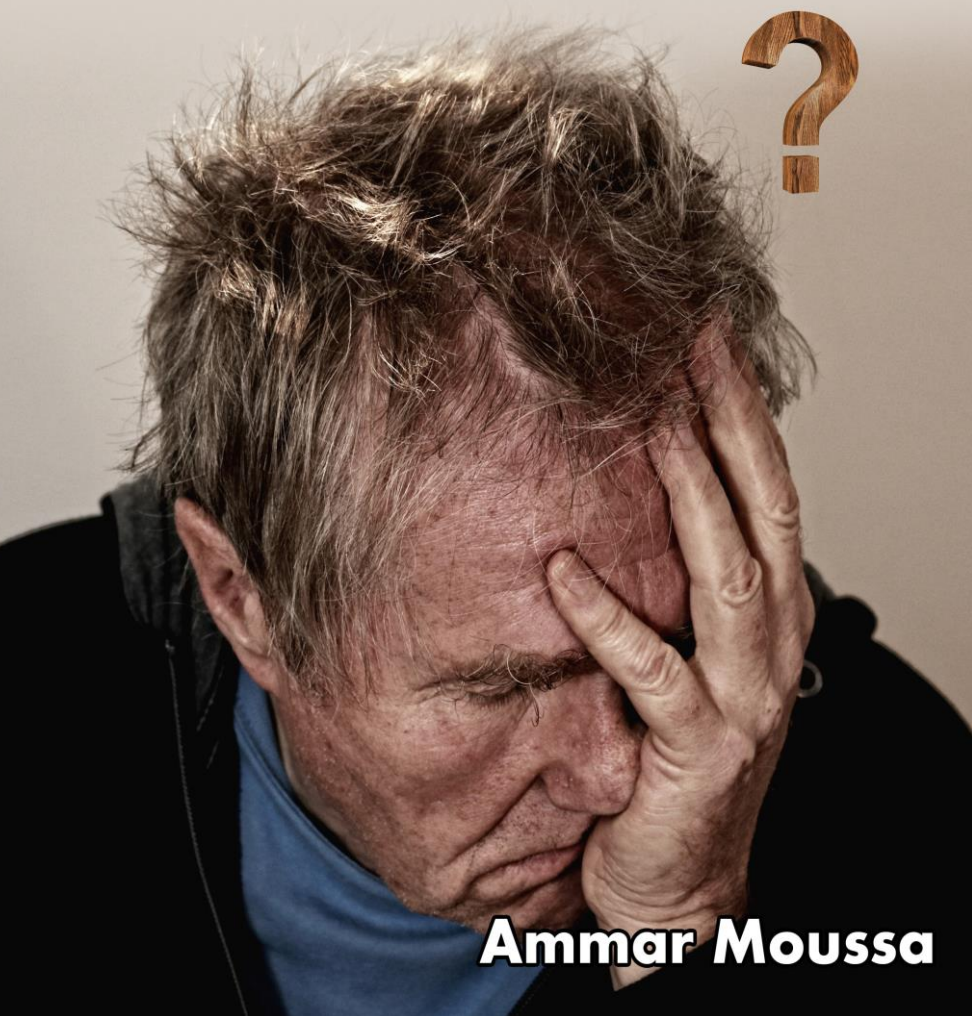




4<sup>th</sup> Edition

# Facing & Solving Problems



**Ammar Moussa**



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# **Facing & Solving Problems**

**Ammar Moussa**

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## **Express of Responsibility**

Whatever you will do with the contents and knowledge you find in this book, it will be completely your own responsibility; I just share my knowledge with you. You and only you can decide how to use them in the sake of your best. Remember that neither the author nor the publisher have any responsibility about how you will use what you will read here in this book.

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# ***Preface***

Last week, I had a problem that was a real challenge; I spent the whole week in a struggle, but on the arrival of the weekend, the naughty problem had been defeated and an effective solution brought the peace back again. I went to bed exhausted but a happy victorious hero, and that is what I would like you to feel every night. 😊

I woke up this morning and told myself, it is time to share the few things about facing problems that I learned in the past few years, because no real emotional, mental, or personal development can ignore the importance of facing and solving life's problems.

*"Problem"* is a hateful word means that an unwelcome guest is knocking the door and our mood is probably about to change negatively.

An endless queue of those unwelcome guests is waiting there at the door, and most of them do not even have the minimum courtesy to knock the door first and wait for our permission before they throw themselves into our life, as if we do not feel that life already miserable enough without them!

Problems just keep coming one after another, until we become totally exhausted at some point where simple

missions become hard and painful like lifting rocks, all our efforts in self-energy management become useless, and perhaps we fall sick.



### ***Welcome Dear Problems***

Finally, if we are lucky enough, we will find ourselves respected guests in a luxurious ICU suite, surrounded by the angels of mercy wearing their elegant white dresses. They will be standing there watching us helpless and just wondering if we are going to witness the next sunrise or not.





Oh! Sorry, that was so dramatic... let us roll back... Why we do not just try to change the scenario from the early beginning, maybe we can end with a happier closure. Let us start by stating and understanding an essential fact:



***“Life is not fair, and problems are essential part of it just like water and air.”***

*“Life with no problems”* was the eternal dream of human beings since ever; but sadly, it has been and will remain the impossible dream.

The nature of life is to be full of problems, and that dream can only be real in the paradise; but here on earth, in this

life, it will never happen... and problems will never stop showing herself as an essential part of our life.

This time I am not trying to be dramatic; I am just stating an abstract fact. Without problems, the life we know has no meaning. Actually, if you took few moments to think, you will figure out that without problems, the whole life as we know it will not even exist.

The nature of this life is built over a structure of connected and overlapped problems or challenges that creatures should face and survive. So, if we want to live happy, then we should accept that fact and deal with it.

By the way, having problems is good news by itself, because it means that we are still alive; so let us accept it and stop wailing and dreaming with a life where problems do not exist. The only thing we can do here is to adapt with that fact, and learn how to face and solve our problems without being drained.

I tried to make things simple and short as possible, and I hope that you will find the few tips and advices you will read about in this mini-book useful.

*Ammar*

# The Memorial

***In memory of all those been slaughtered or  
burned alive.***

2018–2020

*To those who had bravely sacrificed themselves for the  
sake of common good when it was the time... You will  
never be forgotten.*

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Like if she already knew what would happen, the sun seemed unwilling to witness that day; she just insisted on hiding her face behind the clouds, and leave the cold winds dominating the scene.

In the early morning of that day, unforgettable battle suddenly began somewhere in the city. The history will record later that an epic had taken a place there, and lasted for 3 whole weeks. Those who survived the actions, declared the forever mourning; for the rest of their lives they wore the black whenever they met someone to spread the word and tell the sad story of those braves who sacrificed their lives in the sake of common good.

If you were there that morning, you would see the thousands who fought there to protect the noble goal of their existence. The fighting sides were actually serving the same common goal, but they still had to fight each other and go through this existential battle, where only the strongest survives.

Every moment, more red drops were falling here and there, forming big red spots over the white floor; or were running over the bluish bodies that been shaped in different ways.

Even that place that used to be called "*a sanctuary*" was turned into a holocaust. Whenever you entered there, you were been able to see the red spots everywhere, or to hear the frightful cries of those who were being cut, or to smell

the red substance mixed with the smoke of burned remains.

Somewhere in that sanctuary, a butcher stood there waving his sword and drawing the red marks over the skins with no hesitation. If you had looked at his eyes, you would feel sick; he just believes in what he is doing and considers it a sacred mission in the name of the holy slogan!

The only crime that those victims had ever committed was to exist in the wrong place and the wrong time, but who cares?!

There was no chance for a misconception of what is been happening there; only one word can really describe it; it was a real massacre.

The words were been slaughtered with no mercy by the swords of brevity. No single word could have sanctity anymore. It was a sacred war in the name of "*good brevity*". The inquisitions were been held for every single word to inspect its loyalty and how much it belongs to the book. Wherever you moved in that area, you could only hear the screams of tortured paragraphs asking for mercy, while their guts are being extracted and examined brutally. Those who been condemned were been sent immediately to the executioner, without a chance for an appeal, or having a second look on their cases.

Unfortunately, I was the butcher. It was my pen striking right and left, kills a word or cuts a sentence, and paints the red over the blue letters and the white sheets of the initial draft.

I guess that is why books are being printed in black, to symbolize that feel of shame and grief in the hearts, because those printed words are the lucky ones who survived the massacres. How shameful it is when the victims are just young babies. Words' normal life can last for centuries; but these slaughtered poor babies... most of them did not even celebrate their own 1<sup>st</sup> birthday!!

Many paragraphs were lost in the middle of the actions, whether been slaughtered by the sword or been burned alive after being condemned of being "*intruders*".

Those lucky who had not been killed, were been detained in a frightful prison called "*Appendices*" where they kept being tortured brutally. That spot of hell had been built especially for those who been kept alive only to be enslaved and serve the "*Pure*" who were not been targeted by the cleansing.

When the actions were over, the reports of casualties were terrifying. There were more than (14) pages buried in a mass grave located somewhere in my *Recycle Bin*. The remains of burning another (9) pages were been set free in the wind.

A whole village had been exterminated; the words lived there formed together a chapter that does not live up to the racist standards needed to survive that ethnic cleansing; and that was their only crime!

About (60) pages were wounded, and waiting there hoping for healing or being cured. There were at least (9) missing paragraphs that no one can tell what happened for them or where they ended; they just disappeared during the actions without a trace. Dozens of homeless paragraphs were standing there in the snowed fields waiting to be relocated into proper places within the borders.

In total, there were at least (10,000) dead, injured, or missing words according to the most optimistic estimates. More than another (12,000) words were granted temporary shelters in a refugees' folder, waiting to be transferred to another safer book.

The poor figures of this book almost lost its colors and turned pale after witnessing the grossness of this tragedy. Even the thin preface had lost 2 whole pages of its weight while being captivated in that concentration camp.

And as usual with such purging crimes being committed by high authorities, the media invented a cute name to cover the brutal nature of such savage crime; they just called it *"The Editing Process..."*

However, I could not bury those poor victims without a tombstone to tell that they were here one day. The dotted lines in the beginning of this chapter stand as a memorial to commemorate their sacrifice in the sake of the common good of this book.

I wished to make a tombstone for each sentence exactly in the place where it was slaughtered, but of course, I did not wish this book to turn into something like a cemetery. I wished it to be a beautiful city that whoever walked through can see the colorful life and smell the fragrant scent of knowledge. So, I had to swallow my pains and accept a single memorial for all the victims together. One big memorial at the main gate of the city to tell whoever visits that it is a city been built over the skulls of my own beloved words.

.....

Okay, I am sorry again for those overdoses of drama and tragedy. It is something running in our bloods we the writers as you have seen few moments ago; we cannot help with it. Everything in this life is a good material for us to grieve about it and being dramatic. Maybe it is our nature, or maybe we just feel our words like our own children. When you have to remove or abandon an idea or a good sentence you already wrote and admired, you just feel like you are shooting or leaving one of your own kids behind you! 😊



It is pathetic, and that is why you should forgive a good writer when you suddenly pass through a word, sentence, paragraph or even a full chapter that you feel it out of context, or cracking the consistency of the whole topic. He probably knew it, but he just could not let it go. He fell in love with it, and writers are just humans and have their own moments of weakness too.

Seriously, *“Good brevity makes sense”*; can you imagine how many pages and terabytes can be saved? And with internet and social networks nowadays, it is even much... much worse... Can you imagine how this world will be if everyone just made a simple memorial to mourn for his lost chatter rather than throw it over our heads? How many hours can be saved then? How much money both publishers and readers can save that way? Even how many lives could be saved that way? 😊

Hmm ... all those pages just to tell you that I am so sad about the few pages I had to drop, and that I am a so sensitive writer.... What I was just preaching about!? Good Brevity!! I guess it does not sound like something I am good in it so far.... What a felicitous start we have here!? Why I suddenly feel like a politician preaches about honor!! 😊

Anyway, as this chapter had been granted immunity against my red pen blade (by my own rules and authority), so I am going to make most of it and use this space to the last drop.

In fact, this tragedy reminds me with two of the most important lessons I ever learned.



***“We should learn to let it go when it is the time, and we should learn when it is the time to let it go.”***

We should learn ***how to let it go*** and accept our unpreventable loss. Accept the fact that we need to sacrifice something we love and admire in the sake of the better or the common good. And not just that, we should also learn ***when it is the right time to do that***; when it is what we love most, is what actually ties us to the ground and prevents us from flying.

However, this is not an absolute rule. In the name of this rule, a lot of bloody crimes had been committed throughout the history, and the justification was *“It is just collateral damage in the sake of the common good!”*

This rule should always been considered under the umbrella of ***ethics***. Sometimes, sacrificing the common good in the name of ethics is the real common good. It is a fine line between this and that, and only your conscience is the one who can tell; and I am sorry to tell you that there is no easy way here. It is our destiny on this earth to be tested through such hard ordeals, and we can do nothing except accepting that fact.

