

CAPACITY & ENERGY

Week #2 of a 3-Week Series, "How to Get Out of Your Own Way"

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Last week, we started a three-week series on "How to Get Out of Your Own Way." How many people would agree that many problems that you have faced in your life were either created or worsened because you got in your own way? How many people would agree with that?

And how do we get in our way? Let us count the ways. [Congregants laugh] Fear, self-sabotage, procrastination, overthinking, worrying, judging, complaining, comparing, unworthiness, negative thinking, people-pleasing, avoidance, resistance, controlling, perfectionism and indecisiveness. I haven't made up my mind about that last one yet, but ... [Congregants laugh]

I am still shocked and amazed at the numerous ways that we as human beings have to block, limit and hold ourselves back from living and enjoying the lives we want. From achieving the goals and dreams that we desire.

Robert Cooper is a neurologist and the author of the book, "How to Get Out of Your Own Way." And he says we get in our way. But the initial culprit is actually our own brains: specifically, the amygdala, whose role is to keep us safe. to protect us from potential harm, and to help us survive. It is the "fight or flight" response.

And with the amygdala always scanning, and the potential threats, it sends messages to us like, "*Play it safe.*" "*That's dangerous.*" "*Don't do it.*" "*Be careful.*" "*Avoid risk.*" "*Back away from confrontation.*" "*Don't venture outside your comfort zone.*" And, "*Stay within what you already know.*"

The amygdala -- while it is there to help us survive -- actually often works against our goals and our dreams and our success. You know, encouraging us often to not take a chance, to not go after our dreams, to not move beyond our comfort zone to greater possibilities.

Regardless of the influence of the amygdala, we are powerful spiritual beings. And we still have the full responsibility and resources to create and make our own life; to create our own happiness and success. The brain is a great gift, but we need to learn how to use it as an ally and not see it as an enemy or suppressor.

So last week, we looked at two out of the five ways that we can get out of our own way. We'll do a little review now: and that is direction and focus. You know, it is important for us as human beings to have direction for our lives: to know where we are going; to have a vision; to have a destination. It is important for us to direct our lives that way, and it is especially important for our brains to have direction. You know, when the brain has direction, it begins to filter information. It notices opportunities that support our vision. It is able to allocate energy and attention towards our relevant goals, and it creates neural pathways. When we have a direction and a vision for our lives, we are distracted less and we're able to stay on course more.

Robert Cooper says that direction requires two things, and he calls them "horizon and heart." Horizon is seeing ahead for our lives. You know, having a vision for our lives being projected, and he says to project it beyond five years. How many people set goals? How many people have a five-year plan? A few less, I would say. And he says one of the reasons setting it out at least -- at least! -- five years is that it gives a channel for your creative energies to move forward with intention. It gives a level of clarity. It engages your brain. And it begins recruiting in your brain other different areas of it that help support it and give more resources and energy towards it. And having five years, we go deeper in our growth. We go deeper with our own transformation and spiritual development.

The second thing for direction, he says, is -- he calls it heart, which is our emotional connection for why we're doing it. It's our "why." It's our purpose. That when our heart is engaged and our heart is committed, we can endure and keep moving forward, regardless of the challenges, and be extremely resilient. You know, our heart needs to be in it. And that's an important thing.

Scripture says, "As a man thinketh in his heart." It says in the greatest commandment, to "love God with all your heart." The book of Jeremiah says, "Seek God. with all your hearts." There's a power of our heart being engaged in the direction that we want to move and create for our lives.

So, my question is: What is your direction? And if you don't have one, would you be willing for yourself to create a five-year plan that puts out there what your vision and desire is for your life?

So, direction is the first way how to get out of our own way. The second one we talked about last week was focus. Focus. Suppose your child brings home a report card and it has five A pluses and one C minus. Which one do you think would get more conversation that evening?

Human beings have a propensity to focus on the negative.

Do you know top performers are amazingly talented at knowing when and where to focus their minds? Because focusing is directing your attention to where you want it, on what you want it, and when you need it. And it is a powerful and important thing.

Focus is like a muscle, and the better we are able to focus on the things we need when we need them, the more work we get, the more efficient, and the more effective that we are. How many people have had a time that you couldn't focus? That you had a difficult time keeping your head clear and straight? And that's an important thing.

