

Distinction 10

Winners take responsibility.
Whiners play the victim.

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Let's face it: Life doesn't always go according to plan. In fact, it's been said that life is what happens while you're making other plans.

To become a winner in the face of this unpredictability requires that you balance two seemingly contradictory ideas. The first is best expressed by the expression "if it's going to be, it's up to me." The second is nearly the opposite: "What will be, will be."

These two statements sound fine by themselves—but when you put them side-by-side they contradict each other. And yet, taking either of these statements to the extreme produces negative results.

For example, let's look at the first statement: *If it's going to be, it's up to me*. Taking that philosophy to an extreme leads to arrogance and the perception that you don't need anyone. And the second statement? Taken to its extreme, the idea that *what will be, will be* leads to the role of victim, a person aimlessly drifting with no sense of control.

The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Winners seek to find a balance in life, and the balance point for these two statements is responsibility. Responsibility means that you do your best and trust that good will result. You can't always live in a state of *what will be, will be*, or you'll never take positive action. You can't always live in a state of *if it's going to be, it's up to me*, or you will think more highly of yourself than you should and become arrogant and judgmental.

These extremes—a lack of perceived control and a state of arrogance—start whiners down a dangerous path that leads to only one place: fear. That sense of fear manifests itself in people as worry, and worry is the enemy of winning.

Winners don't worry; whiners do.

Conversely, while fear is faith that the worst will happen, winners have faith in positive outcomes, and

that faith manifests itself in the form of trust—a belief in the good in people and situations. While there may be people who do not have good intentions toward you, most probably do. Winners look for those who do—and don't worry about the rest.

Winners trust the intentions of others. Whiners play the victim because they allow their fears to grow into worry, their worry to grow into suspicion, and their suspicion to grow into division. You can't be a winner without others. Life is a team sport. Whining leads to separation, but winning comes only through unity.

The decision to live by faith or fear is just that: a decision. It is a personal choice and it is one you must make every day. Your choices are your responsibility. A whiner thinks his choices depend on his circumstances and that those circumstances are someone else's fault.

Fear is rooted in a belief that you have no choice. In reality, your circumstances exist because of your choices, and those choices are made in the context of either faith or fear. Accept the responsibility to make choices based on faith and you become a winner. Make choices based on fear and you will be a whiner.

Winners know we always have choices, and they take responsibility for them. Whiners, however, believe that their choices are controlled by someone else. And while you can let someone else control your choices, isn't that a choice in itself? Becoming a winner is impossible until you assume the responsibility of choice. Winners understand that power, and use it wisely.

Whiners play the victim by blaming others for their circumstances. Whiners say, "If only they had done this, or if only they hadn't done that, my life would be perfect." Blaming and complaining go hand-in-hand, and victims do a lot of both. Remember: Choices determine circumstances; circumstances do not determine choices. As long as you whine about your circumstances, you cannot become a winner.

Is there something in your life that you've been blaming others for that has been holding you back? As long as you are blaming and complaining, you remain the same. Taking responsibility for your circumstances is the first step toward growth.

There have been many situations in my life that I blamed others for. But I have learned that as long as I play the victim by blaming and complaining, I battle

with feelings of disappointment and discouragement. Once, when I related a disappointment to my friend Nido Qubein, he told me, “Keith, it is okay to be disappointed. It’s not okay to be discouraged.”

The truth is that we all face disappointment. When we become disappointed, though, we must learn to encourage ourselves before we become discouraged, for following discouragement is depression.

Whiners battle with depression. Winners deal with their disappointments, encourage themselves, and move on. A winner says, “My thoughts, feelings, and actions are my responsibility.” Winning starts with your thoughts, and taking responsibility for them means choosing positive ones.

Whining is the fruit of negative thinking. Don’t let others fill your mind with negative thoughts. Make conscious choices on what you hold in your mind, for what you allow to stay there makes you either a winner or a whiner.

Winners choose to be winners. Winners take responsibility for the thoughts, feelings, and actions that produce their circumstances. Whiners let others control their thoughts, and then blame them for the results.

Results are reflections—simple reflections of the choices you make. Winners see almost everything in their lives as a result, or a reflection. Health is, most of the time, a result or reflection of the choices you make about eating and exercising. Wealth is a result or reflection of the choices you make about money. Happiness is a result or reflection of the thoughts you think. You must learn to take responsibility for the choices you make in each area of life. If you don't, then you will feel like a victim and the results you get will be negative. Instead of health, there will be sickness. Instead of wealth, there will be poverty. Instead of happiness, there will be depression. Positive and negative results are simply reflections of the choices we make, especially the choices we make concerning our thoughts.

Now let's look at your results as fruits on a tree. Just as whining is the fruit of negative thinking, winning is the fruit of positive thinking. The positive results you desire are the fruits of positive thoughts, which are the roots of the plant. Winners understand that our roots create our fruits. Say to yourself: My roots create my fruits. Winners take responsibility for their results by taking responsibility for their thoughts.

Winners see thoughts like seeds and their minds like fertile soil. The thoughts you choose to hold in your mind will start growing roots and eventually a little thought or seed can become a big tree with lots of fruit. So be careful to hold positive thoughts in your mind.

When negative thoughts appear, which they most certainly will, don't let them stay for very long or they will start to grow roots. Once a thought has started to grow roots, it becomes harder to remove. Winners believe "my results are my responsibility." That's why we choose our thoughts carefully. We choose to think about what we do want, not what we don't want. Whiners waste their time thinking about the things they don't want, and that's what they get in their lives. Whiners become victims because they allow others to control their thoughts. We all want to win more consistently in our lives. To be a winner you must consistently control your thoughts. By controlling your thoughts, you can change your results. Winners take responsibility for their results by controlling their thoughts.

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