Anyway, I am thankful for god that my crime here in that massacre is fully justified and my conscience is satisfied... Is it?! 😊

You know... sometimes I think that perhaps even this memorial should be excluded too, but forgive me: No... I will not betray the memory of my beloved words. As long as I am alive, no one will ever touch it; and you will have to live with it. 😊 There must be some kind of respect for my grief; and that takes me to the second lesson, which was the real reason for why I gave this chapter such immunity. The modern culture has planted in our minds that it is wrong to be sad, made us feel guilt for our sorrows; while the fact is that it is okay to be sad from time to time, even short mild depression is acceptable.

Actually, it is not just okay or acceptable; it is ***necessary*** and ***healthy***, and we learn the most important lessons of our life through those low mood phases.

Ignoring our need for grief after serious losses just makes things worse and more complicated on the long run; it is like that you are collecting your pains, just as a stingy collecting gold, and you are just waiting for that moment when you will spend them all together and explode or fully breakdown. However, on the other hand, it is a serious mistake to live in the low phase longer than necessary, or waste our time in a non-useful regret. This way, we are just

adding another ***one of the most painful losses: The loss of our precious time in this short life.***

It becomes even worse when the reason of our loss is that we were taught the wrong lessons, or that we did not learn the right ones early enough to prevent the loss. No matter how much time you lost, it is a real foolishness to waste more of precious time in regretting a time already had been lost. When a person learns a new lesson in this life, he should put it in action immediately, rather than waste the time in regretting that he did not learn it before.

All the time you will face this situation. You will learn new lessons and discover new ways to do things better, and you will feel regret or guilt for not discovering that earlier. Even worse, you might feel a pride prevents you from correcting a mistake or adapting better solutions just because you feel it hard and harmful to your pride to admit it. As long as the man is still breathing, and his mind is still working fine, then it is never too late to put a new lesson into practice.

No matter what the losses before were, it is always better to save the future than lose both the past and the future together.

If someone still has any kind of ability to do something, then he has been granted a second chance to do something in the right way with respect to the new lessons.

Just do what you can do, and no one has the right to ask you for more than what you really can do; and probably you will be surprised when you discover the lot you can do. However, no one can judge that except you, and only you.

I always tell myself: ***accept your loss, grieve about it, make a tombstone, cure your own pride, learn your lessons*** and never say it is too late for a real improvement; ***but then move on*** and do not waste time in regret, or useless fights and arguments with yourself or the others. Just go ahead and commit some real and serious useful change.



***“The wise man does not waste the rest of his own story writing about his losses and tombstones instead of writing a story that worth to be read...”***

Now, let me put that advice into practice and move on to some serious business... 😊

# ***Facing a Problem***

Now, before attempting to solve your problems you must face them first. If you already accept the previous fact about life and problems, then you already started facing your problems in the right way. However, there are some basic ideas that can make facing a problem much easier.

## ***Be the Boss and Never Panic***

Let us talk about that moment when the problem shows her face for the first time, and she introduces herself: *“Hi, I’m your new problem, and I’m here today to make your life ugly as much as I can.”* 😊

The first and major rule here is:



***“Never let a problem to be in charge.”***

Flip the table and be the one who is in charge, not the problem. Once you are the one in charge, you will know what to do... and how exactly to solve the problem in many cases... even without any further help.

Being in charge will help you also in the remaining cases, because you will still be able to figure out what to do, or how to work on finding the right solutions that you still do not know.

# Be The Boss



The Problem

You

Be initiative, once the problem shows her face, be the one who strikes first. This does not mean the problem should be solved immediately by that first strike; that depends on the situation.

The most important is that you become the one who starts the fight with it. Show the problem that you are not afraid of it and that you are not just ready for the fight, but you are challenging, you are starting the fight and launching the first hit.



***“Be initiative, the problem is your opponent, and the top hand in a fight is usually for the one who hits strong enough firstly and paralyzes his opponent.”***

Newton 3<sup>rd</sup> law stated, *“For every action, there is a reaction that is equal in magnitude and opposite in direction.”*

Although that might true in physics, but when it comes to human nature and behavior, it looks to be wrong; the reason is the existence of a space between every action happens or affects a human, and his reaction for it.

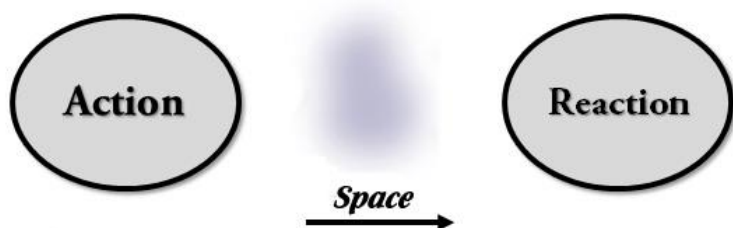
That space allows the person to choose the magnitude, the direction, and even the nature of his reaction. It also allows him to absorb the action fully or partially, which means that the reaction can take several simultaneous forms, and can be in different magnitudes and directions, all in the same time.

Stephen Covey one day wrote something interesting about the idea of responsibility. He explained that the word ***responsibility*** came from the idea of ***response-ability***; it is our ability to choose our responses through that space always exist there between the actions and our reactions toward them, and that is what defines our responsibility about our actions.



Sometimes that space is so small, and we barely notice it, that is true, but in all cases, it still exists as long as our minds are still functioning normally.

Noticing that space is a powerful tool that everybody can use to change a lot of things, starting by daily personal behaviors, passing through solving serious psychological problems, solving our own daily problems whether in work, or at home, or wherever; and not ending at solving the greatest dilemmas and problems of the whole world.

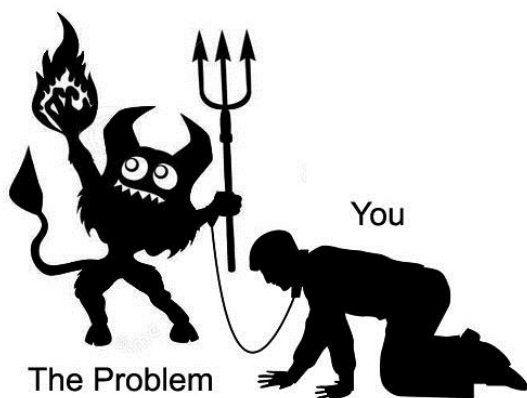


***"Always there is a space between the actions or our reactions for them."***

Now, whenever you feel trapped by a problem; use that space of will that you have between the action and reaction to flip the table and become the boss.

Most of the times, just remembering this idea of being in charge is actually enough to drive you to be in charge. However, sometimes and especially when the problem hits surprisingly, or when it is so serious big problem strikes with no mercy; In such cases, your minds may lose temporally the ability of pushing you enough to be in charge, although you might already recognize your need for that. In such moments, remember to never panic, trust yourself and your ability to solve the problem; panicking is exactly like bowing for the problem saying *"My dear problem, you are the boss."*

It is like that you are tiding your neck with a chain and handle it submissively to the problem to play with it the way it likes. You simply lose all sense of reasonability, responsibility, and respond-ability; you surrender to your fears of being knocked down by the problem.



Take a deep breath, and tell yourself calmly and clearly: *“It is just another problem; I can solve it as I did with many others before.”*

Turn off the red lights of emergency inside your brain; that emergency status, once being declared and announced within your brain, it causes panicking, and automatically calls the emergency protective mechanisms in the body, making you stressed and nervous. It paralyzes the normal thinking mechanisms, allows only the defensive ones, and not all of them, but the most basic ones related to the natural survive, which are usually not enough to face what we call a real problem.



***“Never panic, especially when you face a problem. Turn off the red lights and let us deal with it calmly.”***

## ***Handle Guilt and Identify Responsibility***

The second worst thing about facing problems after not being in charge is the wrong deal with the feel of guilt. Although that the most obvious feeling during the problem is our feel of not having a choice and that we have to deal with the problem, but the real bad one is that hidden feeling of struggling with guilt and responsibility under the surface. We always ask ourselves about who should be blamed for this problem.

Sometimes, we face problems because we did something wrong, and we feel guilty about it, but in many cases we face problems because of others faults, or even because of nobody's fault.

In all cases, we have to face the problem because it is our responsibility; here comes a serious confusion that causes that deep struggle. In many cases, we got confused about guilt (who should be blamed) on a side, and the responsibility about solving the problem (who should solve it) on the other side.

If you are the one who really caused the problem, then it is right to feel guilt but you should not allow that to eat you to the bones. Instead, you should learn your lesson, do what you can (only what you really can without exaggeration or shortening) to fix your mistake, solve the problem and move on. ***“Solve Instead of Justify”*** I always found that so effective and saving for both time and dignity. When you make a mistake, think about what to do to repair your fault rather than wasting time trying to find a justification. Once the problem is been solved you will receive much less blame and much more respect, while usually when you try to justify you just lose a part of the respect the others have for you; beside you will feel pressured and guilty because the problem still exist there, and because of the expected blame.

But on the other side, if you are not the one who caused the problem, this does not mean that you are not responsible to solve it.

Remember that responsibility is about ability to respond, so solving the problem is about using your responding ability not about blaming.

In other words, there is a difference between the guilt and responsibility. Not every responsibility means that there should be a guilt or blame attached to it.

In many cases, the problem is being caused by someone who deserves the blame about it, but should be solved by someone else who should take the responsibility to solve it.

In some other situations, we feel guilt when we face a problem just because we are afraid of being blamed, even if we really know that it was not our fault. That causes worse mixed feeling of stress, fear, and worry; also, it could be translated automatically within our subconscious into a real feeling of guilt in many cases. All that of course is being added to the original bad feelings come from the problem itself.

The guilt comes from doing mistakes; the good and bad intentions also play a role on identifying the right level of guilt and deserved blame.

On the other hand, the responsibility stems from the fact that you are the one who is facing the problem and paying for the consequences; or from the fact that you are the one who is capable to solve it; and here the circumstances and the moral values play also an essential role.



***“If you are responsible about solving a problem, this does not mean that you should necessary feel guilty about it.”***

Use the space you have between the action of a problem occurring, and your reaction toward it, use that space to identify of three important things:

1. The right level of guilt you should feel about the problem.
2. The right amount of blame that you have to accept and neutralize because of the problem.
3. The precise bounds and limits of the responsibility you should take in solving the problem.

## *Accept the Worst Scenario*

Maybe the next most effective trick here is to accept the worst possible scenario. Accepting such possibility simply makes you in charge, because you already have nothing that the problem can make you lose.

You already accepted the worst possible loss from within your heart, which means that the problem can no longer cause you any more pain. You are playing with no fear and no reason to hold back... you either intent on gain or carnage... the motto of all heroes in history.

When you do so, you actually deprive the problem from its main source of strength over you; and you build an emotional precaution against the worst possible scenario. You simply accepted its possibility with no fear, even if you do not feel happy with that, but you are at least not panicked or broken.



***“Accept the worst possible scenario and play to earn the best possible one.”***

## *Play the Game*

This is my favorite cute trick; change the whole thing to a game and play it. Take advantage of that space of the will you have, and consider facing and solving the problem as just a game and a challenge.

*“A game....! Where's the fun in troubles?”*

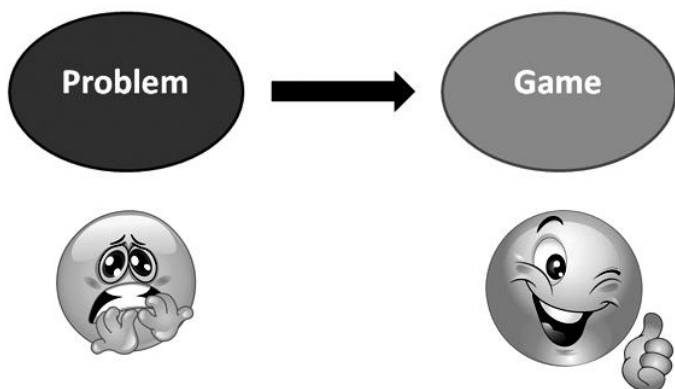
OK, As long as we had agreed that problems are an inevitable reality, then why not to try turning them into fun, rather than keep crying!?

From a psychological perspective, this will induce the problem to be more submissive within your control, rather than you being the trapped victim within the problem's influence area.

You will deal with it with a greater self-confidence as you would do when you play your favorite games, instead of the anxiety and fear.

You will enjoy the adrenaline being pumped into your veins by the enthusiasm to meet the challenge. More importantly, you will be more receptive to the idea of a possible loss and failure, and that most likely it will not be the end of the world.





The courage to face and accept the probability of loss increases your self-esteem and confidence, which in turn increases your control over the problem. You just accepted the fact of being vulnerable and you are living with that, without any more of seeking for immunity and being secured.

