

K.I.S.S.

Most people know what K.I.S.S. means – it's the shorthand for Keep It Simple, Stupid.

Actually, I'm not comfortable calling myself or anyone else Stupid, so in my mind, it's Keep It Simple, Silly. We all are silly when we complicate things.

It popped into my mind a number of times over the last several days, when I found myself over-thinking situations and decisions that really didn't need anything more than a commitment to the simple and a quick check of the obvious.

For a lot of my life, though, "simple" and "obvious" were neither, and were not actually features of my day-to-day journey. I used to call whatever was "simple" *simplistic*. And I used to call whatever was "obvious" *naïve*. So old habits of thinking do recur and tend to re-route travel away from the simple and obvious. Now, though, such excursions down the back alleys of my own thinking are most often opportunities to learn new shortcuts to the direction I want to go, not to hang around and revisit the old haunts.

Here's the "simple" and "obvious" K.I.S.S. I recently received. Not my first K.I.S.S., to be sure, but one of the best yet:

The only way to become insecure is to think about the life drama of me, myself and I. When I'm not thinking about myself personally, I am naturally secure, and can respond to anything in life with confidence, good cheer and a clear head.

This is hardly new news and it certainly isn't the first time I've written it down or seen it written down by others. But the neat thing about a K.I.S.S. is that something familiar comes to you in Technicolor, with special effects and glorious intensity as though you'd never known it before.

So the message that zoomed at me and filled the screen of my mind was "REALLY get yourself off your mind because you are always fine, except when you think you're not." Again, I'm sure there are people reading this thinking, "Ho-hum. What's the big deal? Everybody knows that." Sure, everybody does know that. But does everybody know how to K.I.S.S. and actually live that way? What would *that* mean?

A flood of implications came to me:

- It would mean not worrying about making mistakes and whether you're being judged for them.
- It would mean not being afraid to ask for help when you need it for fear others would think you should know something you don't know.

- It would mean not letting anyone else's negativity or fear diminish or tarnish an idea that resonates with your own truth and common sense.
- It would mean recognizing when feelings like guilt, fear, remorse, resentment or worry are at play in your thinking and turning your back on any ideas that are offshoots of such negative feelings, regardless of how compelling they might be.
- It would mean listening to other people without wondering what it means for or about you.

What all that adds up to is certainty that all your thoughts are your own, and that only your thoughts can produce your life experience and only your thoughts can change your life experience. No one else can change it for you. No change in circumstances can change it. No new stuff can change it. Moving around a multitude of external contingencies won't make any difference in anyone's life, but one new thought can revolutionize everything.

I started considering all of this while working with a group of people who had each written "goals" for a program they were in, and were now wondering how the heck they would achieve them. For most of these people, these were not new goals. They were goals they had set before, or goals they had had their whole lives in some cases, goals they really wished would come true, but goals they had failed to achieve and sustain thus far. So now, they were stating them again, and thinking deep down that once more they would likely fail to achieve them. They had the notion that "hope" means keeping your goals in mind, regardless of how many times you've failed, because you never know, something could change. They were scanning life all the time, looking to glimpse that mysterious "something" of change out there, at last coming towards them.

Between them and their goals were minefields bristling with thoughts of previous failures, of their shortcomings as human beings, of things that were wrong with them, of people who had hurt them or people they had hurt, of fears they felt they could not overcome, of past traumas they couldn't stop recalling again and again. Every time their freshly re-conceived goals shimmered in the distance of their minds, like a destination on the horizon, they would see the road leading up to them peppered with things that could blow up in their face, and they would lose hope, feel sorry for themselves and stay put.

K.I.S.S. It's ALL made up. The goals and the minefields *both* are our own thoughts, products of our unlimited capacity to make up what we're doing now and what to do next and what to think about what we're doing.

K.I.S.S. We all spend much of our precious lives either trying to pick our way through these thought-created minefields or disarm the thought-created mines without getting blown up. When we're not doing that, we spend time regretting that we haven't moved closer to our thought-created goals and sometimes resorting to thought-created temporary

external fixes to induce the imaginary experience either of having done so or of not caring whether we have.

For example, to get to his goal of staying free from substances, one man had decided to leave family, friends, home, pets, work, everything behind to “keep from being bugged by all the things that have bothered me and brought me down every time I started to feel better.” And yet, no sooner was that decision made than the man was beset by insecurity about being alone in a new place and having to “start over” without anything familiar on which to rely. He was suddenly flooded with frightening thinking. The person had changed things, but had not changed his thinking or understanding. He just filled his life with new things and it looked to him as though they immediately started to bug and bother him and he wasn’t making any progress at all.

For example, to get to her goal of not giving in to anger and upset every day, one woman had decided she had to stop working with people altogether and find a job that would keep her solitary, away from potentially upsetting interactions with others. As soon as she reached that conclusion, she was overwhelmed with resentment that she had to make so many sacrifices in her life just to avoid anger and couldn’t have a “normal” life like other people. She had resigned herself to an arbitrary rule that might keep her from lashing out and getting in fights. But she was still troubled by angry thoughts and did not find peace of mind by turning them on herself or on life. She felt no better.

K.I.S.S. Peace and contentment do not come from outside of ourselves. Peace and contentment are states of mind generated from within our own minds, just as bother and upset are states of mind generated from within our own minds. The struggle we engage in to get ourselves out of whatever trouble we’re in is a phantom battle, one thought being set upon another by our ability to think about and react to our own thoughts.

K.I.S.S. Thought is a wonderful power that can bring us all kinds of experiences, but none of them last longer than the thought with which they arrived.

K.I.S.S. Thoughts form and shimmer and float through our minds like the bubbles my grandson creates with his big “magical” bubble wand. Some are beautiful. Some are misshapen or strange. Some last a long time and hang tantalizingly in the air, or climb towards the sky, keeping us enthralled. Some burst before they even form. Some are huge, and pick up smaller ones and make big bubble groups as they float. Some cluster together and cling to the wand, as if reluctant to fly. Some are tiny and dart quickly away. Some disappear with a pop! Some dissolve slowly. Some are drippy and heavy and fall to the ground in a splat.

K.I.S.S. As long as we know the wand is in our hands, the bubbles are all endlessly fascinating, and there are no bad bubbles. Just the bubbles we remember making, the bubbles we just made, and the bubbles we haven’t made yet.

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