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Who do you hold responsible for making you happy or successful? Do you blame the government for making life more difficult than you would like it to be? Do you blame your parents for bringing you up too strictly, or not strictly enough?

Who is responsible for your life?

Maybe someone else does carry responsibility for things that are going wrong for you. What is the best way for you to deal with that? Is it to make sure that the wrong-doer is brought to account, or is it for you to reassess your circumstances in order to work out strategies for dealing with the situation? In many cases I would suggest that the latter is more empowering for you and can lead to you being less likely in future to allow others to affect your circumstances negatively.

Another way of looking at this is that, when someone does something that affects you badly, they have had an impact on your life. To dwell on what they have done and on their culpability and perhaps their nastiness, is to give them more power over your life. To accept that what has happened has happened and deal with the new circumstances, allows you take that power back.

An example of this was a woman who was interviewed on ABC radio. She had been badly injured in a vehicle collision. She wanted to take action against the driver of the other car, but her father, a doctor, advised her that it was more important for her to concentrate on healing and that, in fact, her healing would take much less time and be more complete, if she forgot about the culpability of the other driver. She chose to take her father's advice, and her recovery from the injuries was remarkably quick.

In later posts I will be writing on the issue of the growing 'medicalisation' of our lives. I have already mentioned, in earlier posts, the phenomenon of people feeling they could not die of their 'incurable' disease while doctors were on strike. This is an example of people giving up personal responsibility for their lives (dying is part of living)¹.

There are people who are told by their doctors that they have a certain number of months to live because of cancer, who are still alive ten, twenty or thirty years later.² The main thing that stands out about these survivors, is that they refused to take the doctors' word for what was going to happen to them. They took responsibility for their lives. Often, doctors will label this 'spontaneous remission', but is it? Or is it that the doctors do not understand processes that take place outside the medical model? I acknowledge that not everyone with cancer, who doesn't want to die within the time told them by their doctors, lives longer than that time. However, I do pose the question: how helpful is it for each of us to take responsibility for our own lives in such situations? What would you do if faced with the news that you had a certain time left to live? Maybe you have been in that situation – what did you do?

Still on the subject of your health, you can take responsibility for what you eat, ensuring that you eat well and avoid too much indulgence in junk and confection.

I have written before about the importance of thinking for yourself. Thinking is important for you to be able to take responsibility for your life. If you let others do the thinking for you, you give up much of your power. I will be exploring this further in a future post.

I have suggested before that your ability to respond to the world and thus take responsibility for what happens to you, depends to a large extent on your image of yourself and your place in the world. What does it say about a person, that they feel that someone else should be made accountable for all their woes? And what sort of self-image does someone have who refuses to make someone else accountable?

If you buy something from a shop and it turns out to be faulty when you get it home, you should be able to take it back for a refund or replacement. Similarly, if what you bought is not suited for the purpose for which it was sold. For example, if you buy a vacuum cleaner advertised as suitable for sucking up liquids and, when you use it to do just that, the motor shorts out, the machine is either faulty or not suitable for the purpose for which it was advertised. This is a straightforward situation.

If you give birth to a baby with Down's Syndrome, do you hold the doctors to account because they failed to detect this early enough for you to have had a choice about aborting or carrying to term? Your answer may be made more complex if I tell you that there are doctors who give women carrying a Down's foetus certain nutritional supplements and the baby is subsequently born with no symptoms of the condition.³ Should you doctors be held accountable because they did not know about this possibility?

1. See, for instance, the book *A Mother's Lasting Gift*, by Joyce & Barry Vissell, Ramira Publishing, California 2011
2. Two examples are Dr Ian Gawler (a vet) who was diagnosed with 'incurable' bone cancer in 1975 and Petria King with Myeloid Leukaemia in 1983.
3. See for instance www.doctoryourself.com/turkel.html for a summary of nutritional treatment for the symptoms of Down's Syndrome.

[to be continued in next post]