The gameplay theories are already being applied several ways in many scientific fields, including but not limited to: education, military, politics and economic planning. Even Albert Einstein one day said, "*Playing is the highest form of scientific research*". Applying some form of the gameplay idea to solve your daily problems or even your big problems is not entirely a new idea even for you yourself. How many times had you mixed a tedious or a heavy job with some silly fun and amusement...?

Every time I face a problem, I imagine that problem just as a little cute kid challenging me to catch him. A kid is standing there laughing and teasing me with his tongue out, he is challenging me!



Do not tell me that you will be afraid of a little kid! Oh! ... Please, do not tell me that you are going to disappoint that cute kid! You cannot ignore that cute creature; you have to accept the challenge! Be kind, just smile and start the game. 😊



***“Never disappoint a cute kid wants to play with you, and that especially true when his first name is Problem.”***

You and only you are the one who decides how big your problems will be. You and only you are the one who feeds them with your fears until they become monsters.

We can treat problems like monsters, and they will be; and we can treat them like little kids and play with them, and probably we will win.



***“A problem can be a monster or a cute kid; that only depends on your choice.”***

Of course, this does not mean to underestimate the problem or not taking it seriously if it is a one; but in all cases, even the serious dangerous games cannot be won if we did not play them.

It is all about your feeling toward the problem and your choice. Let us assume that your boss unexpectedly asked you to review 300 pages of complex documents within the next 4 hours and submit a report to the board or otherwise you will be in risk of losing your job! What a nasty problem is that, right?

Depend on the situation, your feeling would vary from feeling bad to feeling a catastrophe; and unless you decided to cut it early by resigning immediately and get the hell out of there 😊, then probably those 4 hours will be so stressful and full of struggle.

Now, hold on... let us press the *“Pause”* button and rewind... What if your boss just told you that you do not have to do it, but if you can do that, you will be probably promoted by the end of the day... and let us assume that you chose to take your chances and do it. How would that make you feel during those next 4 hours? Probably you will be excited and determined.

Now, let us press the *“Pause”* button and rewind again...

What if no one asked you anything... you just knew that there will be a board meeting discussing those documents, and you wanted by yourself to score extra points, you volunteered and started working on that mission quietly without telling anyone; you decided to surprise the board and your boss.

How would that make you feel during those next 4 hours?

You will be working enthusiastic and energetic; you probably would not feel the time.

Remember, it is the same mission... the same problem by the basic definition and requires the same effort in each of the three cases... the difference is the nature of the risk, and the rewards, and most importantly, your choice...



***“A problem could be painful when we are enforced to face it, but the same problem could be exciting and enjoyable when we choose it.”***

### ***Remember: All Problems Are Just Problems***

When you feel you are in a position to make a decision, then that is a problem; when you feel that there is an unmet need that you have to take an action to fulfill it, then that is a problem; and when you feel in a real trouble, that is also a problem. However, problem's sizes vary... Some of them are trivial, simple and automatically being solved, even without we feel that they were problems; just like pushing away that fly hanging around you. Some problems are slightly more complex: at breakfast when you have to choose between eating eggs or snacks.

Some problems we usually consider them real, but we got used to them with time and repetition, like work routines, usual house or car maintenance, and so on...

Finally, there are the disasters or crises that shake us deeply; those are the real big problems. So serious family arguments and disputes, fateful decisions, unexpected emotional traumas, and sometimes decisions which will not

only affect your life, but also others', maybe an individual, a group, sometimes the whole nation, and maybe the whole world if you are lucky (or unlucky) enough to be in the White House or the Kremlin. ☺

But at end, for all those cases mentioned above, starting by pushing the fly and ending with the fate of the whole world; for all those cases, the principle remains the same: a problem needs a proper treatment and solution.

The psychological and mental principles of dealing with them remain the same. And while there are many mechanisms to solve problems, the basic principles always remain the same; the difference will be in the magnitude of the effort to solve, the size, and the nature of the psychological impact.

By becoming accustomed and learning, the big problems we have today will become with time small and usual things, and their psychological impact is reduced each time we experience them again.

When you were so young baby, pushing the fly was probably a nightmare and a scary to death problem, unless you are a so... so... sensitive high class lady, probably this is not really going to scare you now!! (I apologize ladies ☺).



***“Remember that whatever the size, type, or scope of the problem; the basic principles of dealing with them are the same; even if the details, the mechanisms, and the nature of the efforts to solve them may differ.”***

Anyway, what good can remembering that do for you? Actually, a lot, but I will just tell one and leave the rest for you to figure them out yourself.

If you always faced problems through that perspective where all problems are the same, then it will be much easier for you to achieve the balanced emotional involvement; and there will be no meaning for being panicked of a problem. Your intellectual system will start to get used to treat whatever problem the same way it treats the problem of adding the salt to your meal. The difference will be then that some problems will just need more effort to beat them and tolerate their psychological impacts.

### ***Look at the Positive Side***

When we find a way to turn the negative energy into positive one, our intellectual system evaluates the situation differently, because it will receive signals of pleasure rather than suffering.

The result will be that the situation will be recognized as an opportunity for freedom and creativity; and that is the basic idea behind turning the problem into a game as we discussed it previously.

However, doing that means that we have to remain positive and look for the positive side of the situation. The truth is that problems are double-faced; each problem has two faces: one is painful and annoying, but the other is positive and beneficial.

Probably you already noticed that sometimes before. It is a truth, and we just need to look around and find that good side that we miss noticing most of the times because of stress.

As we said before, a part of the reality of this world is that it is just a network of overlapping problems. Everything in this world is a problem by itself. However, the difference between a problem and another does not just lie in the extent or the scope that is affected by the problem; it is also in the nature and the level of the psychological impact that the problem makes, whether it is negative or positive.

In fact, we usually do not feel that something is really a problem unless we feel the effects of the negative side. When our thinking is overshadowed by the negative side of a problem, we often do not even see the possible aids around us, which may help to overcome the situation.



Sometimes, solutions are closer to us than the problem itself, but we fail to see them, the same way we fail to see or appreciate the benefits that the problem might bring with it. It is the nature of the human being that their pains float and cover their sense of happiness.

We usually do not recognize the positive sides of a problem that pains us until it has been solved and the pain is already gone. So, always look for the positive side of the problem and try to identify it if you can.

However and honestly, sometimes it is hard to locate that positive side; in such case, do not exhaust yourself trying to find it, just believe and be sure it is there somewhere, and in many cases it will announce itself in the proper time. But even if you did not see it at all, be sure it is there working in a mysterious way for your own best. It is not mandatory to know it as much as to believe of its existence, that is what you need here.

Sometimes, the problem is just this world's way to keep the life going in a very complicated manner that we cannot understand.

Just believe and be sure that there is a positive side for the problem even if you do not see it, adhere to that idea and remain positive because it is somehow true.

Anyway, there is always a certain positive side that you must see within any problem. The problems are the way we are being tested as humans, they are our way of gaining wisdom and experiences; there is no problem without a lesson to learn.

We rise up on the ladder of knowledge by overcoming problems and solving them; and with every problem or group of problems we survive, we step up on that ladder, and collecting cognitive and sensory experiences that contribute together to shape our cognitive, behavioral and emotional structure as well.

The problems are one form of the food that our minds consume to grow. This world has many facets that we need to know as much as possible, in order to realize the truth and the reality of this life. Some of these sides will never be revealed for us in any other ways than through problems and challenges.

You know, I always thank God for the enforced breaks he gave me from time to time. Those breaks I mean are when the *“Pause”* button is being pressed and the playing of our life’s movie is being interrupted unexpectedly.

These interruptions usually take the form of problems, unpleasant events, or even disasters; and we have nothing to do, except setting there in a corner and thinking freely

because it is the only thing available to spend the time. These times are usually hard, but they are also very important breaks we need from time to time for taking a look over our life and evaluate it, learn lessons and correct the path.

But you know... Sometimes, it is our own responsibility to create that positive side and use the new possibilities came along with the problem. Again, you and only you are the one who can decide how you can do that...

Dale Carnegie says in his famous book:

*"If you have a lemon, make lemonade; that is what a great educator does. But the fool does the exact opposite. If he finds that life has handed him a lemon, he gives up and says 'I am beaten. It is fate. I have not got a chance', and then he proceeds to rail against the world and indulge in an orgy of self-pity. But when the wise man is handed a lemon, he says 'What lesson can I learn from this misfortune? How can I improve my situation? How can I turn this lemon into lemonade?'"*<sup>1</sup>



***"If life handed you a lemon, make lemonade."***

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Carnegie, How to Stop Worrying and Start Living

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Covey, The 3rd Alternative: Solving Life's Most Difficult Problems

## ***Remember That This Time Will Pass***

One day a king gave his minister his own ring and said, *“I want you to think of something when I read, it makes me happy if I am sad, and makes me sad if I am happy; then, I want you engrave it on this ring”*.

Few days later, the minister returned the ring back to the king, engraved with a simple sentence *“This time will pass”*.

Remember that fact each time you find yourself in a serious situation. ***This time will pass***, and whatever you feel now regarding the problem and the whole situation, it will become just a memory one day. Whatever horrible feelings you have, it will not last forever.

But do you know what will really last? It is how you will remember these moments. So, how would you like to remember them? Do you like to remember that you were weak or cower? Or you want to remember that you were strong, stood as a man, fought to the last breath, and probably became a victorious hero? When it is all over, that what may really matters you at the end.

Sometimes, ***“To be or not to be”*** is the only choices you have against the problem, and it becomes an existential battle... in those moments remember that:



***“This time will pass anyway, never surrender... claim your victory... snatch it... or die fighting... standing... to the last breath... like men do. Be a victorious or a martyr hero.”***

# ***Solving a Problem***

So, do you have a problem? Then let the real game begins...

## ***Respect Your Opponent***

Before the game begins, I have a question: What is your problem? Oh, do not tell me that you still live in the denial state and do not even recognize that you have a problem!!

For god's sake, do not kid with me here; the game is between you and the problem not me; so please show some respect... identify your problem before you scream "*I have a problem...*" and your tears flood all over around. 😊

I am not kidding here, you cannot solve a problem that you do not know what is it exactly, and I will not waste my time being involved in helping you to solve a problem you do not even know what is it?! That is not how the game is being played my friend.

You need to have a clear, briefed, and serious answer. We call that answer the definition of the problem. You should state exactly what made the alerts of crises ring and turned the red lights on? And you should have at least an initial understanding for the outline borders of the problem.

Actually, unless you are in a shock, then probably you should do that even before decide to face the problem and all the stuff we talked about previously, because you cannot face something you do not even feel it exists, or you do not know what it is.

I am not asking you to be aware of all details in these starting moments, but at least show some responsibility and enough courage to identify your opponent and give it a name, give it some respect; admit its existence, and assure your respect to that opponent by trying to understand its identity definition.

I assure you if you did not show that minimum respect for your opponent here, then it will not play fair, and you will receive many punches below the belt without a right to protest; you are already the one who did not show respect in the beginning.



***“Define your problem before you scream that you have one.”***

## *The 1<sup>st</sup> Decision*

Assuming that you already defined your problem and faced it, now it comes the moment where you would like to ask yourself two important questions:

### **1- Is it a real problem? Or it was just a false alarm?**

You need to answer that question before any further discussions, because sometimes it happens that a misunderstanding or an unexpected surprise lead to the false alarm of having a trouble, but when you try to define the problem you discover that there is really no problems except your misunderstanding for the situation.

However, you will not be able to relax again and retrieve the peace of mind until your declare clearly the peace status by answering this question with no doubts.

### **2- Do you really want to solve this problem?**

Yes, this is a serious question about the importance of solving the problem. Sometimes we just do not really want to spend an effort on solving the problem, because it does not worth it, and it is less expensive for us to accept the damages that the problem can cause than wasting our energy and resources on solve it; and that is sometimes could be a wise choice.



In some cases, it is just the wrong time to get into the battle because of the priorities, some battles worth much more to fight than others.

Other times, we are just not willing to spend the time and efforts solving the problem, because we know that if we just ignore it for a certain period of time it will be solved by its own, although such situation should be considered carefully.

Some other times, you are actually benefiting from the problem; and keeping it unsolved is much more worthy than solving it; maybe for a while, and maybe permanently.

Finally, there are those cases when we already know for sure that all what we can do is not enough to solve the problem, and it is better to accept the loss and start controlling the damage early, rather than wasting the resources then accept the loss later.

Sometimes, your only available choice could be to wait for what we usually call a miracle, which is actually just unexpected changes in the situation and circumstances that may give us a lead or a chance to solve the problem.

In fact, your decision about all those cases mentioned above is so sensitive, there are no rules that can tell you when those cases are true, and when it is the time to fight

the problem. You and only you are the ones who can judge that using your experiences, instincts, and intuition.