The Bible describes how important this is in so many ways. In the book of Isaiah, Chapter 26, Verse 3, it says, "I will keep them in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee." When our mind is focused on God, we will feel perfect peace.

Colossians 3, Verse 2 says, "Set your minds on things above, on not earthly things." Because when we set our minds on Spirit -- when we set our minds on the Divine within us, on our oneness with God -- it truly creates not just more peace, but more effectiveness in how we live and move in our lives.

And the one I used last week about Peter stepping out of the boat in the storm, when he looked at the Christ -- when he was focused on the Christ -- he stayed up. And when he looked at the crisis -- the wind and the storm -- he sunk into it. Focus is a powerful and important thing.

And one of the greatest ways is to focus your mind on Spirit. Focus your mind on the Divine. That is our source. Focus on it. Center in it. Because what we focus on grows and expands.

And the second thing about focus is: it's important, because our minds naturally focus more on threats than opportunities. Focuses more on problems than possibilities. Focuses more on avoiding discomfort than on taking risks.

Cooper says that we should start every day with a 15-minute focus exercise: focusing on our horizon (what we're shooting for); focusing on our heart (on the meaning and the value of it); and also just focusing on the possibilities and opportunities for our lives ... and including, of course, time we focus in prayer on Spirit

So last week: direction and focus.

Today is **CAPACITY & ENERGY**.

You know, with the negative being of the survival mode of how it goes, what happens is: we begin to create even more negativity in our own minds, and we create self-imposed limitation. You know, focusing on the negative things in our lives, like what's wrong; what could fail and not go right; how we might mess up. And one of the things that really goes big on our minds is stuff that's wrong with us. It begins to

see faults -- focus on our own faults -- to the point that our brain can see ourselves as a collection of problems that really need to be fixed. Sometimes thinking of ourselves, you know, as a loser or a knucklehead, or *"I'm really bad at this,"* or stuff like, *"That never works for me."* *"I always make bad choices in dating a man or women."* Or, *"My financial stuff never seems to go well."*

You know, we see all these things as problems, as mistakes. That we're broken, and these are areas in us that need to be fixed, rather than seeing ourselves as a powerful, amazing beings with unapped potential and incredible capacity.

And the truth is: we are much more capable than we believe that we are.

"I am an individualized expression of Infinite Intelligence."

Let's say that together: [with congregants] *"I am an individualized expression of Infinite Intelligence."* Take a deep breath into that.

"I am creation in action."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am creation in action."* Take a deep breath into that. Feel your capacity.

"I am an eternal being with expansive, unlimited capacity."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am an eternal being with expansive, unlimited capacity."* Take a deep breath into that.

When Jesus said, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom,"* what he was saying here is it's the Father's pleasure to give. God's nature is give, give, give. And God doesn't withhold anything from us, but delights to give. And the only limiting factor is: How much are we willing to receive? How much of God's abundance are you willing to receive? How much of God's love are you willing to receive? How much of God's peace and wisdom are you willing to receive?

It's all available there. The question is, how much are we willing to receive? How much are we willing to expand our capacity to allow ourselves and our lives to be filled with even greater things than now?

Gay Hendricks says everyone suffers from an ULP -- an upper limit problem. I bet we have at least one or two areas where we just seem to have a glass ceiling and we just can't see them. We have an upper limit problem, and we need to expand our capacity to raise that level to be willing to receive and allow through into our lives greater abundance.

In 2 Kings, Chapter 4, there's a story that we all are probably familiar with of the widow's oil. And so, her husband dies and she has a lot of debt. And there's a threat that her two sons will be taken away to compensate for the debt that she's in.

So, she goes to Elisha and says, *"Hey, what do you think I should do?"*

He says, *"Have you got anything in your house that's valuable?"*

She said, *"I have a little bit of oil; just a little."*

He said, *"Great! I want you to go around all your neighbors and get as many vessels as you can, as many containers as you can -- plenty of them. And then you and your sons go in your house, lock the door, and then start pouring the oil into the vessels. And they will keep filling until all the containers are filled."*

And so, they go and do that. And guess what? All the oil pours. And it didn't stop until every single container was filled. She had so much oil she was able to sell and pay off her debtors and have extra for herself to live.

And the message here is: oil is Spirit flowing. And Spirit will flow and fill us to the extent of how, what the size or number of vessels that we have. And we are that vessel.

And so, are you willing to expand your capacity to receive more of God's goodness?

