

Are you the Winner in a Suffering Competition? A Seven Step Solution

By Suzi Elton

Have you ever known someone (or does it describe you?) who seems to believe that they suffer more than any others have ever suffered—to the point where it becomes their identity? There is an element of, “My suffering has been greater than yours—or anyone else’s!” They actually seem to have an aggressive attitude with their suffering, as if there is a suffering competition and they are the obvious winner. Perhaps it is part of the human condition to be somewhat narcissistic with our suffering. Unfortunately, what frequently happens when we are in the midst of a “pity party” is that we totally discount the suffering of any other beings on the earth.

Think a bit about what could be the psychology behind wanting to win the “Suffering Competition”. It could mean that you neither have nor feel compassion for others. It probably means that you need to triumph as the “top of the heap” of suffering. It likely means that you discount the suffering of others and think only your suffering counts.

If you are a person who is the King or Queen of Suffering and want to give up your crown, what are some steps you can take?

1. Focus on gratitude. Start to be thankful for every good thing in your life. Be thankful if you’re warm and inside during terrible weather. Be thankful if the sky is blue. Be thankful if you have soap to clean your dishes and clothing. Be thankful that you can eat when you are hungry. Be thankful that you can pray and meditate and calm yourself. Be thankful if you have work and income. Be thankful when you have transportation. Be thankful for your mate and your family and friends. Be thankful for a warm bed at night. Show appreciation for all you have.
2. Start to notice and feel and show compassion for the challenges you see other people suffering. Take your attention off yourself and pay attention to others, at least occasionally, and especially when you feel sorriest for yourself.
3. Get out of the rut of negative thinking. Negative thinking is a guaranteed downward spiral into depression. It’s all a matter of self talk. Stop telling yourself “stories” about everything being bleak and black. Start telling yourself about all your good luck and the wonderful things in your life.
4. Consciously choose to control your feelings. Turn off the news and turn on inspirational music or motivational tapes or CD’s. Read positive and affirming books and magazines. Watch inspirational or educational and awe inspiring DVD’s.
5. Take action. Assess your situation. Research and explore which actions you could take to improve your circumstances—then take action.
6. When all else fails, clean, clear and organize. Get rid of everything that is junk in your life. Keep a notebook nearby and jot down any ideas you get during clearing. Take things to your favorite charity, throw junk in the trash, and recycle what you can. All this old stuff “holds” stuck energy. This is one of the best ways to start the energy flowing.
7. Initiate a spiritual practice. Begin to meditate. Pray often. Think about the positive changes you want to bring to the world. Consider how you can uplift others.

If you want to give up your position as the King or Queen of Suffering, it takes some conscious effort. You CAN choose to lose the Suffering Competition. With concerted effort, you will no longer win, place or show where suffering is concerned. With Herculean effort, you could actually start living with joy.

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Suzi Elton is a success coach working with "difference makers" who are ready to effect positive change by living their highest life purpose. She has coached hundreds of clients to approach their goals strategically through tiny steps that bring about quantum leaps. For free Life Purpose exercises, go to <http://mylifepurposecoaching.com>.

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