**Starting-Over Guidesheet #10**

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**Getting the Help You Need**

***Judith Couchman***

I descend from a long list of “do-it-yourselfers.” Probably because many of my paternal ancestors were farmers, low-income, and rural Germans turned American Midwesterners, they worked with their hands. They didn’t hire other people to accomplish what they could do themselves—even if sometimes it wasn’t executed well. They took pride in their ingenuity and independence. They solved problems by pulling up their proverbial boot straps.

Even though I don’t fit my ancestors’ profile, I still think I should “do everything myself.” Trust me; it’s not that I’m frugal. It’s more about guilt and pride. I feel guilty when I can’t solve a problem myself. I think I’m not being strong and self-reliant. I also think I’m “giving away” money I could use for something else, something more important or self-gratifying to me. And privately I often think I’m as smart as or smarter than the person offering me advice. (Aren’t I awful?)

While self-reliance can be positive and admirable, lately I’ve realized how I can morph independence into stupidity. I don’t ask for help until I reach a crisis point. The problem looms so large, or I become so disgusted with myself, I’m forced to reach out. Then I might even *pay* for someone’s assistance, but only because I’m shoved against a wailing wall.

I need to change my reluctance to ask or pay for assistance.

I’m working on this.

**The Wisdom of Assistance**

Asking for help can embody wisdom. When we try to do everything ourselves, we can hinder a project or exacerbate a personal challenge. We might isolate and obsess. We can get stuck and give up. Especially when we’re starting over, we could use the advice, expertise, and helping hands of other people. With as much information that’s available today, it can be downright ridiculous to “go it on your own.” Scripture says there is wisdom in counselors, that two can be better than one.

Still, getting assistance depends on your work style, personality, and resources. Some of us thrive on creating with a group. Others work best alone, after gathering up information. Many of us live with limited resources. Whatever your circumstances, these guidelines could help you decide when to ask for volunteers or hire experts. Asking for help could be crucial when:

* *Doing it all hinders your most important work.* Maybe you need an occasional housekeeper so you can meet your deadline. Or someone to run errands. Or an office organizer.
* *The project needs quality, but you can’t achieve it.* An amateurish website won’t convince visitors you’re a professional. A poor house repair can wind up worse than no repair at all.
* *You need better ideas. Or to test your ideas.* Gathering together a group to listen, input, and recommend solutions can proffer ideas, creativity, and objectivity that guides you for days, months, or years. You can take what works best for you and leave the rest behind.
* *The returns will grow larger than what you invest.* Paying for assistance can yield more followers, income, or personal sanity. A mailing list, agent, or part-time marketer could boost revenue.
* *The expertise exceeds your desire or knowledge.* You could learn to fix the furnace, but do you want to? If your nutritional plan isn’t abating anxiety and depression, you’ll probably need the help of a doctor and/or therapist.
* *You’re drowning emotionally, mentally, physically, or spiritually.* At this point, you’re in trouble and can’t help yourself. Someone else needs to reach in and pull you out. Consider a spiritual director or counselor.

Maybe I’m preaching to the choir, but perhaps somebody “out there” needs this reminder: It’s okay to get help.

**Thinking Creatively**

I realize money can bar us from getting help. We simply can’t afford to pay someone to “pick up the slack.” I’m learning, though, that with creative thinking, we can find ways to get assistance, even without financial resources. Many people will trade, negotiate, extend terms, or offer free services. Consider these ideas:

* *Ask for volunteers.* People who know you might volunteer their time or expertise. Sometimes even people who don’t know you well, but follow what you do. They take pleasure in assisting a person or cause they believe in. Create an atmosphere that pays them with your gratitude and their satisfaction.
* *Barter for services.* Exchange your expertise for someone else’s expertise. Maybe someone will write your promotional copy if you help organize her small event or babysit his children.
* *Create an exchange group.* Gather a group of people with similar interests. Share ideas and referrals that help everyone in the group.
* *Talk informally to friends.* Unless you’re known as a “user,” most friends will offer free advice related to their expertise, and sometimes their services.
* *Find free services.* A hallmark of the changing business/ministry world is that the Internet, large companies, and others offer freebies. You’ll be surprised how much information and “stuff” you can utilize at no cost.
* *Hire college students.* Many of them need internships and your project/business/ministry might fit their needs—as well as yours. They get college credits and work for free, or for a minimal cost.
* *Arrange for commissions.* Maybe people you need can work on commission. These workers receive a percentage of the financial receipts they generate. They work for free until the money arrives.
* *Develop donors.* Even if you’re a for-profit business, some people might donate money to help you start over. For no money in return, or a later return on their investment.
* *Ask for prayer partners.* Just as you’re called to your endeavor, they feel called to pray for people and projects. Keep them updated on needs, progress, successes, and failures. Pray for God’s provision.

Definitely, other ideas exist for getting the assistance you need. And believe this: You don’t have to do it all yourself!

**The Help You Need**

1. What help could make a difference for your sanity and success?
2. Do you face barriers to getting this help? If so, what are they?
3. How can you overcome these barriers?
4. How can you wisely choose the people you need?
5. How can you ensure good use of time and finances to obtain this help?
6. How can you evaluate whether this help yields the benefits you need?
7. Create a plan to get the help you need.

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