I cannot advise you to pick one of those choices in any certain case. But still, it is useful to notice such possibilities when you attempt to solve a problem; as long as they will be a choice of wisdom, and not just an excuse you will use to cover your weakness, and that you are a coward who did not wish to stand like a knight and fight a problem.



***“Stand like a knight, win or die fighting; that is what knights do.”***

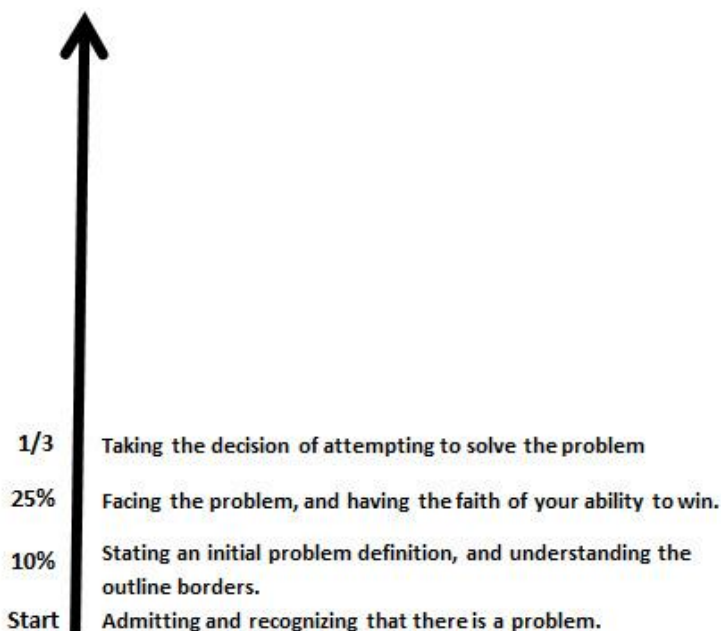
Be honest with yourself, because again, you are the only one who can judge that, and you are the one who will pay for your choices, soon or later.



***“Never lie to yourself.”***

Now, let us assume that you already decided to play the game and fight your problem. Congratulation, you already passed almost a third of the road toward solving and passing your problem successfully.

That road starts by admitting and recognizing that there is a problem, then defining it; the quarter is been accomplished when the decision of facing the problem with a strong faith is taken. Once the decision of heading toward solving had been made with respect to your answers for the previous 2 questions, then you are already passed the first third of the road.



## *The Unsystematic Approach*

Now at this point you have 2 choices, and each has advantages and disadvantages. You have the systematic and the unsystematic approaches to find a solution for your problem.

The unsystematic approach could be summarized in 3 words: *Experience*, *Luck*, and *Intuition*.

The unsystematic way saves time but it is risky. There is nothing wrong in choosing this approach as long as you are ready to take the risk and accept whatever the resulting consequences. But if you are not capable of handling the unexpected consequences, or the matter is too risky, then it is better to switch to the systematic approach as long as you have enough time to make your decision systematically.

But as a matter of fact, most of the times you will mix those two approaches together in different combinations depend on the situation, even without you notice it.

I should warn you here that although this approach can save a lot of time in the case of success, but it in the same time it has an extra risk you should consider beside the risk of failure. It might waste a precious time that could be used in systematic solving; it is an additional risk you should accept when you choose to follow this approach.

Anyway, it is still useful to consider the unsystematic approach seriously, at least as a possible choice when time is so short, or risks are not serious, or when the whole thing is not really worth it.

Our previous experiences sometimes can provide us directly with an answer about what the solution can be without further discussions. The details could not be that clear for us, but we just know that this solution is working.

Also, there is nothing wrong on trying your luck as long as you are ready to accept the risk. It sometimes happens that we just feel lucky and say maybe a *hit by luck* would do it, or we just hope that selecting the first possible solution can end our misery.

In other cases, we might get on-fly ideas about solutions, and we would like to use *try and error* and commit trying one or more of those ideas, whether we do it blindly or half-blindly. Some other times, we just got a hunch where we are almost sure and something inside us keeps saying: *That is it... That is the solution...*

Such hunch could be supported or unsupported by the available givens and circumstances; but in both cases there is an unknown voice inside you just insist that you should solve the problem that way. If that feeling is so strong, I really recommend you follow your intuition.

If you already understand what the risk is, and you are ready to accept it, then there is nothing wrong in following a hunch you have about how to solve the problem without all that much noise about the holy procedures of solving problems.

Again, using any of those unsystematic approaches is one of the decisions you are the only one who can make with respect to the situation, circumstances, and your initial answers about how much solving the problem can be important and risky.

Whatever the way you will choose to follow in solving your problem, I should reassure - for the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> time maybe - the importance of understanding the risks as a part of your understanding for the problem.



***“Be sure to understand the risks and the consequences of your decisions and actions before you commit them.”***

Honestly, your exact answer for that question of risk in many cases cannot be clear enough and terminal until you fully understand the problem, which is the first step in the systematic approach. In most cases, you can't make such decisions about something you didn't understand enough yet; the exceptions to this are the cases when you are sure

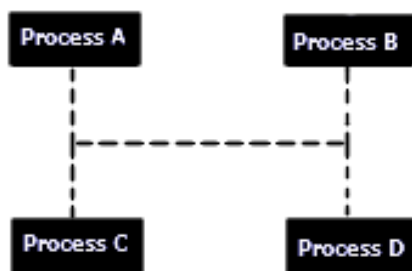
about the scope of the problem but not fully understand the details; and even in such cases, there is still the possibilities of the hidden traps, *“The devil lies in the details”*.

There is an overlapping between the different stages of solving the problem, especially the understanding and finding the solution. That overlapping is what make professionals never advise someone to use unsystematic approaches in solving problems; but to be practical and keep being honest, let me tell you that at least half of the problems in this world is being solved that way without we even feel it; so we can't just ignore it. I cannot deny how much useful it can be, as long as the risk is being considered and accepted.

## ***The Systematic Approach***

Now, what about the systematic approach...?

First, let us assure something supposed to be obvious, but for many reasons some people fail to understand it correctly. Solving a problem is not a linear process as many people like to think about it, the linear approach is just a simplification to express the basic ideas, but the reality is that the solving process is something like a free multi-directional path. We travel as necessary forth and back over that path toward many points being distributed along the path.



We understand, and then we find solutions, then we got deeper understanding that clarifies more points about the solutions, or even would change our vision for the risks, or the answers of importance's questions, we then back to find or validate the solutions and so on.

All the steps are overlapped a way or other most of the time, or we can simplify the idea and say that they are all happen in parallel especially when the problem is complex.

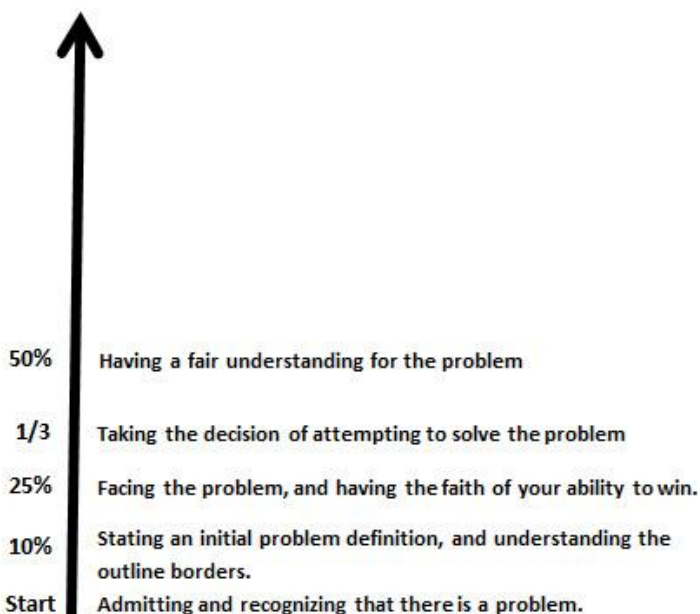
Anyway, let us keep things simple for the purposes of this illustration and back to our simple linear explanation approach for the process of solving a problem.

### ***The Understanding***

They usually say, "*Understanding the problem is the half of the solution*". So how you can understand the problem?



I am going to save you much complicated philosophy you might sink into up to neck. Just understand the problem whatever the way you would do it, the way doesn't matter; what really matters is that you really got a fair understanding for the problem and the situation.



***"You can't solve a problem you already don't understand yet; except being lucky or having a hunch; or just because it's not your first time."***

You need to understand the causes and reasons, the results and consequences, the risks as we said before, the scope of the problem and its effects, the different entities participate in the problem whether they are living entities or inanimate, and finally don't forget the relations and interactions between those entities.

When you are not sure where to start, try simple analysis by identifying the basic entities or sides of the problem and the relations connecting them; or try to answer how and why the problem arose in the first place, then follow the leads.

You might need consultations from someone experienced in the subject of the problem, or might need to do more analysis, or maybe research things; probably some observation, doing some exploratory tests and experiments can be useful if it's needed; but you are the only one who can figure out that depend on the situation and the circumstances.

Finally, when you are trying to understand the problem, do not forget to look for the source of the pressure and negative impact it applies on you.

Identifying those sources would help you much to tolerate them, and most of the times you will find that the master key of that pressure is one or more of those 4 cases:

- *I'm afraid of ...*
- *I want...*
- *I should/must...*
- *I cannot....*

In all those cases, the pressure direction is negative, which means that it actually comes from you toward yourself, even if the givens tell you something else.

In fact, your response to the external pressure is what makes the real pressure on you, and the neutralization of such pressure starts within you.

### ***Finding Solutions***

After you understand the problem, then it is the time to find the solution. The systematic approach for finding solution is just a loop of generating alternatives, evaluating and validating them, whether that is being accomplished theoretically, or practically by applying pre-calculated tries or experiments where the risk of the possible errors is already neutralized as much as possible.

Here comes another role for your answers on the question related to the importance of solving the problem.

Your answer will determine if you are going to accept whatever *available working solution* or you would keep trying until you have a *minimum accepted level* of the generated solution, or you are going to try to have *the optimum solution*.

Generating those alternatives is a matter of thinking and creativity in the first place. If it is the kind of your living to solve completely new complex problems every day, then I recommend you to have further readings about generating alternative solutions and “*The scientific method of solving problems*”. You can find hundreds if not thousands of useful articles to read online about that, but I am not going to discuss that here as it is completely out of the scope of this book.

However, if that is not the case - which is true for more than 90% of people - then with except to few hints I may share with you here, you probably do not need any further assistant on how to generate those alternatives.

### *Start with the Simplest Solutions*

The first hint here is the importance of seeking and trying the most simple and obvious solutions first. Somewhere, while people were trying to learn to think “*out of the box*” they forgot to think **out** “*out of the box*” which means searching *within the box*.



***“Most mistakes made by professionals are usually the most obvious ones; the most successful tricks against a professional are the simplest ones; and the most effective solutions are usually the simplest ones.”***

However, you should always consider both the simple and complex creative solutions, and do not limit yourself to the regular patterns.



***“Think within the box; think out of the box; think if you can build a completely new box.”***

### ***Divide and Conquer***

The second note here is to try dividing the problem into smaller problems that can be chewed separately; allow the full solution to be built gradually part after another.



***“Always keep the balance between the big picture and the small details.”***

### ***Solve Problems Once Per Time***

When you have many problems in the same time, which I guess it is usually the case, then it is so important to

organize your efforts with respect to a priority list where the problems are being sorted depend on their importance. Then, do your best to focus on solving them one after another, which means taking one problem only per time, as much as possible. That will allow you to focus your mind on generating the alternatives on a specific problem each time.



***“Solve your problems once per time with respect to their priorities.”***

However, there are some cases when you should consider many problems together because of the similarity, or that they all follow the same certain pattern, or maybe because they all have a common root. In such cases you might find a single adaptable solution for all of them together, or maybe you will just focus on solve the root problem, which in turn will result in solving the others fully or partially; and that takes us to the next hint.

### ***The Big Picture & Details***

Be sure to see the big picture, as much you are involved in the details. Do not allow small details to blind you from noticing the big picture, and do not let your attention for the big picture makes you forget the important small details.

## *Don't Give Up*

Of course, I will not forget to tell you to keep try and do not give up easily, sometimes problems are just stubborn opponent that makes you become exhausted in fighting, but be sure it will surrender a way or other at the end.

I know this is optimistic advice. Honestly, it is not true all the time, but seriously, I found it true most of the times. I guess that *"most of the times"* is an enough possibility to keep you trying as much as you can and not giving up.

