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## Loving the Struggle

What can we, as coaches, learn from our own personal struggles?

Let's face it. Life happens. The good and the bad. It's the nature of life that we have ebbs and flows, peaks and valleys, high points and low points. And isn't that why our clients come to us—to better navigate life, to take it in fully?

I've come to realize that my own struggles are grist for the mill that we call coaching. Whether it's the 50<sup>th</sup> version of the same argument with my husband or children, or a setback in my business, or a personal loss, my difficulties inform me of what my clients are going through. Is it possible to *love* the struggle? To do so would be to learn from it, be grateful for it, and step outside of the victim place to accept it for what it is.

So here are a few tips on loving the struggle:

- See events in the larger context of the journey. Joseph Campbell talked about the Hero's Journey and the Dark Night of the Soul, a place where the struggles of life are in full force. When life happens, where does it fit into the larger picture? If your life were a Broadway play, which act are you in now? And how is the plot developing?
- Re-frame events in a light way. Create a "Loving the Struggle" inbox for email or voicemail or list in a journal. Put the stuff that you are struggling with in that inbox or on that list. Congratulations. You've just reframed your struggle to look at it in a different way. The ugly stuff is just another item on the examination table.
- Be curious about the muscles that will develop. Is your current challenge to call on your ability to be compassionate, to let go, to practice self-love, to create boundaries, to be non-judgmental, to be courageous, or to bear witness to the pain in the world? What will you play and experiment with in this challenge?
- Find the gift in the chaos. So the day care is closed due to a burst pipe and your husband is out of town? Find your learning edge, your awareness of what you can't be with. Revel in the opening for creativity. There is a gift waiting to be found.
- Be aware of what you need in order to take care of yourself. The struggle takes energy. And without self-care, you may well run out of gas before emerging from the Dark Night of the Soul. Take that long walk. Watch a Three Stooges movie. Play with your pets or your kids. Indulge in a hot bath. Eat rich chocolate. Connect with a close friend.

Letting the struggle exist, without judgment or resistance, is what we can give our clients and ourselves. Life is a long journey. Sit back and enjoy the ride.

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her magic by bringing the power of the creative, intuitive right brain into a left-brained world. While her degrees in engineering from Northwestern University have served her well, it's been her life and work experiences that have moved her to do her best work. She is certified by The Coaches Training Institute and credentialed by the International Coach Federation.