

Anchor In

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I have never told anybody this before, but I figure now it is time to share. My senior basketball season I chose to sit on the very end of the bench, behind all of the underclassmen, for a reason. It didn't have anything to do with where I was in the rotation, but rather, it had everything to do with a completely different game than the one I was playing—tug of war. In tug of war, you put your strongest person as the last person on the rope, and even if everybody in front of him or her falls, your team still has a chance as long as that last person, the anchor, is standing. I figured that, as long as I was still standing, we'd always have a chance to win. What I would find out, though, is that I was only an extrinsic anchor, which is secondary to an intrinsic anchor. So, while I may have been consistent with my actions, if the intrinsic anchor in any one part fails then the collective unit is susceptible to failure. Let me explain.

There are two types of anchors you can have in your life: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic anchors would be things outside of yourself that you rely on to keep your day going smoothly—your job, relationship, family, friends, etc. Intrinsic anchors are things directly connected to you as an individual—your morals, beliefs, emotions, etc. While it is important to have both intrinsic and extrinsic anchors, if you are able to master your intrinsic anchors you will be able to compensate and continue on with life during any shortcomings of your extrinsic anchors, which are often times more variable, than you would if the opposite occurred. This is why I said that no matter how strong your extrinsic anchors are, if your intrinsic anchors falter you will be highly susceptible to mishap.

In life, there are so many variables and moving parts, between jobs, relationships, and everything else that goes on, that at times it can seem like your entire world is out of your control. Even when things are seemingly good, what we are actually able to control in our daily lives is so little compared to what we would like to believe. We have no control over outside events or other people, and, when everything else gets stripped away, all we really have left to control are our mental emotions and our physical reactions to life's events, our own set of morals, and our religious or spiritual beliefs. But this is enough to build upon, so this is our starting place.

If you truly want to make some type of improvement in your life you need to have some type of foundation to start on. You cannot build an empire on shifting ground and you cannot climb the ladder of success if the steps break with the slightest pressure. You need to have an anchor in your life that you know will always be there and you can always count on. Because extrinsic anchors have the tendency to be highly variable, it is best if you can find an intrinsic anchor. This is different from the external motivation of having something greater than yourself to fuel your pursuit of excellence. This is something that comes from within yourself that you know will be there for you no matter how hard times become.

Once you are able to master some of your intrinsic anchors you will be able to make improvements of greater meaning in your life. In other words, it is only once you are able to master your intrinsic anchors that you will be able to improve upon your extrinsic anchors. Now, mastering your intrinsic anchors does not mean that every day is perfect, you are always happy, and are able to handle whatever life throws your way without batting an eye. It means that you don't let a bad day become a bad week; you are able to take a bad experience or an unfortunate series of events and contain it, not letting it build upon itself.

Stabilizing a potentially negative everyday situation is one of the keys to being able to improve yourself as a person and improve your life. This is done by, among other things, being able to clear your mind when need be. Some of the best ways I have found to clear my mind so I can think logically and calmly about a problem are:

- Prayer
- Reading a good book—nothing heavy, but something uplifting that may either give me a different perspective on what's going on or just allow me to think about something else for a minute
- Listening to relaxing music—usually the kind without lyrics works best
- Meditation—count your breaths up to ten, then start over, focusing on blowing away your thoughts with your exhales like clouds in the sky
- Talking to other people—an outside perspective can be great, but at the same time you have to take it for what it is, an outside perspective; you are the one who has to live with the decisions you make

So find the anchors in your life, both extrinsic and intrinsic. Find the people, places, and things that allow you to stabilize this unstable journey. Here's to faith, strength, and passion.

Get big or die tryin'.

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