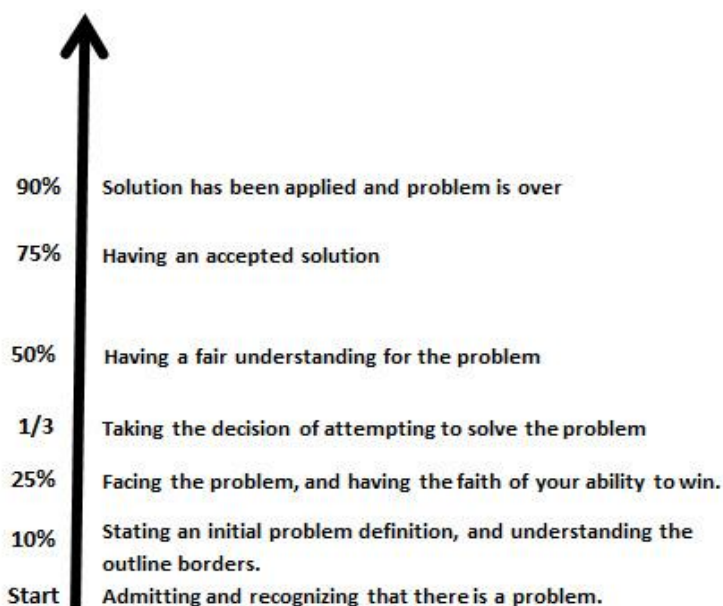


***"Don't walk 1000 miles then give up at the last few feet."***

## *Keep Your Options Open*

Finally, do not forget to keep your options open as long as possible. Do not shut the possible doors so early; give yourself a space to maneuver as long as you can. The only exceptions here to those situations are where keeping the choices opened is more risky than closing them, which include the risk of being lost or wasting your energy and divide it on several uncompleted solutions rather than focus on a single working solution. Sometimes, you have to choose which bridges to cross, and which ones to burn.

When you find a solution, then you already passed 75% of the road, and applying that solution will probably end the problem and take you to the milestone marked by the sign 90%.



Now, the problem is already gone and became a part of the past and everything is fine now. What happened for the last 10%?



## *The End Is a New Start*

The last 10% of your road on solving a problem contains few things, and the first and most important one is the *Learning*.

After the problem is being solved, it becomes the time for the debriefing session. You will sit in a closed meeting with yourself and submit the final report about the experience, revising and discussing both the positive and negative things about the problem, and how you were handling it. You will ask yourself about what were your mistakes that you would like to avoid in the future, what are the new lessons you have learned from that experience?

It's not a session in a court, most of the times yourself judge is not supposed to attend this meeting to judge you and set penalties, he is just there in this friendly meeting as a counselor to help you by providing the advice about what is right and what is wrong.

This session is what helps to make the lessons being learned from the experience and become permanent. During the experiment, the lessons took a temporary form waiting for being confirmed. If not, they will just being moved to the ignored background storage where they do not receive any more attention most of the time, they just fall in an area that's usually not being visited by our

intellectual system in any future searching processes by default, unless as a last desperate choice.

Also, a correction process for some misunderstood things might take a place here; sometimes under the shock or the pressure of the problem, we learn the wrong lessons as a side effect of the problem circumstances, or we might get a wrong/incomplete ideas or information that deserve to be more investigated. These should also being filtered and corrected before being allowed to be stored permanently in our knowledge base.

Such debriefing session is what makes the desired lessons and knowledge confirmed, and builds our wisdom with time. The end of your problem is the real beginning of learning something useful out of it.

In this session, you also might in some exceptional cases (but not as a default) ask the judge to set some necessary disciplinary punishments if there is something that is really serious and deserve it.

However, in order to encourage more positive behaviors in the future, the better decisions will be those about rewarding yourself for the good things you did; take the permission of the judge to set some rewards for those things as a way to *thank* yourself in behalf of yourself for those good things.

And don't forget to thank god for helping you to pass through that problem, and for sure you should thank whoever helped you in solving that problem, that's how you can be sure that they will help you again in the future...



***“Don't be emotionally stingy; always thank those people who helped you and those who deserve it.”***

However, as a side note here, do not wait others to thank you when you help them in their problems; when you expect thanking from people, the truth is that most of the time you will be disappointed.



***“Never wait thanks from anyone for whatever good things you do.”***

That's still not all yet; but before I tell you more about it, let me assure here an important point; these revising sessions can last few seconds, or can take much longer, up to maybe few weeks, or even months in the case of the very big and serious problems; that depends only on your own judgment about its importance. In fact, some problems are so trivial where we will not even bother ourselves in spending time to think if such revision is necessary or not.

I guess it is also obvious that it is not necessary for those sessions to be continuous in a single session!!

Another important thing that should take a place within these sessions is the *re-factory* and *restoration* process, which is the third part of the last 10%.

You need to revise or even discover the impacts of the problem on the different aspects of your life, whether they were physical or spiritual; and you should have your own strategies to restore the happened damages, or even use the chance to construct completely new positive things in your life.

For sure, that should include restoration for whatever negative impacts affected the others surrounding you, and correction for whatever behavioral mistakes that might hurt anyone else.

You always should compensate the withdrawing processes of your emotional accounts; when you do something wrong to someone, you are actually withdrawing from your account in his feelings bank, and you should make some deposits to compensate that; otherwise, one day your balance will be a negative value, and he probably will close your account permanently. Correct any misunderstandings and build more mutual trust and understanding.

That assessment process should also include for sure the assessment of the positive impacts to take advantage of them in the best way. Those positives probably will be found somewhere there, and that include the new

unexpected opportunities that might become available because of the problem itself or as a result for its solution.

Anyway, the last thing about the last 10% is *to control the range of the negative impacts and not allow it to spread out* or accompanying you in your next trip.

The problem was a trip a way or other, it has all the cumulative characteristics of the trips; and once it ends, it will be a beginning of a new trip, which could be sometimes just a new problem, or probably as we all hope, it will be some new thing that we do not call a problem.

There is a common story says that one day, a man woke up in the early morning and started having breakfast with his family. His young son poured out unintentionally a cup of coffee on his father's shirt, the man got angry and quarreled with his son; that wasted some time and made him already late, while he still did not eat his breakfast or change his shirt yet.

He was on hurry and so angry, so he tried to finish his breakfast faster, but he himself this time poured out his own cup of milk on his trousers, which was for his bad luck the last clean one. This made a new problem, and he had an argument with his wife and lost more time, then he had to change his shirt and wait until his wife washed his trousers on fly and wore them almost wet.

When he got out of the house, he was already too late and nervous, beside he was feeling irritated because of the almost wet trousers. With all of that hurry, he unintentionally broke through the red traffic light, which cost him more time in an argument with a police officer, and he got a ticket that will cost him a lot for his violation of traffic rules.

Finally, he arrived too late at work and in a very bad mood that did not allow him to explain for his boss clearly what happened and why he arrived late. Of course, he was charged for this lateness. That made a serious argument with his boss an inevitable because he was going to lose a good amount of his salary while he has loans to pay soon.

His bad mood was getting worse and worse and drove him to shout loudly and fight with his boss, and of course the end was that he had been fired from his job.

If you thought a little about that story, you will figure out that if he was just reacted different for the first accident of pouring the cup of coffee by his son then things was going to be different.

If he just smiled and took it easy and lost only 4 or 5 minutes in changing his shirt and then continued his day normally, he probably was not going to be fired from his job 3 hours later.

So, use that space we both already know now that it is there between the action and reaction to avoid making the end of the problem to become a wrong start where a series of new unnecessary problems begins.

Once you are done with those 4 parts:

- **Learning**
- **Thanking**
- **Restoration and Re-factory**
- **Limiting the scope of damage**

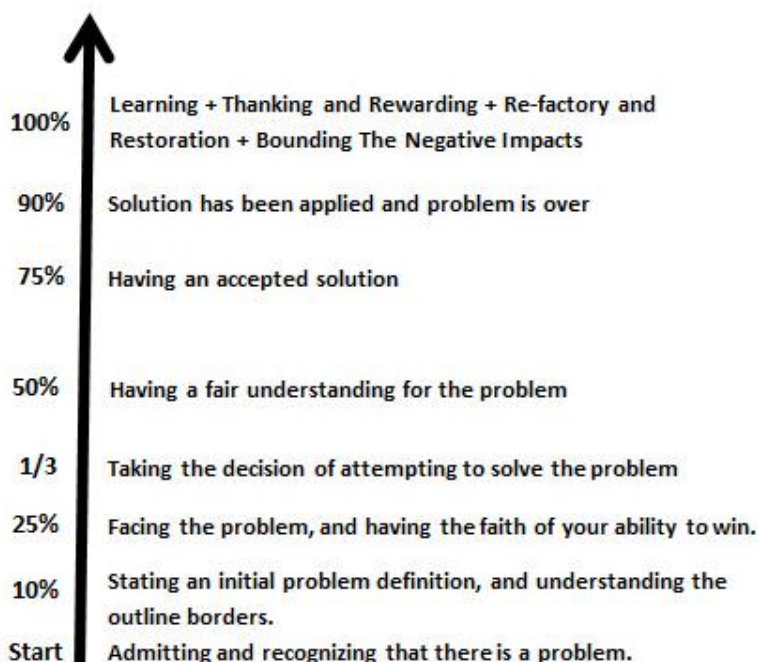
Then congratulation, now you hit the 100% Mark. 😊

However, our discussion about problems is not over yet, but first I would like to share with something important here after all this discussion regarding systematic and unsystematic problem solving approaches. There will be those moments when you have to gather all of your courage to make decisions you really not sure about their results. The risks might be extremely high, and you have to make a decision almost blindly; whether it's because there is no way to have more information before making the decision, or just you don't have enough time to think quietly about your choices. In those cases, your only aids are your faith, your experiences, your intuition, and your luck.

In such moments, do not be coward, and do not be frighten; just have faith and accept the worst possible scenario and rely on those available aids; because simply that's all what you can do in such situations.



***“Trust God... Trust your intuition... Trust yourself...”***





## ***Struggling a Problem***

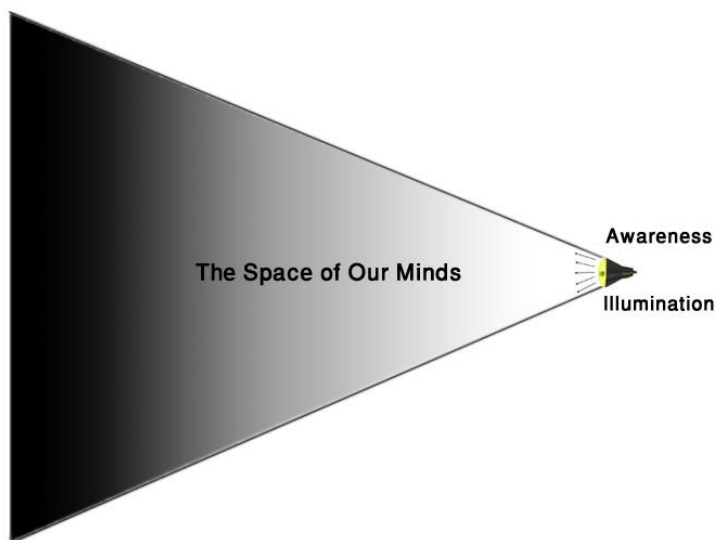
The causes of the problems and even the problems themselves are around us all the time, but we do not start to feel their existence or feel disturbed unless they start to form obstacles on the way toward achieving a goal, satisfying a need, or when they start to cause a pain. In such moments, the problem starts to move forward towards being in the focus of our attention, and there it is where our struggling begins.

A little struggle with a problem is not bad, because such struggle in a try to solve a problem is what induces our intellectual system to expand its internal structure and build new relations. In other words, it is how we learn and earn experiences. However, a *little* struggle is something, and when our life turns into an endless series of painful struggles is completely something else.

Let us try to understand what happens inside our minds when we are in a struggle with problems.

### ***Boiling Balls***

Let us imagine the mind as a space bounded by an infinite angle; at the head of the angle there is a source of illumination directed within the angle and represents our focus and awareness.



That space is just like the memory of your phone or laptop, every problem or idea that the mind needs to address is forming a ball that stands somewhere within that space, and representing a process or a file that consumes some of our resources including our mental and emotional abilities as well.

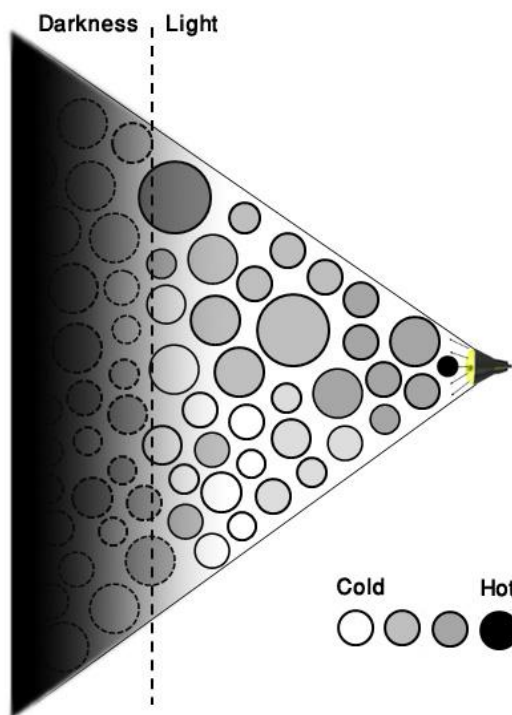
Obviously, the distance separating a ball from the awareness illumination source in the front is inversely proportional to how much illumination would the ball receives at any moment. Far balls in the back are less exposed to our focus, and vice versa.