Everyone, I want you to think about how much love is in your life right now. Take a deep breath. And can you expand your capacity to receive and enjoy even more love than you're experiencing now? To feel more love? To receive more love? To express more love and experience more love?

Nothing is withholding it from us. The question is: Are we willing to open ourselves to receive any and all aspects of the abundance that God has available to each of us? If we want to get out of our own way, we need to expand our capacity and our willingness to receive God's abundant good.

You know, Cooper says that we have more capacity than we realize. And he says, as good as we think we are in having one brain, he says we actually have four brains. He says we have the normal brain that we think about in our head. And that represents cognitive intelligence. It's good for reason and planning and so on.

But he said we also have a heart brain. And that represents emotional intelligence. And our heart has to be into it; it's about that connection to meaning. The third one is our gut brain. That is our instinctive intelligence. And then the last one is our body intelligence, somatic intelligence. Because our bodies hold experiences. They hold all kinds of information for us. Anybody ever do muscle testing? You know, there are all kinds of ways that the body shows us knowledge and wisdom.

And he says that one of the ways we can expand our capacity is to utilize these four brains. To go to the head for a clear decision and realizing what our priority and the most important thing is. To go to our heart to know what the meaning and the connection is, and to put our heart into it. A third with our gut is to trust our gut; that it feels right and to be decisive in whatever action we are guided to take. And the last one, our body: go to that intelligence, because it really helps us sustain our inner energy.

You know, something I find that's really interesting is the word "heaven" comes from a root word that means expansion. And really heaven is an experience of expansion. When we expand our heart in love and compassion and kindness, that's a heavenly experience. When we expand our minds into a greater awareness of the divine and the goodness in our lives, that's an experience of heaven. When we expand our joy; when we expand our wisdom; our understanding -- that all experiences of expansion are heavenly experiences. And we are called to all of us to expand our capacity to experience the fullness and the richness and the abundance of God.

And so, we go to the next one: energy. **The first one is to expand your capacity. The second one is to manage your energy.**

You know, life is energy. Our words are energy. Our bodies are energy. Everything is energy. But I'll tell you, three of the quickest ways that we waste our energy are this. Number one is dwelling in the past, particularly holding on to grudges; holding on to guilt or shame or regret. All of these things are the past that we hold on to drain our energy.

The next one is to worry and have anxiety about the future. You know, 85% of the things that we worry about never even happen. Worrying about the future is a huge waste and drain of our creative energies.

And then the last one is our expectation and belief that other people should make us happy.

[Congregants laugh] That that is their responsibility. Well, I can't tell you the amount of frustration and anger and upset and disappointment that that belief system causes and wastes our energy, thinking that other people should make us happy. And some of them are not doing a very good job, in our opinion.

[Congregants laugh]

Another one of the biggest ways that we get in our own way is that we believe that, if we work harder and longer and just grind it, you know, and just keep pushing and forcing and take less sleep and not eat good, but devote everything to work harder, that things will get better and we will be more and more successful. And that is just not true. The more we work, it will lead to burnout and running on empty. It'll lead to tunnel vision and feeling exhausted.

And because we are so overly focused on it, we'll end up missing out on other areas of our lives that bring us joy. We lose joy. You know, we're not as effective. And not only do we not make progress, sometimes we regress, as well.

How many people have ever felt exhausted and drained from how much you work? Anybody? How many people ever believe that working harder and longer will always produce greater results? And the last one is: How many people have ever seen yourself or someone else working long hours, staying late at the office, and it's almost a badge of honor representing, *"Oh, he's so dedicated. She is so committed."* Anybody have that, as well?

He said, this is not healthy. This is not an effective way. This drains our energy.

Person A works 70 hours a week, checks their emails every five minutes, is constantly stressed, and sleeps five hours a night. Person B works 45 hours a week, has clear priorities, exercises three to five times during the week, gets rest and self-care, and his work or her work is aligned with their purpose and has great meaning to them. Which of the two do you think is a higher performer? Or at least a happier performer? I think the answer is obvious.

You know, success is not about measuring how much work we do. It is about how we expand and invest and manage our energy.

How many people ever run around like a chicken with your head cut off? Anybody ever have that or have, *"The sky is falling!"* kind of feeling, or we're panicked and freaked out?

One of the things he says is that we can excel under pressure. And he said the first thing: that pressure is not the problem. The problem is that we believe that pressure is danger. Pressure is failure. That pressure is bad. And we get anxious. We get defensive and completely stressed out.

