Carving Out a New Path: Choice Points

You’re caught in a pattern. You’re not feeling good. In fact, you’re feeling bad. You’ve heard that we all have the chance to feel good in every moment…if we take advantage of “choice points” which will allow us to carve out a new path. You think it’s nuts, but you’re willing to try it. Check it out and see how it works.

The goal is to find a way of feeling better exactly where you are. Let’s take stock. Where are you now? You’re feeling crummy, but it’s familiar, right? Comfortable in a strange way? This is not about jumping ahead of yourself, or even about looking good (for yourself or others to see), it’s about staying right here in the moment, and looking around for the choice point. Choice points are where your power lies.

Here are some steps to change your experience.

In the beginning, this process feels like you are carving out a tiny little footpath in the rain forest. The first move is literally like pulling out a clump of weeds—underbrush in a wall of forest. It doesn’t seem like there’s really a way through. Hence the metaphor of carving! You need to carve it out.

Get clear about the state you’re in right now. What thoughts, feelings, and body sensations are you having?

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Reach for the closest, most easily accessible thought that will reassure you and make you feel better about yourself or the situation. What is it? (“I’m doing the best I can,” “Things always change, although that feels unlikely at this moment.”)
How do you feel when you think that thought?

Where do you feel that in your body? Describe it as fully and with as many descriptive words as you can.

What’s it like to feel a little better than you were only moments ago? Remember it’s not about taking gargantuan steps. It might take something even smaller than baby steps. It may, in fact, feel like its just one pebble down on a large path. Each little pebble matters, even though the whole process may be quite slow!

The pull of the pattern...

You’ll notice that it’s hard to hold on to positive feelings and thoughts in the beginning.

Imagine standing in front of that wall of thick dense forest. Your back is aching from whacking away at those first few plants. As you stand there, rubbing your back or your arm, you see that familiar, well-trodden road you were thinking of leaving behind. You have the thought, “What was I thinking? Why carve out a new path? It’s so much work. It’s easier to
just stay on the old road. It’s not a pleasant road, but it’s already built, and I’m used to it.”

There’s the pull to stay with the habit, the old pattern. This is a choice point. See the little
tiny path you’ve started. Reach for a thought that makes you feel good about it. Staying with
the forest analogy, it might be very small thought like, “This green sure looks pretty.” With
that kind of thought you might feel a relaxation somewhere inside that feels good. Or it
might be, “Isn’t it amazing how long the roots of this weed are?” And with that thought you
might feel a sense of wonderment and an opening to possibility.

You’re not really facing an actual rain forest, though. Recall the thought that was making
you feel better just a moment ago.

Reconnect with your body and feelings. What’s happening now? Has some uneasiness
crept back in?

If so, ask yourself what your choices are, right this minute. Reach for the next thought that
makes you feel good about this moment.