After a certain distance, the balls will be at the end line of the lights in the foggy area between ***the consciousness*** and ***the subconscious***; then there in the background will be any more balls, which will actually sink into the darkness of our subconscious. You can think of the consciousness as your phone memory and the subconscious as the storage card or laptop's hard disk.

Each ball has a certain temperature that reflects the amount of emotional energy that being consumed within it. So, balls that are more active will be hotter. Also, each ball has a size proportional to the intellectual resources being occupied by this process.

Operations remain active within all the balls by different levels, even those lay in the dark; but of course, the balls that receive light in the area of consciousness are usually more active and hot; at the head of the angel, the activities and heat are at the maximum.

When the process ends a way or other, the ball or the process is being destroyed, and the space it occupies within the mental space is being freed together with the resources it was consuming. What we usually call a real problem or real interesting idea is simply a ball that consumes a lot of intellectual resources, or a boiling one; some balls could be both big and boiling in the same time and that doubles the stress we feel because of them.



A big ball does not leave much free space for other things to be handled as well, and makes our minds crowded. A boiling one consumes a lot of our emotional energy and leaves us drained and exhausted.

Sometimes boiling balls melt, and we lose control; some other times they will just explode causing damages of different sizes in our minds and feelings. The restoration would need considerable efforts and long time.

The worse is that both fusion and explosion may occur in the darkness, causing serious damages in the subconscious, which will usually being translated into psychiatric illnesses.

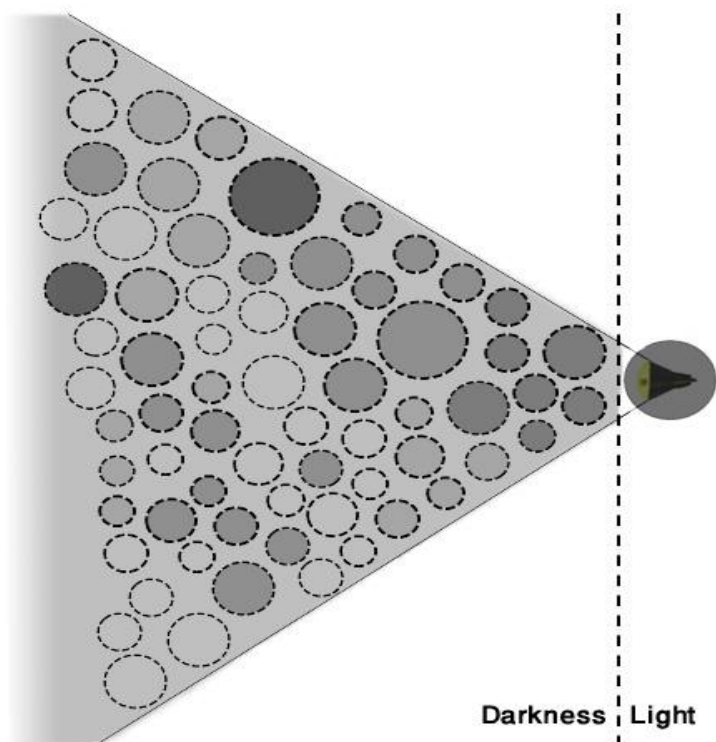
You can imagine what happens when a ball that is already boiling in the darkness has suddenly been exposed for more heat by the illumination in the consciousness area.

Anyway, the head of the angle can accommodate only one ball at any certain moment to become exposed to the direct illumination at the center of our attention and focus.

Depending on the circumstances, and according to our wishes, the positions of the balls are constantly changing; all the time we push one back, and pull forward another one with respect to the needs of the current situation.

Pushed by the pressure of stress or of being interested, a ball can keep moves forward until sometimes it passes the position of the focus to be at the position of almost complete acquisition of our thinking, takes some form of obsession accompanied by anxiety, tension, and sense of insomnia proportional to the level that the obsession reaches. The high pressure just pushed the ball to jump out from the head of the angle to face directly the light source and contain it, causing the state of obsession, and leaving the rest of the balls behind laying into the shadows.

It is exactly like when a program or application manipulates the computer or mobile device and keeps it busy on a single task preventing all other programs from working perfectly. In such case, the device responds so slow or might even freeze and stop responding, and we usually do not find a solution other than unplug the power or the battery from the device to stop it altogether.



When that happens, the temperature of the ball increases rapidly in a greater rate than the cooling mechanisms within our minds can handle. The fusion or explosion becomes certain if we do not intervene quickly to bring the ball back to its rightful position.

In fact, we are usually able to intervene because that protecting mechanism in our minds that makes most balls half-transparent, so the jumped ball will allow some light to reach the rest of our mental space.

Otherwise, we will never get out of that situation by our own, and the only way will be through the external intervene by others, which is what happens in the shock state, harsh emotional trauma, and the serious abnormal obsession states, which being treated by psychiatrists.

Our intervention sometimes takes the form of doing negative defensive tricks to escape temporarily the obsession state; we just push the ball harshly to the background, rather than confronting and making a decision about it. We just ignore the problem or the idea, try to forget it, and pretend to be involved in other things without making clear and specific decisions.

In such case, it will remain cause more anxiety and tension under the surface, which we will feel it without being able to determine its real causes. And while the causes remain hidden, we keep looping through a growing spiral of

tension, anxiety, and the search for the unknown, until a moment in which the ball will explode suddenly or jumps back to the obsession state.

Pushing the balls to the background without confronting them or making a decision about them is not the best choice to get out of such state. Forgetting, escaping, and ignoring, all are just methods of pushing the problems into the dark area where they continue to boil there. Moreover, if we did not do so with a sufficient force, then we will face a worse situation. We will be involved into a conflict with the problem; but not to solve it; it will be a violent struggle of pushing back and forth just to try moving the problem back and keep it in the background away from the area of acquisition.

In other words, we got here another new problem, which is the problem of the struggle with the first problem. The loop continues, and conflicts continue to consume our energy while we are trying to do so. I will not deny that sometimes the problem is being solved during that, but the price is too high, especially when that is our way of dealing with all the problems, the permanent endless struggles!

Avoiding the struggle requires that the pushing back if it is necessary must be performed gently and decisively without violence.



***The confrontation*** is the solution instead of escaping and ignoring. However, confrontation does not necessarily mean that the problem must be resolved immediately.

## ***The Decision of No Decisions***

Most of the times solving problems early as possible is the best decision. However, sometimes that is simply not possible for many different reasons, other times we might decide to let the problem takes longer time before being solved for some reasons that make sense. But in all cases, there should be an early decision whatever what it is, even if it is *the decision of no decisions* in the current moment.

Confronting a problem means studying the situation and making a clear decision about it, even if the resolution is not the decision. Staying bewildered without specifying any position at all is what keeps you in a state of anxiety and boiling.

When you encounter a problem that you have no specific vision regarding how to deal with it now, then you need some way to perform a proper pushing for the problem from the region of acquisition to have a more convenient position, without being pushed into dark.

The clear decision of not to take a decision now, and to postpone the decision about the problem until a certain

time is the requested procedure here; provided, that this decision is firm, clear and based on reasons that make sense. That specific time could be:

- Certain specified moment (*e.g. the first day of the next month or after an hour*)
- Certain event (*e.g. after meeting the opponent*)
- After certain resources become available whether they are information, or whatever physical or emotional resources (*e.g. until the information about the competitors is complete, until I receive my salary, until my struggle with the boss ends*).
- After a certain action you will make (*e.g. after contacting the manager*)

There are also cases where a temporary escape is lawful for obvious reasons, because it is not about escaping as much it is about taking a break.

Sometimes it is right to escape because:

- Lack of health resources (*e.g. until I get enough rest, until I become more qualified for clear thinking*)
- Lack of psychological resources (*e.g. until my feeling of anger calm*)

- Lack of time resources (e.g. *until I am free of another more pressing and important problem*)

However, in such cases, it is important to determine the time limit by which the decision to escape will expire, so that it must be reconsidered again.

Excuses and arguments must be avoided, be clear with yourself that the decision is to *make no decisions and escape temporally* as a tactical withdrawal, a maneuver, not a shameful run away. But again, it should be with a clear decision supported by certain reasons and givens not just excuses.



***“Do not leave a problem without a decision even if it is the decision of no decision.”***

Using “*the decision of no decision*” and organized following up for these suspended decision is a successful way to organize the use of your mental and emotional resources in solving the problems with respect to their priorities, without stuck in acquisitions and endless struggles with the problems. However, sometimes even the decision of no decision is not available, so we find ourselves in an urgent situation where we face a problem that we cannot find a proper solution for it immediately, and the decision of no decision is not an available choice.

In such case, we would need to mix the decision of no decision with the painkillers. Painkillers here refer to the temporary solutions that delay the urgency of the problem. They do not end the struggle or the problem; they just reduce the noise that comes from the urgency of the problem and cool it down a bit to avoid falling in acquisition state.

As in medicine, using painkillers should always been considered carefully and reasonably, because they are addictive, and they do not really cure. They cannot be used alone as strategic solutions, when we do that we actually just ignoring the problems and pushing them back a little bit gently but in the same time we collect them as suspended problems one after another. We should use them only in few cases such as:

- When we already have a decision about the problem and a strategy to face the problem and the painkillers are just used to reduce the noise in our brains until the problem is being cured due to the plan.
- In urgent situations, where we think the decision of no decision is the right choice, but it is not available alone.
- In the hopeless situations where the worst scenario became no longer just an accepted one, but it already became inevitable. We just relax the patient and easing his pains waiting for his death or a miracle.

- In the few cases where the problem looks like to be solved by itself with time, and we just need to ignore it until that time. However, this choice especially should be considered very carefully, these cases are rare compared to the majority of the problems. This choice should be an exception driven by strong reasonability and probability.

Again, using painkillers must be considered carefully and with the minimum doses.



***“Always focus on real treatment not the painkiller, and do not forget the real medicine while using a painkiller.”***

## ***The Acquisition Curve***

Despite what had been said here so far about acquisition, but the complete truth here is that we cannot deny that in many cases, the acquisition state might accelerate finding solutions. In fact, most of the inventions that changed the world had been worked out in such acquisition states. It's a fact that some problems can be solved, and some ideas can be analyzed while being cold, or even while in the dark, but some others cannot until it became in the center of our focus, and maybe needs a little obsession.

So, is there a normal obsession?!

Actually, a little obsession - or more precisely, a little of being in the obsession state about something - is a normal status that happens for everyone from time to time, but usually we are able to intervene in the right time and re-set our mental system.

However, although a little of reasonable passion or even obsession is something needed to solve some problems and invent, but there is a certain limit where we must stop. It is when the passion or the little obsession turns into a full possession.

Despite the obvious benefit that we get from such obsessions, but that state has serious side effects, whether they were psychological, social, and even financial effects sometimes. That is why benefiting from the obsession state is conditional; it depends on having a smart and advanced mechanism that gives us a sensor for the appropriate limits of staying in the obsession zone, and allows us to move out as soon as the sensor detects that we crossed the allowed limits.

Once we cross those limits, we should give it a chance to cool down a bit, give it a chance for being cooked without being burned, and without burning ourselves too.

After reaching the state of obsession and staying there for a while, we need a complete and smart dissociation from the whole thing in order to restore the balance of our lives in all of its aspects.

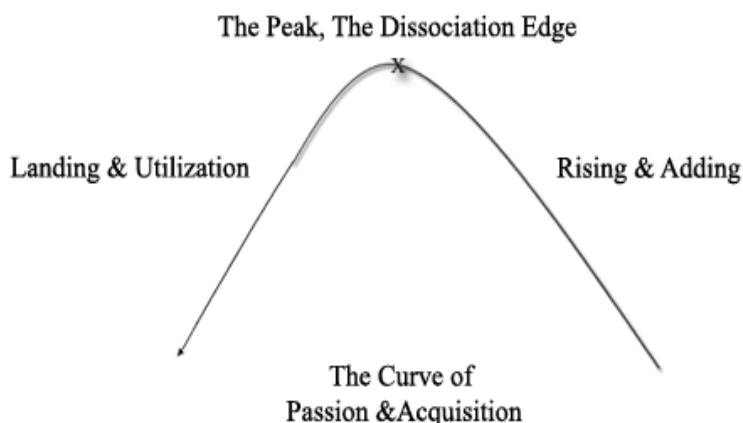
The inevitable result of staying at high levels of obsession for a long time is to collapse. Our energy is somehow limited, and our nerves have a limit of the pressure that it can handle. The state of obsession applying too much pressure and consumes a lot of energy.

