

## A Conversation Within Yourself

The central practice of personal mastery involves learning to keep both a personal vision and a clear picture of current reality before us. Doing this will generate a force within ourselves called “creative (or structural) tension.” Tension, by its nature, seeks resolution, and the most natural resolution of *this* tension is for our reality to move closer to what we want. It’s as if we have set up a rubber band between the two poles of our vision and current reality.

People who are convinced that a vision or result is important, who can see clearly that they must change their life in order to reach that result, and who commit themselves to that result nonetheless do indeed feel compelled. They have assimilated the vision not just consciously, but unconsciously, at a level where it changes more of their behavior. They have a sense of deliberate patience--with themselves and the world--and more attentiveness to what is going on around them. All of this produces a sustained sense of energy and enthusiasm, which (often after a delay) produces some tangible results, which can then make the energy and enthusiasm stronger.

We may not be able to command ourselves to snap instantly into this frame of mind, but the discipline of personal mastery suggests that we can, as individuals, cultivate a way of thinking that leads us gradually to it. The more we practice this way of thinking, the more we will feel competent and confident, and the more we will allow ourselves to be aware of the tension which can pull us forward if we cultivate it.

Some people think, “I will never accomplish my vision, because of the way I was raised--I *know* I can never have what I want.” Or they feel, “I can only force myself toward my vision if things get bad enough,” or “It’s up to me to push ahead through sheer willpower, against the obstacles thrown at me.” As Robert Fritz [author of *The Path of Least Resistance*] notes, all of these fears are manifestations of “emotional tension”--basic beliefs that we are unworthy or powerless to obtain our deepest aspirations. How do we cope with emotional tension? Not by denying it exists, but by trying to see it more clearly, until we can see that emotional tension, too, is part of our current reality.

Personal mastery teaches us not to lower our vision, even if it seems the vision is impossible. And, paradoxically, it teaches us that the content of the vision is not important in itself. “It’s not what the vision is,” says Robert Fritz. “It’s what the vision does.” There are many stories of people who achieve extraordinary results with extraordinary visions--where the results happen to be different from their original intent.

Personal mastery also teaches not to shrink back from seeing the world as it is, even if it makes us uncomfortable. Looking closely and clearly at current reality is one of the most difficult tasks of this discipline. It requires the ability to ask yourself, not just at quiet

times but during times of stress, “What is going on right now? Why is my reality so difficult?”

Finally, personal mastery teaches us to choose. Choosing is a courageous act: picking the results and actions which you will make into your destiny.

Practicing personal mastery is like holding a conversation within ourselves. One voice within us dreams of what we want for the future. Still another casts an (often baleful) eye on the world around us. A third voice, often well hidden, is willing to say, “I have chosen what I want and accepted that I will create it.” In this discipline, we try to hear all these facets clearly, knowing that the power which pulls us toward our vision emerges from the relationship between them.