

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus *n.* an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

SETTLING FOR LESS **Are you sabotaging your chance for fulfillment?**

by Nina Durfee

Do you settle for less than you want?

Do you tell yourself "this is good enough" when really it is not?

Sometimes settling for less than ideal is a matter of simple practicality. But if settling has become a default response for you -- if you consistently put yourself or your wishes, opinions and preferences last -- you may be the very thing that keeps you stuck in a loop of dissatisfaction. Never fear. You *can* break free of the loop.

Why do we settle for less? Any number of feelings, beliefs or habits may move us to settle. Could be a feeling of guilt, justified or not. Maybe fear of being wrong or lack of confidence in our own knowledge or worthiness. Perhaps we're leery of potential confrontation. Whatever the reason, settling can cause great dissatisfaction in a number of circumstances and areas of life.

Commitment. Have you ever joined a committee or started a project or promised to be somewhere/sometime because you felt you "should," only to regret it later? What moved you to commit in the first place? If you committed out of a sense of duty rather than a sense of eager anticipation to participate, you compromised from the get-go. When you consider whether to commit or not to commit, listen for the word "should." If you choose based on "should," you set yourself up to be a victim of disappointment and resentment. Choosing from a place of "should" says you place greater trust in someone else's opinion than your own. You sell yourself short.

When faced with a decision to commit or not to commit, examine your own priorities. What will this commitment take away from me or take me away from? Will my time, energy and values be served or imposed upon? What will be gained, and by whom? What will be lost, and by whom? What is critical for my own well-being? Listen to your gut. If it feels good, do it! If not, be like the athletic shoe guys and "just say no!"

Relationships. Do you settle for your partner's (or your parents' or your children's or your boss's or your friend's) ideas, desires and opinions at the expense of your own? Respect and acceptance are cornerstones of fulfilling relationships, but the street runs both ways. It's possible to accept and respect another without forsaking your own values and priorities. By not standing for what's crucial to your own well-being you, in effect, invite others to disrespect you and not accept you for who you are.

Health. Do you settle for less in ways that compromise your physical health? Have you ever justified an unhealthy snack because you "don't have time" to fix something better? News flash: Eating better may help you live longer. You'll have more time in the long run if you spend your time wisely now.

Do you get bored eating the same meals over and over because you "don't know how" to fix new and different things? Ask a friend to join you in a new food-learning adventure. Set your own parameters (ethnic, whole food, raw, cooked, indoor, outdoor), find a class or a cookbook, and have fun with it!

Do you sacrifice balanced nutrition when you're by yourself because there's "no sense in going to all that trouble just for me"? What more important place and time to honor your own values than when you're alone? That's the *exact* time you have full control! If you don't deserve even your own respect, what basis will others have to respect you?

Communication. How often do you hold back your thoughts because "he's really smart, he must be right"? What's the risk inherent in disagreement? Is it fear of being wrong? Not wanting to muddy the waters? Worry about rejection? Compared to the imagined discomfort, sacrifice in the moment may feel insignificant. But over time it grows and festers. Suppression compresses discomfort. Expression releases discomfort.

Disagreement need not be antagonistic or righteous. Disagreement from a place of curiosity or exploration can be friendly and fun, and may be educational for all concerned. By withholding your point of view, you may be robbing yourself and others of a shift in awareness that could offer a whole new possibility.

Business. Settling for less success in business happens when we use other businesses as a measuring stick. The fact is, just as no two people are alike, no two businesses are alike. Products, talent, experience, resources, geographical location and marketing techniques (to name just a few things) vary significantly. When we use the competition as our measuring stick, the results are skewed.

What's *your* business mission, purpose and vision? If your business success falls short of what you want, chances are you're not living up to your own standards. What aspects of your business do you feel good about? How are your mission and purpose alive and evident in those areas? What elements of your business need improvement? Are your mission and purpose neglected in those areas?

When you use the competition to measure your own success, you set yourself up to feel inferior, not good enough. To get a true measure of success, your own business is the only fair comparison. What was I then? What am I now? What do I intend to be tomorrow? Don't deny the success or creativity or cleverness of the competition. Instead, look to it as inspiration to tap your own creativity and go *yourself* one better.

Its all about values. Settling and compromise are neither right nor wrong. What matters is adherence to your authentic values. If you compromise your principles, you lose integrity. When settling is your default response, you're out of integrity with yourself and you give your power away. There's nothing wrong with settling, as long as you do it by design, and not by default.

New inventions, discoveries and revelations are not hatched from settling for the status quo. If you want change, set a different standard for *yourself*. Don't settle for someone else's opinion or method or belief or judgment before you examine the worthiness of your own. Depending on someone else for your satisfaction puts the power in *their* hands. Accept responsibility for your own happiness, and settling won't be an issue.

Be easy with it. Play with it. Notice and practice. Don't assume the waiter's choice of table is the best for you. Ask for the table that appeals to you. Take an extra moment to consciously choose what you eat, what you say, what you commit to. When you hold an opposing opinion, speak up. Welcome an educational discussion and eagerly anticipate the resolution, whatever it may be.

To Settle or Not to Settle 3 Questions to Help You Decide

1. What do I have to gain by settling?
2. What do I have to lose by settling?
3. How will it feel to stand up for what I want?

7 Practical Steps to Stop Settling for Less and Get What You Want

1. **Eliminate mental clutter.** Mental clutter fractures our attention and keeps us from focused action. Quiet the clamoring voices that say your opinion doesn't matter, or you don't deserve what you really want, or it's too hard, or you're not good enough. Those thoughts keep you meek and weak. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and blow them away with a big exhale.
2. **Know what you want.** From a space of mental clarity, define what you want and accept that it's okay to want it.

3. **Know why you want it.** How will it feel to stand for what you want? What core value will it honor? How will honoring what's true for you change your posture, your breath, your demeanor?
4. **Write it down.** Writing it down opens the door to inner and outer awareness. Make a list of your core values. What's critical to your mental, physical and emotional well-being? Now make two columns, one labeled "Settle" and the other labeled "Take a Stand." Which action will honor each value? Write each value in the column that will honor it best.
5. **Be aware.** Throughout the day, read or remember the 2-column list, and pay attention to what shows up to support it: an opportunity to speak up; a willing listener; a circumstance that offers a new level of satisfaction.
6. **Act.** Consider the choices before you. Be selective. Act with intention, not by habit or default.
7. **Enjoy!** Action *always* produces results. If the outcome isn't exactly what you anticipated, what did you learn? Which of the previous 6 steps will you ramp up next time for greater satisfaction? Enjoy the power of steering your own experience.

1 to Grow On: Gratitude perpetuates the process of fulfillment. Acknowledge what you've learned in the process. Express thanks to those who played with you along the way. Appreciate the process that helped you steer your course. Thank yourself for stepping up to the plate!

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