However, that is not the only reasons why you need such disassociation. On the road to the peak of the acquisition curve, we sink deeply into certain regions of thoughts and knowledge; but we do not actually use that harvest in depth until that process of separation or dissociation took place.

We fill our knowledge reservoirs with a new substance as long as we continue to rise on the obsession curve, and then we begin to consume that stock in building the knowledge links within our intellectual system on the landing journey.

When these reservoirs reach the state of fullness, the more knowledge we will try to add will simply flow out of the container without benefits. In this case, we must first unload or consume - even partially - that stock through that landing process.

That happens when we begin to go back to the normal life while the process of developing and building knowledge links within the intellectual system is taking place in the background. The new earned knowledge is being linked with the accumulated experiences of the past, and eventually we come out with the solution for the problem, and a new deep knowledge and experiences. *Obsession* is useful only when we dissociate in the proper point.



Solving a problem is in fact somehow a traversing process for the jungle of knowledge, collecting pieces from here and there and put them together. Sometimes, we need to dig the ground at a certain spot to extract some hidden knowledge in that spot, and link it to the rest of our knowledge.

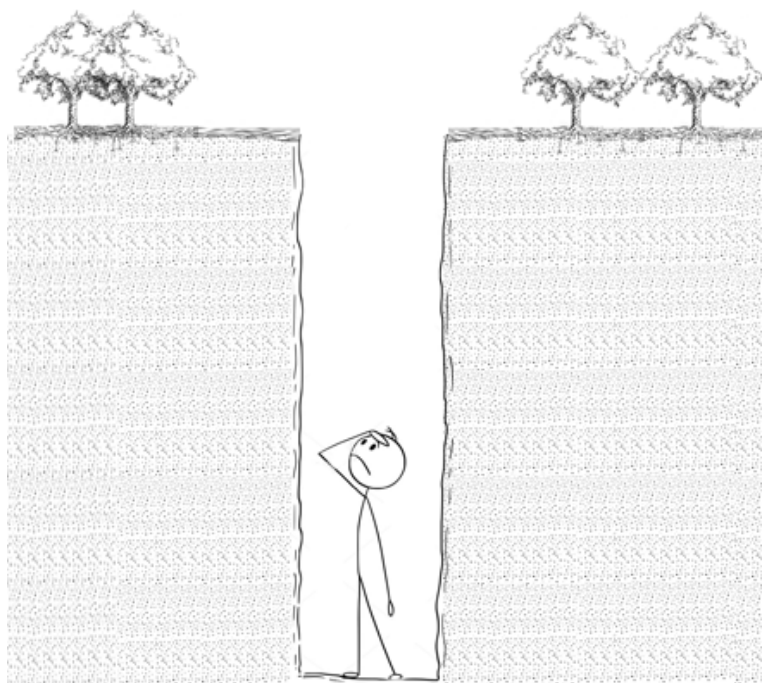




A little obsession means that we are digging a little deep in the ground, but we still can see the surrounding area, so we can link whatever we find with the rest of our knowledge.



The bad obsession on the other hand means that we went too deep until we cannot see the horizon anymore... we become stuck under the ground, and we can see only a very limited area above the surface.



The more deep we go, the more isolation we enforce ourselves into apart the rest of the jungle. At some depth, we might find treasures, but they worth nothing until we back to the surface and find some way to use and link them with the rest of our knowledge before attempting to dig any deeper.

Once we are on the surface again and have a full view, we can have better judgment on the real value of these treasures; we can decide if we need to move on to another spot, or to prepare for a deeper digging after recharging our energy. That is what happens when we do the dissociation process, we get back to the surface, look around, take a breath and recharge.

And please, do not forget that achieving separation after acquisition requires pushing the problem to back gently and decisively without violence.

You should take a firm decision that ***it is enough for now***, and back temporarily to the ***no decision state***.

It is true that sometimes there are exceptions, where we get to the desired solution before the breakup occurs, but that remains an exception rather than a rule, and occurs only within certain circumstances, which usually are out of our control.

Now, how do you know that you already reached the limit?

The precise answer is hard to find, but there are symptoms tell that you are around the limit, whether you already passed it or not yet, and as much as these symptoms become more clear, as much as you probably crossed the peak. Some of these symptoms are:

- You start to repeat to yourself certain ideas again and again with no changes or enhancements just to assure them.
- You feel like going through a closed loop that pulling you down and consume your energy fast with no gain.
- You start to ignore anything else except the subject of the obsession, like if there nothing else in your entire world or life other than that subject.
- Your tendency for perfection increases more and more, and you gradually lose the ability of ignoring tiny defects that usually can be accepted or tolerated.
- Your productivity becomes less in a clear manner down to Zero productivity in the advanced stages.
- Your feel of safety become less than usual down to feel that your whole life is really threatened by not solving that issue.
- Your attitude becomes more mechanical, routine, and monotone.
- You find it easier to complete on previous plans, projects, or ideas than try to think of or start any new ones.

- You keep yourself working on the subject of the obsession although that you feel exhausted and do a lot of mistakes. You just want to get rid of the whole thing as soon as possible. In advanced levels you even would wish the worst scenario to happen just to give yourself an excuse to through it all behind you because you feel stuck in that obsession. You are in a struggle between those pushy feelings of responsibility on one hand, and your inability to continue because of insufficient energy on the other hand.

The last 4 ones of the previous list is signs that you are already passed the limit for sure. In fact, they are more related to your level of emotional involvement in the problem, and the fatigue level of your nerves.

## **Serious Warning**

You can impress your beloved girl using the idea of the boiling balls and the obsession state to explain for her how you did be emotionally involved with her and could not sleep at night the day you saw her for the first time. However, committing suicide is not a good idea because you will never have a chance to correct that mistake. So, unless you are willing to get yourself killed and invite me to attend your funeral the next day, then no matter what,

never ever use this idea to explain for her why you forgot something she asked you to do. ☺



***“No matter what situation you find yourself involved in, committing suicide was, is, and will always remain a bad stupid idea.”***

### ***The Managed Emotional Involvement***

In most cases, the hard part of the problems in general is the negative emotions that accompany them, not the problems themselves. There are thousands of problems confronting us every day, but we do not consider them as problems because we do not have negative feelings.

Determining the appropriate amount of salt to be added to your favorite meal by the exact definition is a problem, but you do not feel it. The reason is that you are probably involved in the positive feeling results from the hope of a delicious meal; also, there is the fact that the damages will not be so painful if you made a mistake. But if you suddenly find out that you do not have salt, then you will face another problem that is not so much different from the first one in terms of the essence of being a problem.

However, you are going to delay your pleasure until you get the salt, and maybe you will make an unexpected effort going to buy some of it, which will generate negative emotions that make you feel the problem. If you do not have money to buy another meal, or you are cooking for guests, then there is a risk and something to fear, that generates negative emotions, and would make you consider the required amount of salt to add as a problem.

Being emotional involved in a problem means that your emotions became a part of the problem, and that results from mixing between the problem in its abstract form and the accompanying sentiments.

*Emotional Involvement* is to allow something to get into you and touch your heart and feelings. When you are emotionally involved in something, your emotions become a part of it, whether it was a problem, an idea being processed, a dream, someone, or something.

In such a moment when you allow the problem to get into you and touch your heart, you feel somehow like that your existence and identity is directly threatened by the problem.

Ideally, a lot a people would advise you to not be emotionally involved in the problem, but let us be practical here, that is not 100% possible all the times. We are human beings not machines.

Also, a small dose of emotional involvement could be sometimes the master key that drives you to solve a problem and find exceptional solutions. In fact, creativity and creative ideas usually come from the emotional involvement. Being 100% emotionally disconnected deprives you from a real source of enormous energy that some deep problems can't be solved without it, and in fact, there is that kind of problems that actually will never be solved unless you are emotionally involved to some level.

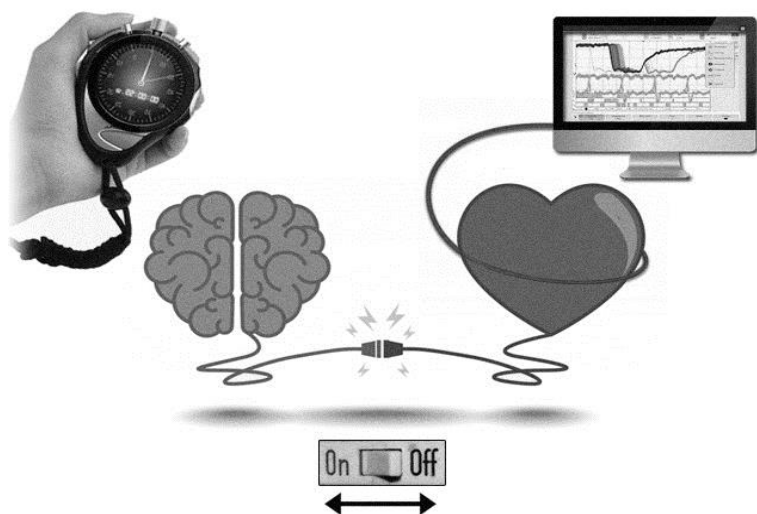
However, once you become emotionally involved in the problem, it acts like a hungry beast that will not stop until eats you fully. It is like a whirlpool that once you entered, it pushes you down with no mercy.

In the extreme cases of emotional involvement, you reach to a level where you feel like if the situation was resolved, then you are safe and secured; but if not, it will be your end then. The whole matter changes to be an existential battle where you cannot feel safe even to blink while that situation still exist and stands there. The worry eats you and you cannot stand for the existence of that unresolved situation, you do not really want to solve it or handle it, you just want it to vanish or disappear immediately by a miracle, so you can breathe again.

So, what we can do?



The answer is that you should monitor yourself. As long as you see your emotional involvement works to your side then it is fine. But once you start feel it dragging you down to be under the mercy of the problem, then it is the time you should let it go, dissociate and get yourself emotionally disconnected of the problem, and that is what I call Managed Emotional Involvement.



Honestly, keeping your emotional involvement in the problem balanced is not something easy is to do; knowing or identifying the proper point to disconnect is really hard, and that's why it is much easier, and also much safer in most cases to be completely not emotionally involved in the problem as much as possible.

There is no real rule I can tell you here to recognize that you are at that point, near to it, or even just passed it a little. That is just a sensor that needs to be built with time within you by yourself, with respect to your watching for your own emotional involvement experiences.

Learning to keep your emotional involvement managed requires you to try doing that many times and fail, until you learn how to do it. No one can tell you how to do that. It is just something inside you, and you and only you are the one who should figure out how to control it. But until you learn how to do it, I would advise you to try not being emotionally involved at all if the problem is so serious one.

Serious problems will drive you involved emotionally whether you like it or not, so the tries on the opposite direction will reduce the amount of involvement, and that might be enough to achieve the required minimum level of emotional involvement.

You should also notice that even when your emotional involvement is a positive one, the risk of being disappointed roughly is standing there when failures occur. Also, there is the risk of being enslaved by the hopes or even dreams resulted from that positive emotional involvement.

But again, it is not right to tell you to be completely emotionally disconnected from the problem; the right thing to do is to learn when to be in, and when it is the time to get yourself emotionally out of the problem. That is a very handful skill to learn.

I think the safe general advice here is to keep your emotional involvement at the minimum possible as long as you do not reach the level of Zero emotional involvement.



***“Keep your emotional involvement in the problem managed and as minimum as possible.”***

Now... let me say all of that in a simpler way. Honestly, once you decide to make a little emotional involvement in the problem, you already gave the problem some privileges to treat you not like a boss anymore, but to play with you as a close friend at least, and you know what happened when some close friends do not just know what the limits are. 😊

But remember that everything in this world needs us to balance contradicted concepts and bring them to a beneficial equilibrium point.

For sure, you had heard that there is a fine line between being genius and being crazy, and a fine line between dreams and reality. It is also a fine line that separates our recognition for the contradictions and our attempts to balance them on one side, and being lost and sinking deep in these contradictions on the other side; and managing your emotional involvement in a problem is just another attempt to find such a fine line.

Our wonderful world in fact stands over a lot of these fine lines, and surviving this life is just *the art of finding the fine lines*.

## ***The Art of Doing Nothing***

Sometimes we know for sure that there is nothing to do, not because we are desperate, but because it is the nature of the problem, which makes it much... much... out of our influence range.

In some other rare cases, we just know that we should do nothing and just ignore the problem until it solves itself with time, or at least to wait until certain moment or circumstances before committing a step.

In the previous situations, we can even sometimes tell for sure, that whatever we will do, it will just make it worse, and it is better to do nothing.

In such cases, it is the role of what I call *The Art of Doing Nothing*. This art is based on two main pillars:



- 1. Accept what you cannot change, and accept your loss...***
- 2. Keep calm, and hold your position... Do not allow anyone or even your own internal feel of guilt to push you to do something you know it is going to make it worse.***

Sometimes we think it is easy to do that, but when the matter is so serious, and your firm conclusion is that you should just do nothing, it becomes a real challenge to do nothing while you are being hammered from everywhere, and that is the art you need to learn. Accept your loss so it would not harm you or push you anymore, and hold yourself or even dance with the hammers if you have, but do not let them push you to the corner or into the wrong path. Breathe and wait calmly the right moment to act.

