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Let Go to Get Ahead By Dr Lynda Wee

The Ingenious Monkey Trap is an innovative method for catching a monkey by using a single coconut. First, the hunters make a small hole in a coconut and fill it with baits such as sweet rice and nuts. Then, using ropes, they chain the coconut to a tree. On the other end of the coconut, they cut a tiny hole just big enough for the monkey to insert its hand but too small for it to remove its fist when clenched full with food.

The aroma of the food lures the monkey to the coconut. It reaches inside the coconut and greedily grabs as much food as it can. However, when it tries to withdraw, it finds that its hand is trapped. In panic, it starts to scream. The hunters emerge to catch it.

What held the monkey captive? Oddly, it can free itself by releasing its hold on the food. But, greed and fear imprisoned the monkey.

Are we like this monkey? Are we trapped because we do not want to let go of what we deem important? The power to free ourselves lies in our hands, but our refusal to release whatever “food” binds us. The hold we have on anything at all is the precise hold that holds us.

When trapped in a situation, it may not be obvious to us that it is we, not the situation itself, who are responsible for it. It is easier to blame the coconut for being the source of our predicament, and miss out entirely on the decisive role our hold plays in fuelling our own

misery. The moment we allow any outcome to become more important than who we are, in that same moment we imprison ourselves.

Can we let go of our ego, power and wealth? Do we over-consume things that do not matter as much to us anymore? Do we over-stay in our positions despite the better people around that can take up our work? Do we cling on to bad relationships or habits where its only purpose is to traumatize us?

Here are 4 ways to help us let go to get ahead:

1. Challenging Status Quo

Most of us refuse to let go of solutions that worked in the past which may contribute little today. We are also holding on to our ego and pride. Manage our ego, be curious and open-minded to other ways.

2. Knowing Self

Know who we are and the roles that energise us. Be authentic to who we are. When we try to imitate someone else, we are at best a follower, never a leader. Play up on our uniqueness.

3. Staying Focus

Be purposeful. Ask “WHY”. Say “NO” to distractors, things that we tend to gather along the way but do nothing to aid us on our journey to our desired destination. For example, as we hike up a mountain, we may pick and keep objects we come across as keepsakes. But little by little, they add up and the extra weight does

nothing to help us reach the peak. Only by getting rid of them, are we in a better state to complete our climb.

4. Managing time

Time is what we need to do things. Time is also finite. Hence, we need to spend our time wisely. When asked to do something, the focus should never be on how much we can earn. If we say YES to money, we would have just allowed money to determine what we should be learning and performing. Innovation is seldom well understood by mediocre minds. Its starting point is low or even no revenue but by being possible game-changers, its returns are huge! If we judge it by its yield from the very beginning, we would have rejected it.

Focus on doing things that align to our authentic selves and capitalize on our strengths. When our hearts do the work, the output is truly remarkable! Use time to hone our authenticity. When the result produced is outstanding, the profit shall then appear.

Are we holding on to the right things that make us great? The fear of the unknown makes letting go never easy. Yet, every exit is but an entrance to try new things. Exit and enter well. Let go of mediocrity to get ahead with greatness.

“The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.”

John Maynard Keynes