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Be Like Stewart Cink: Do the Thing You Think You CANNOT Do

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Stewart Cink doubted he could win a major golf tournament. How about you: What do you think you cannot do? Deliver a spectacular speech? Stand up for yourself at work? Or at home? Get into great shape? Attract the love of your life? Improve your financial situation?

Each of us believes there are things we cannot do. For a long time, I thought I was the only one. The only one who thought I wasn't good enough. Who couldn't ever be good enough.

It wasn't as if I were a slouch: After all, I'd earned a doctorate; been a sales and marketing consultant for a Fortune 500 company; run in 10K road races; and raised \$4,500 for cancer research by soliciting hundreds of donations to support my cycling in the Pan Mass Challenge, across Massachusetts.

Yet my deepest yearnings were unfulfilled:

- gliding on a rope swing, which I've wanted to do since I was 22, when I saw my boyfriend do it;
- writing a book; and
- loving a man with all my heart (Yipes! He might leave or die.)

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. ... Do the thing you think you CANNOT do," advised Eleanor Roosevelt.

I had Roosevelt's words taped to my wall, yet it took Stewart Cink's come-from-behind win in the British Open for me to decide to do things differently.

In the past, Cink suffered from the same malady as I: he was good at what he did, but not great.

Cink had been a college star, graduating with a "look-out-here-he-comes" buzz. Indeed, Cink was named 1997 Rookie of the Year, his first year on the pro tour. That was the year Cink won the Greater Hartford Open. He won the tournament again in 2008 (now called the Travelers Championship). Yet

while he earned millions of dollars by consistently finishing in the top 10, Cink had never won a major tournament.

"I'm not sure I thought much about whether I was good enough to win a major or not," he said. "I knew I'd been close a few times, but I never really heard my name tossed in there with the best ones not to have won. So maybe I was starting to believe that I wasn't one of the best ones."

The spring of 2009 was disappointing for Cink. He didn't make the cut in Hartford, after winning the previous year. He didn't make the cut at other tournaments, either. He had a bitter taste in his mouth. Cink decided to look within himself:

"My confidence was lacking," Cink discovered. "There's not a statistic category for confidence. My results hadn't been very good. When I looked at my stats, every one attached to putting—bunker shots, up and down—all my putting stats were not very good."

Cink decided to revamp his golf swing and also his attitude. "I went into the basement and got out an old short putter and never looked back. I've changed to a short putter and revamped my whole approach to the game. I started over from scratch."

Cink sought help from experienced golf coach Butch Harmon in Las Vegas. "Butch helped me so I could make adjustments when things were going wrong. So I could fix things on the fly."

Stewart Cink realized that his attitude needed adjusting, too. Sports psychologist Dr. Morris Pickens helped him there. Pickens advised Cink to focus on hitting quality shots throughout the day, rather than on making holes. This meant focusing on the process, not the result. "Keep your focus 100 percent on the task at hand," said Pickens. "Keep playing the golf course, not the tournament. Have fun and stay in the moment."



"OMG," said the author, the first time she jumped.

Positive thoughts matter, too. For example, after a missed or poor shot, Pickins suggested Cink think about a future positive outcome by saying, "Give me a good lie." Stay future-focused, rather than dwell on the past. Expect good things to happen, like making a long putt.

Two months after Cink began working with Mo Pickins, his efforts paid off. Cink won the British Open, besting Tom Watson in a playoff. Even though the crowd was rooting for the 59-year-old Watson, Cink later revealed that he "didn't have a care in the world."

The very same day Cink came from behind to win his first major tournament, I read about NY Trapeze School in *The New York Times*. I realized that swinging through the air on a trapeze (and then releasing my grip) would be the same as gliding across a lake on a rope swing and dropping into the water. By doing ONE of the things I thought I could not do, I might prime myself to accomplish the others, too.

Of course, I felt terrified.

Yet I decided to do the thing I could not do—in tiny steps, concentrating only on the task at hand.

Step 1: was to google NY Trapeze School. (I could do that, couldn't I?) The pictures on the trapeze school Web site made me nauseous.

I decided to take step 2 anyway: I called for information. Marina, the woman who answered the phone, was reassuring. She described how participants are strapped in for safety and how helpful their instructors are. She also talked about how much fun participants have and how empowering the experience is. I still felt nauseous. However, I took step 3: I went to a nearby park and asked a strapping man to spot me while I hung upside down on a monkey bar. Success!

On to step 4: Online I checked the availability of trapeze school for this coming Sunday: three openings. *Step 5:* I made a reservation by paying \$92 through PayPal. *Step 6:* I used Mapquest to print directions to NY Trapeze School.

In the coming days, I continue to take tiny steps, with a smile on my face.

Step 7: Fill my gas tank Saturday.

Step 8: Write down on a white board in my condo's garage the time I want my car Sunday morning: 7:15.

Step 9: Fish out my class confirmation and driving directions and put them next to my front door, so I'll have them when I leave.

Step 10: Set my alarm clock for 6 a.m. Sunday morning.

Step 11: Get into bed at 10:30 p.m. Saturday night, so I'll be well-rested Sunday.

Step 12: Hop out of bed Sunday morning, as soon as my alarm goes off.

Step 13: Eat a nutritious breakfast, to fortify myself.

Step 14: Make a sandwich to take along with me, and grab my water bottle.

Step 15: Leave my apartment at 7:10.

Step 16: Head out my driveway, toward the highway.

Step 17: Drive two hours to New York City.

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Step 18: Locate trapeze school, in lower Manhattan.

Step 19: Find a parking spot.

Step 20: Walk to trapeze school.

Step 21: Present my class confirmation.

Step 22: Follow the on-land instructions provided by trapeze school staff.

Step 23: Climb the 23-foot steel ladder that leads to a narrow platform, from which participants lean forward to grab the trapeze bar.

Step 24: Breathe deeply, reminding myself that I'm safe, because I love myself, now and forever. I always have myself.

Step 24 will be my last step, because that's my goal: to stay in the moment while I pursue my dreams. I have decided I must choose to expect good things to happen and focus on the steps, not the result.

If all I do is climb the ladder, I'll consider myself a success for taking the steps. Because if I don't take them, how can I possibly achieve my dreams?

I invite you, too, to do the thing you think you cannot do. Write down what it is and the smallest step you can take toward achieving it. Doing so will enlarge your view of who you are—and of who you can become.

Begin today to expand your life. Write me to tell me about your taking a small step toward what you think you cannot do (Docktor@DoreenStern.com).

Happy sailing. ●



The second time was a cinch, as the author's smile shows.