The hardest part of this art is to learn to accept bravely the responsibility for your choice and decision, and be ready to face the blame and feel of guilt with courage comes from your deep believe that you tried your best and did what you thought is the right thing to do even if it is nothing.

You might wonder how that is can be different from being a stubborn or coward idiot sometimes; yes... you are right... we all suffered such stubborn behaviors done by someone in our life.

Well... again, the answer will be that it is a fine line between this and that, and that is why I called it an art, it is something within your heart that tells you about such line, it is a skill that no one can teach you, you should try to practice and learn it by yourself.

## ***When Everything Goes Wrong***

Yea, we all know that creepy moment... It is just everything goes wrong, nothing happens as you expect it, the problems waiting on the line at the door are more than the population of China... at least you feel so. The knocks on the door become louder and louder every single moment, the invasion is about to begin, or maybe it is already happened. You feel panic... you know you should not, but you feel lost and helpless, and you feel your mind crowded and hot like if a nuclear reactor had just exploded there.... Now what...?

Now it is the time for The Supreme Council of your Armed Forces to intervene in the situation before everything falls apart and the regime falls. 😊

In such moment, the first thing to do it to take it much more serious to be calm and not to panic. Be sure from your own ability to handle the situation and do not question that for a second, it is the wartime and you do not have such luxury here.

Then declare the national emergency state of crises and make any necessary urgent responses with respect the assumed priorities, and use a high doses of painkillers and sedatives for all the problems as much as possible (**Attention please:** *sedatives & painkillers here are meant for the problems not for yourself.* 😊)

Yes, I know this is against many things we said so far, but this is only a temporary step in an emergency state, to regain control... This is a maneuver to give you a chance to push the invaders back away from your own command center and give yourself a chance to breathe... Then the next step is going to be the call for the Armed Forces Staff Committee to be held 😊.

Find a quiet place and bring a white paper and pen, try to relax and start writing a list of everything going in your mind whether it is important or trivial. No matter how much silly is it, write it down in the list, even if it is just that you need to wash your hands, let it be a long list if it will be. Nothing wrong with that, the idea here is to extract every bug buzzes inside your head and put it on that paper, the

balls are running crazy inside that limited space in your mind, let us get them all out for now. Clean the space, give your brain and nerves a chance to cool.

When you feel that mind became blank and there is no more buzz inside your head, take few minutes to breathe again and relax, nothing to worry about at this moment, it is all there on the paper now, and you will handle it later, for now, just relax, you are a free man. If you are so exhausted, sleep or at least take nap, if not just remain calm and quiet there.

Keep being like that for a while until you feel your mind restarted successfully and begins to work efficiently as usual. One significant sign for that might be a solution jumps into your mind suddenly for one of the problems in the list, or you feel that you start to realize that the situation is not that much bad as you thought, the dramatic effect of the invasion shock has over.

Anyway, the sure sign here is that you start to feel your self-confidence back to flow naturally without the need for self-induction. In some cases, it might be hard to reach the level of any of those signs within the available time and circumstances, in such cases the minimum accepted here is that you are calm enough and not feeling frightened, confused, chaotic, or extremely disturbed.



Now, begin to evaluate the situation and looking at each item in the list, which actually represents a problem to solve, and make a decision about it, whatever the decision will be even if it is the decision of no decision as we discussed earlier.

Take your time in traversing the list and make the decisions. When you reach to the end of the list, you might be surprised of how that mind was acting crazy few hours ago, and how it is working like a luxurious Mercedes Engine now.

What you did is just like when riots happen in a prison, the armed forces control the situation first by using whatever possible to control the damage and minimize it. They use whatever required and necessary to force the prisoners to surrender and lay down on the ground. Then take them all out to the yard, rearrange the prison and the cells, and finally they take them in again one per time, and everyone is going to his proper cell in order, that is how you can regain the control when you have such riots inside your brain. 😊

## *Constructive Conflicts*

A major part of a problem struggling is the conflicts with the others involved in the problem, these struggles consumes us sometimes more than the problem itself, and many cases these conflict are just the problems themselves. Moreover, sometimes the conflicts are within us between two or more opinions or ideas, where each of them represents a side of our nature or mentality.

However, the conflicts we go through is actually a blessing most of the time as Stephen Covey once said<sup>2</sup>, conflicts took a place when people start to think seriously about what they do. It is what makes us explore new opportunities and gather new life experiences, making new friends, discover our real enemies, learn new lessons, and gain wisdom.

But still, we can manage these conflicts to be **Constructive** rather than being **Destructive**. In a constructive conflict, all sides are against the problem, all of them might win or at least feel satisfied, and the problem loses.

In a destructive one, all sides are against each other, one or few might win, or they all might lose, and the problem probably wins.

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Covey, The 3rd Alternative: Solving Life's Most Difficult Problems

Constructive conflicts are based on the basic idea of **Abundance Mentality** where we believe that there are enough benefits for all the sides of the conflict. The real challenge becomes how to find the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative as Stephen Covey called it, which satisfy the wishes of all sides of conflict, and achieve the **Win/Win** deals where all sides are winners, rather than struggling for **Win/Lose** situations.

Abundance mentality reduces the violence in our daily life and prevents a lot of unnecessary destructive conflicts and struggles, because it changes the situation from being a struggle that needs a battle, to be just a problem that needs a proper solution.

I read a funny story that one day a trainer gathered his students in a small room and gave each one of them a balloon. He said, *"I have few trophies here, I will start to count 1 min. and when the timer stops, I will give a medal for everyone still has his balloon intact."*

Once they heard the whistle, the students started to attack each other balloons to blow it up, when the time was over, no one were standing there with his balloon, even the last survivor, lost his balloon in a revenge before the time was up.

The trainer said, *"I did not really expect you to be such idiots, I never asked anyone to attack others' balloons, if you all stood hold until the minute is over, you all were*

*going to have trophies, I brought them to give them to you and just wanted to see you standing quiet waiting them!!”*

How many times you and I were such idiots just because our mentality was built on Scarcity rather than Abundance?

The good news here is that most of people are amenable to participate in constructive conflicts once they feel safe and met with honest good intentions, which give you an effective key in running most of your conflicts.



***“Seek Win/Win solutions whenever it is possible.”***

However, to be honest, in many cases it is not 100% our decision to make the conflict fully constructive. Sometimes we stuck with some persons who are just unwilling for that no matter how much hard you tried with them, and that takes us back again to inevitable struggles that we have to adapt with them.

In such cases, we have to decide which is more beneficial for us both materially and morally, to win or to lose. Sometimes losing the struggle to win something else could worth it, other times we have no choice except to fight to the end and win. In other cases, the no deal could be an acceptable alternative for ***win/lose*** deals when it is possible.

## *Solving the Conflicts Constructively*

When it is about solving our internal conflicts, it is really a long subject, which would need another book, so here I will just state a simple note about it. In order to solve those conflicts you must first admit their existence and not denying them.

Do your best to find their roots and understand them and the viewpoints or the sides of your personality or mentality they represent. You need to have a deeper understand for yourself, and also for the life. That is the master key that I can give you about it here.

Now let us back to the external struggles, assuming the default case where we are not struggling against a mindless opponent where we have to go with the win/lose choice, then how we can reach the win/win deals?

Again, you will need first to admit the existence of the struggle and try to understand it, and reach to the roots of that conflict. Ask yourself, *what is this conflict really about?*

Next, you should understand yourself first, and identify *what is it for you in this conflict? Why are you involved in it in the first place? What are you really looking for or wishing to win?*

Then you will have to assure your self-esteem, your own respect for yourself, which is very important because if you did not respect yourself, no one will respect you.

After that, you should respect the other side(s) of the conflict; you cannot reach a win/win deal without the mutual respect, because win/win deals are built on respect and trust before everything else.

You should respect your opponent before expect him to respect you, and once you respect him you will start to wear his shoes and try to understand his/their perspective in the conflict and why he/they are standing there against you in this conflict. That what build the mutual empathy that allows all the sides to put the personal ego aside and work hard to find the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative. Once all of that are done, and the mutual respect has been established, then we come to the easy parts of the mission.

We start by identifying: What each side might win, and what he might lose. Then just as a precaution, we try to find the possible compromises that could be accepted by all sides. These are not the desirable solutions yet, as they will have win/lose results, but it is a step where each side agrees for the possibility that he might get some benefits and some loss.

This plays two important roles in the process, the first is that it is an accepted settlement just in case that the

problem nature does not allow creative 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative. The second role for this compromising stage is that once everyone becomes ready to accept a loss, the loss becomes a mutual enemy, it becomes a common loss that everyone will start to co-operate in working toward prevent it. All the sides now are united against the problem not against each other.

Now finally, it is the time for creativity... Search for all the possible creative solutions that will make everyone not just accepting the settlement, but make them really win and happy.

The win/win deal is based on creative solutions where every side of the conflict takes what he wants or even more. It is not a compromise, reaching win/win deals is a creative process in which we try to generate exceptional solutions where no one have to end with a loss, but all sides ends winners.

From my own experiences, if all the sides of the conflict honestly wish to find such solutions, then around 80-90% of the conflicts in our life can be solved constructively with win/win solutions.

However, we will have to live with that minority of conflicts that have such nature where win/win deals are impossible, and try to live with compromises, no deals, or even win/lose results for them, and that is the nature of life, there will be forever some problems that will make us feel bad from time to time. In such cases, we can do nothing more than ***accept our loss, grieve about it, make a tombstone, cure our own pride, learn our lessons, and then move on...***

*The End*



# Appendices

Here, I will share with you my conclusion about Stephen Covey's philosophy in solving problems concluded in to simple parts...

## ***Appendix A: Stephen Covey's Seven Habits***<sup>3</sup>

Understand those habits and use them while you are attempting to solve your problems, start from the personal victory in the first 3 habits, and when you are ready move to the public victory with the habits from 4 to 6, and always remember the 7th one.

①

### ***"Be proactive"***

*We are in charge. We choose the scripts by which to live our lives. Use this self-awareness to be proactive and take responsibility for your choices.*

②

### ***"Begin with end in mind"***

*Develop the principle-centered personal mission statement. Extend the mission statement into long-term goals on personal principles related to your vision.*

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<sup>3</sup> The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey

③

***“First things first”***

*Spend time doing what fits into your personal mission Identify the key roles that you take on in life, and make time for each of them.*

④

***“Think win-win”***

Seek agreements and relationships that are mutually beneficial. In cases where a “Win/Win” deal cannot be achieved then accept the fact that agreeing to make no deal could be the best alternative in many situations. As a boss or a mentor, be sure to reward win/win behavior among your subordinates or followers, and avoid inadvertently rewarding win/lose behavior.

⑤

***“Understand then be understood”***

First, seek to understand the other person, and only then try to be understood. This is one of the most important principles of interpersonal relations. Effective listening is not simply echoing what the other person has said through the lens of one’s own experience. Rather, it is putting oneself in the perspective of the other person “*Wearing his shoes*”, and listening empathically for both feeling and meaning.

⑥

***“Synergize over blaming”***

Through trustful communication, find ways to leverage individual differences to create a whole that is greater than the sum of parts. Through mutual trust and understanding, one often can solve conflicts and find better solution than would have been obtained through either person’s own solution. When a problem or a mistake occurs, try to help in the correcting process instead of searching for someone to blame about the mistake.

⑦

***“Re-sharp the saw”***

Maintaining the equilibrium between Production and the Ability of Production

## ***Appendix B: Stephen Covey's 3<sup>rd</sup> Alternative***<sup>4</sup>

I mentioned my own view to find the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative previously, I was inspired mainly by the paradigms Coveys presented in his book. He concluded the process of the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative thinking in applying four paradigms:

***"I See Myself", "I See You", "I Seek You Out", and "I Synergize With You".***

The first step or paradigm is about coming to know oneself. It is about stepping outside of normal associations and examining personal worth, feelings, and interests. When a person adopts this paradigm and wins the "*private victory*", he or she is ready to turn toward others, according to Covey's 7 Habits.

The second paradigm instructs to see others with the same respectfulness as they now see themselves.

The next step "*I Seek You Out*" is to understand others and their views. In this paradigm, interests are not obstacles to each other, but principles required to be understood by both parties involved in order to generate a solution for both.

The 4<sup>th</sup> is the process of arriving at synergy, which in turn involves four steps: "*Ask the 3<sup>rd</sup> Alternative Question*", "*Define Criteria of Success*", "*Create 3<sup>rd</sup> Alternatives*", and "*Arrive at Synergy*".

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_3rd\\_Alternative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_3rd_Alternative)



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