*Sustaining Motivation through Ups and Downs*

Perseverance is one of those words that are defined by each individual’s story. The obstacles that are behind you, like hurdles in a relay race, vary in number from person to person. The moment the gun sounds at the starting line each runner has to mentally prepare themselves that although they are physically capable of the task at hand, there is a possibility, that when they turn the bend of the track a hurdle is in the way. Hurdles are those pesky problems of life when things go wrong or a wry and stare us in the face. You can’t go around it, or avoid it but it alters your stride for a moment. Instinctively, a runner will lift their leg to stride over what is an obstacle. After successfully landing over one problem, a few more yards later there may be two, three, or four more jumps. Fatigue may set in but the jump is necessary. Likewise, as we start our day we don’t know what lies ahead whether in the office or in our personal lives and the challenge is to conquer and continue. There have been races where the hurdle even knocks down the runner but in order to reach the finish line the participant must get up. The bottom line is do you finish your race. Batons are used when each runner has done their part and the baton gets handed to the next person. Sometimes we must delegate, and utilize those who are in positions to help as long as they are heading in the same direction with the same purpose and goal. Our helpers are those we can trust; a partner, spouse, an assistant. Team up with those who can take you to your ultimate goal.

Perseverance as described in Merriam-Webster dictionary states ”the quality that allows someone to continue trying to do something even though it is difficult; continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition; the action or condition or an instance of persevering; steadfastness. Persevere is to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement.” Webster included the word “condition” in the description. The word “condition” recognizes you have to be going through something. Beginning with your first breath on the planet you will go through something. We know that there is laughter as well as crying. We know that happiness escapes through sadness. Even a bed of roses can be viewed as a bed of thorns. So conditions are a part of what it means to be living.

Most of the conditions we face tenacity is needed. Tenacity becomes “jet fuel-like” inspiration to propel us forward. Jet fuel would not work in a car. The reason it wouldn’t function in a car is that jet fuel is made of larger molecules which require higher pressures and temperatures to fully combust than gasoline. In the same way our distresses become the propellant that brings us to a place of soaring in our spirit. In order to ascend to new heights something in your life must combust. Whether it is your dreams, aspirations, or purpose in life it must ignite and keep you aflame. Perseverance is the process, it’s the journey. It is a trip that is constantly in motion.

Any situation in life including those of great distress like illness, divorce, loss and hurt, can also be the catalyst to keep you going forward. Illness is inevitable, from the smallest sniffle to the stage four cancer patient, we experience moments of disharmony in our body. We learn to persevere from a very early age with our first sore throat. Our caregivers gave us something to soothe our pains and with time recovery takes place. We understand divorce is a cutting away of the heart. There are physical and financial assets that are no longer there. Divorce divides a family not only children but in-laws also. Friends choose sides, children no longer have an aunt or uncle, but persevering through the pain often times reveals that you gave up part of yourself to another person. Instead of having a symbiotic relationship there were years of one-sided emotional tapping. The divorce which may have seemed like an unbearable pain over time becomes a celebratory liberation from a state of suffocation. Relationships between two people should be based on reciprocation. Persevering through a divorce sometimes casts a light on issues that were hidden in the relationship. The break in the union allows newness and becomes the oxygen needed to breathe again. Also, the death of a loved one who was not at optimum health is sometimes the release of a burden. Tragic losses although it rocks our foundation become guarantees that we are survivors and we can conquer the ultimate hurt. Hurts sometimes can be avoided if we listen to our inner voice but emotional boo-boos are a part of growth. Persevering onward becomes the gust of wind keeping us from falling backwards.

The challenge with all the moments that we cannot control is to not lose our character. Storms always come with a variance of devastation. The greater the storm is the greater the change. Devastations always renders us tattered. The lesson learned during any adversity is maintaining our integrity and not succumbing to our carnal nature. Through this process of perseverance we are fortified, and fortification yields strength which produces force. The same way we understand a caterpillar goes through a process to ultimately become a butterfly likewise does perseverance translate into power.

One of the enemies of perseverance is exhaustion. Some many people, women in particular are exhausted. Women have a huge responsibility to not only be the caregivers to the entire family but also, in some cases, the bread winner. Whether you say “I do” to a marriage and children or if you choose to stay single, women tend to become the auntie who gives her all. She is the worker that stays late to decorate the office, or the manager that works overtime to get the job done. Whatever comes with bringing a sense of home to the plate, here we are. If you calculate the hours and minutes in a day, how many of them are spent for someone other than yourself. You will find that the majority of time, if not all are spent caring, motivating, inspiring, cleaning, shopping and organizing everyone else’s things and problems. It is a natural role as a womb carrier but the problem lies with balance. If you allot time for others, you MUST allot time for yourself. Without those moments exhaustion creeps in like the movie “the blob” and slowly smothers everything you do. Can you persevere through those moments? The answer is absolutely, yes. However, it will delay the process of building strength and your fuel tank will be low. It is similar to attempting to jog uphill. Can you get to the top? Of course you can, but how long will it take and at what level of exertion.

