



Week One: Reflective/Discussion Guide
Begin Again: Fresh Starts in Challenging Times

Obstacles and Ruts

Fresh starts are important to well-being and spirituality. We know renewal brings revitalized energy and passion for life. We also know that, lurking nearby the surface of our lives, are obstacles that can keep us from a new start. In week one, of Fresh Starts, we explored some of these obstacles and what we can do to overcome.

Early in our time together, we explored the difference between a routine and a rut.

Questions to Ponder/Discuss:

How would you describe the difference between a routine and a rut?

Consider This: Ruts can be ways of thinking, feeling or acting. They can be small behaviors that, over time, chain us down. Can you see a place where a rut is keeping you from a fresh start?

Three Obstacles to Fresh Starts

During our exploration, we considered three obstacles that inhibit new beginnings.

Obstacle Number One: Regret – Living in and being defined by a past mistake or missed opportunity

Consider these quotes:

“Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it; it's only good for wallowing in.” — **Katherine Mansfield**

“I've got a bad case of the 3:00 am guilts - you know, when you lie in bed awake and replay all those things you didn't do right? Because, as we all know, nothing solves insomnia like a nice warm glass of regret, depression and self-loathing.” — **D.D. Barant, Dying Bites**

Questions to Ponder/Discuss:

What do the above quotes reveal about regret? What about the quotes stands out to you? How do they relate to your life?

Obstacle Number Two: Resistance to Risk: An unwillingness to change because a current rut is too comfortable to step away from.

Nothing of meaning in life, including new beginnings, happens without some measure of risk.

Questions to Ponder/Discuss:

Can you think of a time where risk lead to a fresh start? Describe the risk you took and how it initiated a new beginning.

Is there a risk you need to take now in order to initiate another new beginning?

Obstacle Number Three- Voices of Critics: A sense of being stuck due to outer or inner critics that cast doubt and fear.

Questions to Ponder/Discuss:

Can you identify an “inner critic” that you feed that keeps you stuck? What is it that you gain by listening to this inner critic? Would you be willing to let go of the gain in order to remove the critical voice?

Can you identify an “outer critic” (another person) that you listen to that keeps you stuck? What is it that you gain by listening to this person? Would you be willing to let go of the gain in order to remove the critical voice?

Reducing or Eliminating the Obstacles

We concluded our time by looking at four actions that help to reduce or eliminate obstacles:

- Name it: Name the obstacle
- Describe it: Articulate the anatomy of the obstacle and what you gain from holding onto it
- Interrupt it: pay attention to when the obstacle emerges and see if you can interrupt it
- Replace it: Describe an action that could help to eliminate the obstacle.

Think of a place you need renewal and “work the four actions” to remove the obstacle and move into your fresh start.