But high performers know that pressure is good. And it's important. It's a part of life. The question is: How do we handle it? How do we focus with it?

And do you know what he says? Is to go back to those four brains and create a system that -- anytime there's stress and pressure 00 and it's a good system just for work in general ... And the first one is: get a clear decision and focus on your priority. Ask what needs to happen and think about what is the best outcome.

And then the second one: go to your heart. What is the meaning of this? Why is this so important? And to invest your heart in it.

And the third is to trust your gut. Check in with your gut. What is the best action to take in this moment?

And then the final one: check in with your body. Is this the right and best thing to do?

Then take action. And then come back to yourself and check in with yourself or your team and then go over again.

One of the things I love about this is: if you want to make progress when there's pressure, you need to have a process. And that, if we had a process in tough times, we wouldn't be running around like chickens with our heads cut off. We wouldn't be thinking the sky is falling. We would use our power and resources to conserve our energy by doing the right things and not just freaking out and worrying about it.

The pressure doesn't disappear. But our capacity to meet it expands. And so the question is: How good are we at managing our energy, particularly when there is pressure to keep our focus on resolving it and having the best outcome?

In it, he has got a chapter entitled, *"Leap Forward Doing Nothing."* And he's talking about the fact: we always think *"Go, go, go!"* But rest is an important thing. You know, Leonardo da Vinci? And Thomas

Edison and Einstein? Every one of them found out the secret to utilizing and maximizing your brain's creativity, problem-solving, memory, and all the great things our minds can do is rest it on a regular basis. Quiet it on a regular basis. It renews and replenishes and keeps us an open channel for greater ideas, solutions, and inspirations. They did it consistently. They did it regularly, because they knew of its power.

How many days did it take for creation? Anybody remember? Seven. Notice they didn't say six. That's a minister heckling and saying ... so ignore her. It is six! Or is it seven? And the fact is: it is seven. Because what did God do on the seventh day? He rested.

And the reason they said that is because the creative process is seven days. That rest is a part of the creative process. That for us to create, we can't just work, work, work, work, work. Rest is a vital and important thing.

After God created 24 hours of alternating darkness and light, he went to one of his angels and said, *"Hey, look what I created!"*

And the angel said, *"That's awesome! What are you going to do now?"*

And then God said, *"I think I'll call it a day."* [Congregants laugh and moan] All right. The heckler ... I may have ...

An executive was struggling trying to resolve a business problem. And he was working on it, and it was going nowhere. And so, he took a weekend trip. He went hiking. No spreadsheets, no meetings, no phone calls. And on the second day of his hike, the answer came to him. And the reason it did was because he cleared a space in himself. He quieted his mind, his body, and he opened a space, and the answer came through.

You know, a golfer developed a slice in his stroke. Every single time. And he kept working harder and harder and harder. And he got more frustrated and frustrated and frustrated. And he took a couple of days off. He came back relaxed. And his swing returned. He didn't play better, but his swing returned. [Congregants laugh] It's golf after all ...

A writer was looking at blank pages thinking, *"I can't write anything."* And he was getting upset and frustrated. And so, he decided every single day he would go for a walk. You know, he would try and do some activity; leave the house. And then in a few days, his flow came back.

You know, it is important to get rest: rest this incredible genius mind and open ourselves to be a greater channel.

Having moved into his new office, a pompous new colonel was sitting at his desk when an airman knocked on the door. Conscious of his new position, the colonel quickly picked up the phone and then told the airman to come in and then said on the phone, *"Mr. President, thank you so much for having the confidence in me that I could handle this great task. I am so looking forward to our meeting together. But in the meantime, I just want to say thank you and blessings and good wishes to your family."*

Feeling as though he had sufficiently impressed the young enlisted man, he asked him, "So what do you want?"

And the airman said, *"Oh, nothing important. I'm just here to hook up your telephone."* [Congregants laugh] Okay. The colonel definitely got in his own way!

So, the fact is: if any of us want a greater life -- and we all absolutely deserve it -- and even with our amygdala seeming to work against us, we have such great resources and powers that we can have incredible breakthroughs and do amazing things.

And the two things we need to remember and practice is to expand our capacity and to manage our energy. You know, that is the third and fourth way to help ourselves get out of our own way.

God bless you all.

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