



Train your doubt

Bởi:

Joe Tye

“Doubt is torture. If we give ourselves fully to something, it will be clearer when it might be appropriate to quit. It is a constant test of perseverance... Don’t listen to doubt. It leads no place but to pain and negativity.”

Natalie Goldberg: *Writing Down the Bones*

Between 1902 and 1908, the German Rainer Maria Rilke wrote a series of letters to a young poet that have since been published (and are still in print). The young poet was wracked by self-doubt about the quality of his work. Rilke responded that he needed to train his doubt, to teach it to ask better questions. That is great advice when your world turns upside down.

The dictionary definition of doubt gives it two meanings:

1. a feeling of uncertainty
2. a lack of conviction

If the doubt you are feeling is of the first variety, do what you can to reduce your uncertainty level with more research, but then accept the fact that some things must remain uncertain. The young poet can study the masters, write and re-write his poems, but he cannot dictate how the critics will respond.

If your doubt is of the second variety, a lack of conviction, ask yourself whether that is because you really don’t believe in the cause, whatever it is (your job, your half-written book, your marriage, your diet and fitness program, etc.), or rather that you simply are not willing to pay the price, make the sacrifice, and do the work. In such cases, doubt is often just an excuse for laziness and cowardice.

As Goldberg says, doubt is a constant test of your commitment and perseverance. Train yours to work for you and not against you by teaching it to ask empowering questions and to stop pestering you with disempowering questions.

One more thing: virtually every major breakthrough in the history of the world has come from someone acting upon doubt. From Copernicus doubting the conventional wisdom of a geocentric universe to J.K. Rowling doubting the conventional wisdom that an

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unemployed single mother can't become a successful author, people who act upon their doubt have changed the world. So if you are feeling overwhelmed by doubt, ask yourself if it might not be that you are on the verge of some sort of breakthrough yourself.