

LET IT BE EASY

By Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D.

As a leader, it's your job *not* to accept the status quo. How can you break out of the difficulties and rise to a level of ease and prosperity?

One simple way – and it may surprise you – is *letting it be easy*.

“Letting it be easy” is a mindset that can break you out of the toil and struggle that so many leaders experience today. It's an acknowledgement that even though we can't seem to control it, sometimes things just work out. We have a breakthrough. We get a golden opportunity. The answers just appear.

It may seem that such good fortune is impossible to attract, as if we just have to wait for it to happen. To some extent, that may be true. On the other hand, you have to be willing to open up to the possibility that maybe, if you could become more trusting and relaxed, those breakthrough opportunities are all around you.

A friend and mentor of mine once taught me this:

If things are going your way, go that way.

If things aren't going your way, don't go that way.

To put this suggestion into effect, you just have to notice what's working and do more of it. Notice what's not working and do less of it. Easy.

Let's look at some examples of how letting it be easy can resolve some of the tough issues facing leaders today.

One organization was struggling with the decision of how to cut their staff, but the CEO had a strong commitment to avoiding layoffs. What was working? He had a loyal staff that was dedicated to the success of the business. What wasn't working? He was overstaffed. He decided to start by simply asking people who would accept early retirement or willingly go part-time. The response was surprising, and the CEO was able to reduce the budget without feeling like it had cost people their jobs.

Another organization similarly wanted to cut costs, but leaders were stuck in the dilemma of hard choices about where to cut for the least negative impact. What was working? This was an energetic, creative organization with lots of innovative ideas. What wasn't working? The organization simply didn't have the volume in sales to operate the way it had in the past. Finally the leaders decided to do something easy: they asked their employees for innovative

ideas about how to cut costs. The brainstorming meetings revealed very clear themes and the answer about where to cut became readily apparent.

In both cases, leaders were faced with impossible choices, and the decisions seemed very hard to make. Opening up their minds to new possibilities, they found the answers came to them. They let it be easy.

This strategy is especially helpful for making difficult decisions or finding your way through confusion. However, it's important to remember that letting it be easy is *not* an excuse to be lazy, to accept failure or to give up. Persistence and courage are still important.

Letting it be easy shouldn't be confused with:

- **Rash decisions.** Rash decisions may be easy, but they're not effective. For instance, slashing budgets across the board without thinking about the effects can be devastating. Suddenly quitting your job or closing your business is not always the best choice just because it's the easiest way out. You can let it be easy and still be thoughtful at the same time.
- **The status quo.** Sometimes the easiest thing to do is not to change at all. Just keep going along the same path. Again, that is indeed easy, but it doesn't help you achieve your vision and goals. The trick to letting it be easy is to remember what it is for which you're striving, and look for the easy ways to get there.
- **Giving up.** There's a fine line between something being challenging and something being hard. You can learn to recognize the difference. When you're feeling challenged, the results may not be easy, but they are energizing, exciting, and moving in a forward or positive direction. When something is hard, the opposite is true. Nothing is working. You feel like you're beating your head against the wall. Your intuition tells you you're going the wrong way. Letting it be easy is not about giving up. It's about recognizing the right path when you've found it.

Letting it be easy is an approach you can use to see new possibilities. You are able to work smart and let the current of your life carry you in the direction it wants to go. You can put down some of the weight of success by noticing which direction seems easy and right.

Try these questions to help you get in the mindset of letting it be easy.

- What's going your way?
- What's *not* going your way?
- What do your answers suggest about what to do next? How can you let it be easy?

Take a step back every once in awhile. Notice where you're struggling and recognize where it's easy. Even if just for a while, try going the easy way. It may be the path of success. The Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu put it simply: Easy is right.



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