Moments of meditation are one of the building blocks of perseverance. Meditation has been a song that everyone in the Western hemisphere started singing recently but has been realized for thousands of years in the East. It is a way to achieve emotional balance to put you in a place of continuity. What it really does is gives one time to spend for themselves. Meditation is not something you can drain from someone else. It is solely a river flowing uniquely for you. It cannot be siphoned or tapped. It is exclusively for that individual. In order to continue through and forge on over our impediments we need clarity of mind. Stress will cloud our thoughts. Meditation, prayer and worship are the brooms that sweep the clutter away. Perseverance is in our spirit. It is the force behind the force. Our faith is the launch pad but our rocket booster is our connection to God. There has never been a calamity or instance that I did not have need of God. Every illness, every death, every loss, every burden I have personally depended on my faith. Every dark hour needs light for only light dispels darkness. Many scientists, philosophers and educators try to contest the existence of God but even through their studies they must admit we are made up of energy. Our bond with Him, the eternal sovereign God is where our energy supply is nourished.

Prayer is the conversation between our spirits with our Creator. We must find time to include prayer in every moment that we can. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, it states to “pray without ceasing”, this is one of the tools in our daily life that sustains our connection to a God who is omniscient. When we are faced with moments of uncertainty, God’s all-knowing essence will pacify your insecurities.

Worship is one of the privileges and duties as a child of God. Worship keeps us humble and always places God first in everything. As we lift up praises and acknowledge the omnipotent God, He in turn draws closer to us. In James 4:8 it is promised that if we “draw nigh to God He will draw nigh to us”. This close proximity to a God that is all powerful will keep the flames of moving forward burning.

Are there days when we feel giving up are an option? Every day there is the potential for failure. Every day we are faced with the possibility that things may turn for the worse in whatever the circumstance. There will be challenges in every aspect of our life. We are bombarded daily with negativity and bad news. We have to consciously choose to be positive. Surround yourself with positive friends, positive quotes, positive movies, and positive music. This girds up your being like a force field of steel, strong enough to ricochet negative attitudes and “stinking thinking” that others like to emit at you like mini laser beams. Encapsulate yourself in the things that warm your heart and use your achievements, compliments, and dreams to snuggle like a blanket.

If you think of perseverance as an illustration in your mind, picture a swimmer using the butterfly stroke. In order to continue forward you must shove or scoop water out of your way. There comes a time when achieving your dreams means scoop those who impede your progress out of your way. Unapologetically, remove yourself from people who are complacent in the valley while your vision is to ascend the mountain. People who are “joysnuffers”, “dreamkillers”, or “debbie downers” may even be related to you, but their energy becomes a tangible hurdle. Perseverance is for the destined. Not everyone is interested in changing their life circumstances or building a company. Not everyone has interest in finding purpose for their life and that is okay. However, the environment of achievement must be a room with air that is breathable. It will keep you inflated with oxygenated success. Limit your time spent with those who don’t share your passion.

I attended a conference for those who were in the financial industry and one of the speakers there said something that struck me. He said that when he first started his business, the first three years he didn’t even attend a family reunion. He didn’t go to birthday parties, or out with friends, he only placed himself with those who were successful and involved with his company. His wife was also a partner of his business and she also did the same. At first I thought to myself, this is extreme. How could you not attend family gatherings? At the end of the day, that is what is the most important. I wrestled with that comment and didn’t quite agree, but his business eventually generated over 500k a year. His point was, now that he has the income, he can spend more time with family and include them on trips etc. Eventually, I came to understand, that in order to persevere through the struggles of any new company or project you have to be committed enough to immerse into the bucket of determination.

Over the years I hear the word multitask used frequently. The truth is you do what you have to do. Women in particular are wired for this. The balance of family, finance, school, work, and play are the trials we face. The juggle of womanhood is having each ball an equal weight in our lives. We don’t want to drop any of them. We watch everything rotating and moving because we are the force that keeps it all going. We catch what is falling and we hoist it back up. We as women persevere and we run to the finish line. Take time to reward yourself, to enjoy moments of silence. There is rejuvenation in stillness. Delegate tasks to others you trust to free up your time. Avoid negativity from those around you and select your inner circle with those who are like-minded, whether it is spiritually, or people who are about the same cause. Counteract exhaustion through meditation and exercise. Lastly, swim in the pool of positivity and not only will you finish your race but you will soar over your hurdles and achieve excellence in your endeavors.

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