

Overcome 8 Common Limiting Beliefs That May Keep You Stuck

By Victoria Gigante



“Smile, breathe, and go slowly.” ~Thich Nhat Hanh

For almost three years, I’d been living out of a suitcase, relocating every three to six months. To some people, this lifestyle sounds adventurous and exciting. But anyone who’s ever lived like this understands how exhausting and scary it can be: I felt unsettled in my career, unhappy in my relationships, and completely alone in the world.

While I knew I was unhappy and that I wanted to make a change, the truth is that I felt completely stuck in the lifestyle I’d chosen for myself. When I brainstormed about what was preventing me from taking action, this is the list I came up with:

- I lack motivation.
- I procrastinate too much.
- I don’t have time.
- I don’t have enough resources.
- It’s too late to change.
- I have too many responsibilities.
- I have no clue who I am.
- I have no clue where to start.

It was then that I realized the only thing preventing me from making a change was a long list of limiting beliefs.

So let's explore how these eight limiting beliefs keep you (and me!) stuck:

1. I lack motivation.

Do you really, or are you burned out? This type of burnout usually indicates that you are in an environment that leaves you feeling drained and unsupported. When this happens, you may even start to call yourself "lazy."

In my case, it took so much energy to get through the day and to figure out where I was going next that the thought of making changes was exhausting.

Examine your external environment: What situations and people are draining you? Do you feel supported? Do you really lack motivation, or are you just burned out?

2. I procrastinate too much.

Procrastination is a symptom, much like a fever, stomachache, or headache, and it usually boils down to one thing: fear.

For me, it was the fear of stepping away from the freedom I thought I had in a lifestyle with minimal attachments. It was also the fear of failing, of not having all the answers, and of making the wrong decision.

What is your procrastination a symptom of? What are you afraid of?

3. I don't have time.

A quote by Lao Tzu says, "Time is a created thing. To say 'I don't have time,' is like saying, 'I don't want to.'" Perhaps the real issue is that you don't really want to change.

There was certainly a part of me that didn't want to change; there is something very freeing about having so little stuff. I also liked traveling and seeing the world. But once I clarified what I did and didn't like about my situation, I was clearer about why I'd actually take the time to make changes.

What parts of your current situation do you like, and how are they affecting your desire to move forward?

4. I don't have enough resources.

Focusing on external resources, like money, credentials, and skills, is another tactic we use to give ourselves permission to remain stuck. But lasting change starts internally, with things like energy, willpower, clarity, and passion; and as your internal resources start to grow, your external resources will naturally start to grow as well.

At the time, all of my internal resources were completely depleted, and as a result, I wasn't using my external resources effectively or efficiently. As I watched my external resources slowly drain, I became more internally drained. So, it became a vicious cycle.

What in your external environment leaves your internal environment feeling uninspired, unsupported, and lifeless? Are you using your external resources effectively?

5. It's too late to change.

Focusing on some arbitrary time and date by which you're supposed to have accomplished X, Y, and Z means neglecting to enjoy the amazing journey unfolding right in front of your eyes. After all, who created this timeline by which you're supposed to live your life anyway?

In my situation, seeing friends getting married, having children, and buying homes left me feeling more and more trapped by my current situation. Eventually I realized that the real frustration was that I was spinning my wheels in directions that didn't even make sense. I didn't want what my friends had, but I didn't want what I had either, so I felt like I was just wasting time.

Do you hold yourself to an arbitrary timeline by which you're supposed to have accomplished X, Y, and Z? Do you compare yourself to others? What do you really want to change in your life, and what baby steps can you take in that direction?

6. I have too many responsibilities.

If you feel like you have so many responsibilities that you can't manage to carve out time to start changing your life, then chances are your "responsibilities" have become an excuse for not taking care of yourself.

At the time, I was taking on way too much emotional responsibility for the people around me, and it was leaving me feeling empty and lost. I was neglecting my own needs, and I was neglecting to take responsibility for my own life.

Who and what are consuming your time and energy? Are these people and situations really your responsibility? How can you start to take responsibility for your own life?

7. I have no clue who I am.

If you feel like you don't know who you are, then chances are you've been neglecting yourself for a very long time.

When I finally stopped long enough to ask myself why I felt stuck, I quickly realized I'd never taken the time to really figure out who I am or what I wanted in life; instead, I was just bouncing from thing to thing, hoping something would stick.

What do you want in life? Where do you want to see yourself in 6 months? A year? What are your values and goals?

8. I have no clue where to start.

Depending on how you chose to look at it, not knowing where to start can either be liberating or completely overwhelming. But it's usually just an excuse. If there is no clear place to start, then there is no wrong place to start!

I developed a daily practice and started spending time alone each day exploring and rediscovering who I am. I tried new things until I uncovered what I wanted, and from this awareness I created an action plan for change.

Start somewhere—anywhere. Will you commit to spending time alone, each and every day, to explore these limiting beliefs? Because when it comes to making changes in your life, all you need to do is “Smile, breathe, and go slowly.”

Photo by Francis Ritualo