

**HEALTHY MINDS**  
**A WEEKLY COLUMN ALL ABOUT MENTAL WELLNESS**  
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**Taking Responsibility for Change**



When we have been behaving habitually in the same manner for many years, it is human nature to resist change. We don't want to leave our comfort zone. We want to get someone else to change themselves or to make us change. Whatever the change we want to happen, we must do it ourselves, if we want it to be a real and permanent change.

If we want to quit smoking, drinking, taking drugs, overeating, obsessive sexual behavior, gambling, shoplifting, malicious gossiping – any of it - we must think of the consequences of our continued action on our own lives and on the lives of others. If we rely on outside forces, such as – for example in weight loss – diet pills, liposuction, stomach stapling, and so on, we will often gain the weight back unless we make the choices of eating less calories and doing more exercise. The operative word here is CHOICE. We make the choice to take the action and we make the choice to stick with it – or make the choice NOT to stick with it. We choose not to use our will power to stick with it but it is us who do things to ourselves. Not exercising your will power is a choice.

Being able to bend our own will through making a choice and sticking with it is empowering, enlightening, and gives us tremendous control over our lives. It all times, and especially in these coming hard times, the strong have the best chance to survive and prosper.

**QUESTION OF THE WEEK:** Most psychotherapists and counselors are not advice-givers, like coaches. Rather, they lead their clients to come up with solutions to their own situations. They may see a path for their client to follow but they understand that it is more therapeutic to lead the client to find the path. As the writer of this column, however, I am often asked for advice, and have been encouraged by several readers to answer these questions here. I shall try responding to some of these questions when they arise. You are welcome to contact me at the address below, and I will do my best to answer you.

One woman writes me: “I have been happily married to a hard-working man who is decent to me and our children. We get along fine, but after 8 years the fire has died down. Recently my attractive older sister got divorced and she and her kids have been spending a lot more time with us. We have always got along but I can see a growing attraction between her and my husband. I am afraid it will soon get out of hand if it hasn't already. It is a terrible situation to be in. What should I do?” Family Gal, Cumberland County Kentucky.

Dear FG: Find a good, relaxed opportunity, with no distractions, to speak with both your sister and your husband. **DO NOT MAKE ANY ACCUSATIONS ABOUT THEIR ACTIONS OR INTENTIONS.** Tell them instead that you are concerned – probably needlessly – that they seem to be so fond of each other, that a close and loving family relationship could go too far unless it is kept in check. Tell them that you love all of them and you want all of you to be strong and support each other and keep the precious family from being torn apart. Tell them that you are feeling a bit insecure and to forgive you for your worried mind. Do not drive a wedge between yourself and either of them. You cannot control their actions or their morality and you must not make any threats, even subtle ones. Do not be the spark that starts the fire in a flammable situation, or they will conveniently blame you for driving them together. Be brave and be strong and restrain yourself from being too quick to speak or act. Do not discuss this with others, either, as it will only start other brush fires, since there are many who are eager to see this kind of painful drama happening to others. Having these gentle conversations with each of them can be a good wake-up call if things are actually starting to get out of hand. If they care about the big picture, they will restrain themselves. If you were mistaken, no feathers will be ruffled and you will get the loving reassurance that you need. If handled correctly, many potential infernos can be quenched when they are only starting to smolder.

**WEBSITE OF THE WEEK:** How to Stop Cheating  
<http://www.snzeport.com/dlarticles2/stop-cheating.htm>