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During your journey in life, you have to make a choice before you begin your trip. You have to decide if you are going to be a driver or a passenger. It’s completely your choice.

People who choose to be passengers are subject to going where other drivers are going. Passengers have no control over the speed with which they move ahead, nor do they have any say about whether or not rules are observed. Of course passengers can bark out orders but they have no control over whether the driver hears in a timely manner or whether they are paying attention. The destiny of the passenger is in the hands of the driver.

Then again, being a passenger can be appealing. Passengers merely sit in the car, relaxed and oblivious to their final destination. They may opt to use an electronic device to listen to music, read a book, or take a nap. They may talk on their cell phone or do crossword puzzles. However, they rarely pay attention to where they are, who is in front of them or behind them, or whether progress is being made. Their journey may be pleasant, but those choosing to be passengers are just going along for the ride.

Those who choose to be drivers accept responsibility for moving forward toward their goals. They pay attention and focus on getting to their final destination. They make decisions about how quickly they move ahead. They avoid obstacles, like bumps or dips in the road. They may choose to take a detour. They decide when to stop and refuel. During the journey they make the choices to control their safety and success.

The distance between a passenger and a driver in a car is less than three feet, but the difference is huge. The driver has the choice to head toward success. The passenger just goes where he or she is driven.

In life, this driver/passenger concept applies as well. You’re either controlling where you’re going or you’re along for the ride. Which are you, a driver or a passenger? If you’re a driver, keep driving. If you’re a passenger and want to become a driver, then do the following:

1) *Expect the unexpected and properly respond to it.* Life always has a tendency

to throw curve balls at us when we expect something else. And because of that, we either swing wildly and miss or we stand still thinking the umpire will call “Ball!” But instead we hear “Strike!”

Expect the occasional curve ball. Life rolls things in front of you all the time. It’s how you choose to respond to what happens that determines your next move, next path, next relationship, and next risk. You can be a victim, or you can choose to realize that by taking control of the unexpected, you can make strides toward greater success.

2) *Don’t believe you are a victim.* When did this epidemic of victimization begin? Maybe it has become too easy for people to blame their mistakes on outside circumstances. It’s the easy way out, but it’s never the best.

I’m sure you’ve heard or read about some of the following defense excuses during a criminal trial:

- *Abused as a child.*
- *Product of a broken home.*
- *Untreated attention deficit hyperactive syndrome.*
- *Mother never loved him or her.*
- *Grew up in a rough neighborhood.*
- *Bullied in school.*
- *In business, it’s much the same:*
- *Been hit with too much turnover.*
- *A bad economy.*
- *Can’t find good people.*

In family life, some adult children forever blame their parents for issues and problems rather than accept personal responsibility to carve out a new or better path.

While the circumstances in life can be tough, damaging, and/or unfair, at some point in time, a person can make a choice to change or to take action--to be a driver. All of these self-proclaimed victims are full of excuses. What happened to accepting full responsibility and accountability of one’s life or business?

Being a victim and making excuses rather than choosing to not be a victim will eventually destroy you or keep you down almost permanently.

3) *Keep moving forward.* Once you choose to become a driver and proactively deal with the unexpected, take responsibility and move forward when unfair things come your way. If

you don’t accomplish an objective, you have two choices: you can either take responsibility and decide you’ll work twice as smart over a designated time period to make your goals, or you can wonder “Why me?” and quickly blame someone or something else.

If you embrace the “why me?” attitude, the victim mentality will paralyze your attitude and your enthusiasm. Left to fester, this paralysis will prevent you from doing what you need to do next.

4) *Realize not everything bad that happens is your doing.* Things that can lead to excuses could be things beyond our control, like a gust of wind messing with a golfer, or a flat tire caused by a nail in the street, or perhaps even a disease, virus, or cancer that impedes one’s health. When bad things happen --things we do not deserve--the next move is still ours to make. We cannot blame the situation and adopt the victim mentality because it will lead to or accelerate our demise.

5) *Take ownership of your life.* You can make the choice to avoid becoming a victim and get on the road to success. There are no limits to the alternatives you have unless you set them yourself.

In every situation, whether in your work life or in your personal life, there are always alternatives. You must choose to see them. The challenge is taking off the blinders of victimization and searching for the alternatives to help you reach your potential and achieve the success you deserve.

Accepting responsibility for your life means taking ownership of your mind, thoughts, actions, and reactions. Only you can accept this ownership--and, once accepted, it is yours to keep. Conversely, you cannot give away this ownership by blaming others when things go wrong. When you have full ownership you can direct your thoughts and create your own future, even in the face of adversity, a wrecked project, or a mangled relationship.

No one can make you a victim without your consent. No one! Don’t allow yourself to dwell on unfair things that happen to you--keep moving forward. A wise man once said: “Don’t let your past eat your future.”

~ The End ~