

Tedious Task Transformation

“Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.” Zen proverb

It’s easy to get numb to the pressures of daily life. In fact, we might not notice the pressure at all because it’s always there, operating like a background noise that we have long ago tuned out. The big events can feel so much more rewarding. The Proving Mindset loves an opportunity to strut its stuff! On the journey to our true self – which some call enlightenment – it’s natural to look for the big moments that tell us we are there, that we have arrived. Yet, as the proverb says above, it’s always chop wood and carry water. In other words, daily life continues. There is no there, there. There is only now. What matters most is how you go about the tasks in daily life – those tedious tasks that we take for granted.

The tedious tasks of daily life can also be gist for our transformation. It’s all in how you see it.

For this exercise, the purpose is to use the pressures of everyday life to provide many, many opportunities to use shift your mindset from Proving to Improving and to use The Flywheel to Raise Your Pressure Threshold.

I started doing this exercise for myself when I realized that the task of unloading my car after a day at Mystic Waters was getting me down. My overreacting thoughts went like this: “We should just sell it. I’m so sick of having to unload my car every day. I should just quit getting groceries and picking up the mail.” See how silly those thoughts are? As if selling Mystic Waters would somehow make me no longer get mail and need groceries! That’s when I decided to take the approach of “in unloading my car”, I would raise my pressure threshold. As a result, what had been a source of nagging discomfort became a practice field – and a source of steady joy.

Somewhere in your life, you have a tedious task that gets you down. I invite you to take the approach of “IN doing the task”, practice becoming more of the true YOU.

For this exercise, choose a tedious task that is embedded in your life, and yet something you would rather not have to do. Examples:

- Unloading groceries from the car
- Vacuuming the house
- Organizing closet or drawers
- Cleaning up a spill
- Washing dishes



- Ironing clothes
- Getting dressed in the morning
- Filing bills and papers
- Preparing everyday meals
- Folding laundry
- Packing for a trip

Step 1: Commit to apply the Flywheel to Raise Your Pressure Threshold to this task for at least a week.

Step 2: Each time you do the task, take yourself through the Flywheel 5 Steps.

Step 3: Congratulation yourself every time you do it. Allow yourself the satisfaction of doing small task well.

Here's an example from my car unloading experience.

1. Look at piles of things to be carried in and read my negative positive pole. It's typically a steady 3 or 4.
2. Let the things tell me how to carry them. For example, if there are a lot of packages from the mail, along with eggs from my chicken coop and several bags of groceries, is this a 1, 2 or 3 trip load? What can be carried with a handle? What can be carried in my arms? Just this action takes the NPP from a 3-4 to a 1 or 2.
3. The main "tool" I'm reaching for in this game is "puzzle working", as well as curiosity, listening and patience.
4. Instead of seeing it as one big pile of stuff, I think through the order of how I will pick each piece up, and step by step, stack everything in my arms.
5. Finally, at EACH STEP, I give myself a little nod, allowing myself to feel the endorphin kick for the one thing done. I keep doing this at every step, until I've put everything away. Groceries in the pantry, mail in its place, packages opened, boxes broken down, etc.

Just reading all of that might feel tedious! However, there are many benefits.

- First, it anchors the Flywheel into my practice in a low stakes environment.
- Second, it gives me many repetitions in each load. That's a lot of endorphins!
- Third, it takes a tedious task and transforms it into something that is incredibly fun and useful. Finally, make fewer trips with fewer broken eggs!
- Fourth, it has made its way into almost every other daily life practice, which has lifted my mood in many domains.