

Embarrassed to Empowered: Owning Your Growth

How often do you pay attention to your inner voice? Hopefully, you listen when your inner voice is an affirming and encouraging one. However, it's also important to consider your voice when it's a cautionary or teaching one.

The latter is not always easy to do, especially if the caution or lesson points out a perceived flaw or highlights a nagging need. Examples of this may be *"I should save for retirement..."* or *"I need to end this relationship..."* In those cases, we sometimes may try to ignore our inner voice.



Shame and embarrassment often keep us from listening to the messages shared by our inner voice. We think, *"I should have started saving for retirement years ago and I'm ashamed at how little I've done..."* or *"I've always told everyone that my relationship is great, so I'm embarrassed to admit that it's not..."* While these thoughts and feelings may be real, giving too much attention to them can further immobilize us.

Instead, let's use our inner voice for greater self-awareness and growth. Let's use its messages to motivate ourselves to take action that will move us from feeling embarrassed to feeling empowered. This requires emotional maturity to do, but doing so opens the door for enhanced feelings of self-confidence and personal satisfaction.

There are several things you can do to move from feeling embarrassed to empowered, such as:

Own your story.

Resist the tendency to compare your situation with others—whether it be another person's retirement portfolio, relationship, etc. Resist the tendency to blame or obsess about the origins of your situation. This is your life story—own it. What matters most is that you honestly acknowledge where you are in this moment and that you are committed to writing a new chapter.

Embrace your humanity.

All humans have flaws and make mistakes. Do you accept that part of the human condition for yourself? If not, perhaps it's time to give yourself—and your past—some grace. This could mean forgiving yourself and practicing greater self-compassion. Or it could mean more fully embracing your imperfection and your human ability to change and grow.

Believe in yourself.

Once you've shifted your focus from your past to your future, the next step is to become your own biggest cheerleader. Give yourself affirmations such as, *"I can do this!"*, *"I am financially responsible."*, or *"I am healthy and worthy."* Focus on your talents, your potential, and your commitment to your development.

Be courageous.

If you already knew and did everything, there'd be no room to grow. Growth often involves the unfamiliar, the uncertain, and the unexplored. Navigating those things requires courage. It requires the courage to both hope and act. You often have to envision something better for yourself, even when you can't quite see what it looks like. And you have to do what's needed to make it a reality, even when you're not 100% sure what, when, and how to do it.

Be smart.

Take the necessary steps to help yourself be successful in your growth effort. Set concrete goals so that you stay focused and can measure your progress. Explore and use available resources. Surround yourself with individuals who will be supportive and can help you as you grow.

It's easy to feel embarrassed by things we did not do yesterday. Yet it's just as easy to feel empowered by doing what we can today. Appreciate the experiences and lessons of your former self and embrace the worth and potential of your present (and ever growing) self!



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