged coyote than a four-legged fur coat. It’s willing to go through (relatively) short-term pain in order to gain its long-term freedom.

## **It’s Better to be a 3-Legged Coyote than a 4-Legged Fur Coat**

Contrast the coyote with the monkey. According to a traditional Indian fable, a monkey can be caught by leaving a banana inside a large clay pot that has a very narrow opening at the top. The monkey grabs the banana and struggles to extricate it from the pot as his captors approach. The banana will not fit through the narrow top while wrapped in the monkey’s clenched fist. Now the monkey has a choice, doesn’t he? He can let go of the banana and escape (hungry but free), or he can hang on to the banana and hope against hope to keep both the banana and his freedom. The monkey takes the second approach, clutching the banana as he attempts to run off, dragging the pot behind. He is, of course, quickly captured.

Too often people react to the traps that hold them back just as the monkey did. They envision a goal – financial independence, entrepreneurial success, spiritual equanimity – as being “out there” in front of them somewhere. But they are trapped and either

## Escape prisons you've made yourself

unwilling or unable to, like the coyote, go through the painful process of chewing off a paw (changing spending habits, ending an abusive relationship, quitting drinking, quitting a soul-sucking job) so they can escape to a better future. They cling to their “banana” and wonder why they're stuck, why they can't seem to move toward the future they say they wish to create.

Though I've never tried this personally, I've read that if you drop a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will instantly jump out. If, on the other hand, you put the frog into tepid water and gradually turn up the heat to the boiling point, the frog will relax into a fatal stupor. Perhaps that's how we get stuck in our own little traps: we grow so accustomed to the pain that it becomes tolerable, even comfortable, when compared to the risk of making a leap into the unknown. The keys to escape the traps of life might be simple common sense, but the locks are rarely easy to open. We become so used to our traps, so comfortable in them, that we hardly recognize them for what they are. And we end up sleeping with the frogs.

Some lizards are equipped with a break-away tail; if they are caught in the beak of a predator, they yank so hard that the tail comes off and they can run away, diminished in stature but still alive and free. And before long, they grow a new tail. Perhaps that's an even more apt metaphor than the coyote, because once we escape from our traps, we can usually grow back whatever we've lost – in fact, more often than not, it will be stronger than the original.

Why don't you put some thought into your traps (we all have them). What is the price you will need to pay in order to escape? What is the price you will pay for refusing to escape? What are you waiting for?