

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

November 4, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

7 Things to Do When Haters Tell You "You Can't"

One of the most important lessons that I have learned in life is that the "virtue is always in the middle of two vices." For example, the virtue of humility is in between the vices of pride and self-hate. The virtue of forgiveness is in the middle of the vice of holding a grudge and the vice of enabling. I like to think of living a virtuous life mentally as shooting at a soccer goal. If I shoot too far to the left I miss and if I miss to far to the right I miss. In order to score, I have to hit the center.

Applying this to my life has made a world of difference, because growing up I was always told not to do point out my good qualities in order to avoid and this was one of the things that led me to suffer from depression. In counseling, I finally learned that there was nothing virtuous in not acknowledging my talents. After all God had given them to me, who was I to deny them or not use them.

Learning to handle others' negative comments has helped me grow in many amazing ways thanks to the grace of God. The following reflection on how to avoid self-hate comes from my reflections on an article entitled "Seven Things to Do When Haters Tell You 'You Can't'". It was written by Wesley Baines. My comments will be in the normal font and quotes will be in the bold font.

When the haters start hating, do you know how to react? Now, we're not talking about the Merriam-Webster definition of "hate." This is intentionally unconstructive, mean behavior that's intended to cause someone pain or anger, and it's made up of two parts jealousy, one-part judgmental attitude, and one-part pettiness.

Do I know how to react? I do now. Having a plan can be the difference between life and death. This is why we practice fire and tornado drills in schools. When someone comes at me in a negative way, I strive to remain calm and to analyze the person's argument to see if there is anything valid in it. If it is valid I try to use what they are saying to improve and if not then I discard it.

But the reality is this: haters can only hurt you as much as you let them. Their words are carefully designed to get under your skin and make you lash out, but you're not going to do that. Instead, you're going to read these 7 things to do when the haters tell you "you can't," and you're going to learn how to handle the hate like a boss.

"The loudest person in the room is the weakest," is a phrase that near and dear to my heart. A person who is confident in oneself does not have to yell or scream. The more vicious a person is in their verbal language the more scared they are. They are acting out of fear like a cornered tiger. A person is attacking me, and not my argument does so because they often cannot think of a good refute for my argument.

1. TAKE IT AS A SIGN OF SUCCESS

Want to know one of the best ways of dealing with haters? Let their jabs encourage you, rather than taking the wind out of your sails, by seeing them as signs of your own success. Haters hate for a very particular set of reasons. They're insecure, and your successes and victories remind them of their perceived failures. They're comparison junkies who can only feel confident if they're the best one in the room. The moment you step in, though, with even the tiniest accomplishment that they deem better than their own, they start tearing you down.

The non-Christian world is a world of competition. When you do not believe in an afterlife or a loving God, life becomes more about who has the most toys or fame. For Christians, we know that fame and fortune are not that great because they will fade away. A person attacking me has made the mistake to assume that I am interested in winning their game of "he with the most toys wins." Why should I be upset if someone thinks I am doing well at a game that I am not even playing? I should feel good that they are assuming that I have certain talents and gifts that make it look like I would be good at their game.

Before you let it get to you, though, think about what we've just talked about. These people are basically saying, "I think you're better than me." Now that you know their reasoning, you'll be able to hear that statement in everything they say and do!

"Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain but it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving." – Dale Carnegie

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November 11, 2018

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2. IGNORE IT

Got a hater on your back that's particularly hateful? Is their rhetoric a little too toxic for you to see it as the compliment that it is? It's time to ignore. This doesn't mean passively ignoring your hater. If you've got someone who is really getting under your skin, trying to pretend like it doesn't affect you is only going to make things worse. Instead, deal with the feelings by confronting them. Acknowledge that this particular hater is upsetting you. And then click the block button. That's right—cut off communication. Get this person and their negativity out of your face and out of your life. If they truly have nothing constructive to say, they've no business saying anything to you.

A wise priest once told me that 30% of the people will love you. 30% of the people will hate you and 30% won't care about you. (He never could tell me about the extra 10%). The important thing to remember is that Jesus still wants us to love those who persecute you.

You take away a hater's direct line to you, and you take away their power. Eventually, they'll go wander off into the wasteland of emotional trolls, seeking another target. You, however, will be hater-free and happy.

I have discovered in my life that there are a few people who only felt validated when they were able to make me unhappy. In the mixed up mind, the idea became that if I got upset about what they said it about me then I gave them proof that I cared about them. They seemed to feed off of my negative response to them. If I instead ignored them, they would eventually walk away and try to find someone else to complain about.

3. FIND THE LOVERS

Haters got you down? Go find the lovers who will build you up! For every person out there who makes it their mission to tear you down, there are two who want to build you up. If you're feeling the heat, it's time to find your squad.

God has always given me friends to talk to in my darkest hours. They might be the people I had expected but nonetheless there has always been someone there to help me through the grace of God.

Find those people in your life who are positive rays of sunshine, and who encourage you to go after your goals. These are the people who are actually happy when you succeed—they don't care to compare themselves to you, no matter where they are in life.

Life is too short for us to be around excessively negative people. True friends follow the rule of "only being willing to confront you to the amount of energy that they are willing to help you improve.

If you have a lot of haters in your life, these people are more important than you realize. A lot of self-help experts will tell you that you tend to become like the people you hear from the most, so don't let that negativity seep in. Instead, surround yourself with loving people who will remind you that you can, and let them help you filter out the "you can't" messages in your life.

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November 18, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

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4. STAY FOCUSED

When the hate starts pouring in, sometimes you just can't ignore it, redirect it, or alleviate it. Sometimes, you're just going to have to do your best to hunker down, stay grounded, and refocus on what's really important.

G.K Chesterton wrote "The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." Many times, when we are going through tough stuff we are doing so for the sake of helping someone else. While, I might be willing to compromise my values to ease my pain, I will endure more if it means someone I love won't have to. I have to also realize that anytime I sin for whatever reason I hurt those around me by not being the best person I can be.

When things get this bad, hate hurts. It can hurt deeply, in fact. But don't let that hurt stop you from doing what you love. Stopping isn't going to make the hate less painful—in fact, if you let it keep you away from your dreams, that pain will become a scar of regret that you'll carry with you for a long time to come.

Thomas Edison once said: "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." Joshua had to walk around Jericho seven times before the walls came tumbling down.

If we also keep our focus on someone who has hurt us we end up spending a lot of time and energy on dreaming up ways to hurt them back instead of using that time and energy to help others or improve ourselves.

Keep moving forward, step by step. Keep the end in mind—focusing on your goals, to the exclusion of everything around you, will help you stay on track.

5. TRY TO UNDERSTAND

Another way of disarming haters is by understanding them.

Psychologists talk about the "Fundamental Attribution Error." Simply stated, the fundamental attribution error is the term they use to describe the human tendency to blame another's intention on evil's motives and to excuse our personal behaviors by blaming our circumstances. If we stop to think about it, we realize that most people do not do evil for the sake of evil. They are just coming from a different perspective. Sometimes they are even unaware of what they did or how it affected you.

This means actually engaging with them, which doesn't work for everyone—some haters are just too obstinate. But for those who are willing to talk, a little empathy and understanding goes a long way.

I find talking with people about things helps us a lot if it is done with respect. I often find that the person acted the way they did or said what they did out of fear or as a reflex and not with any intention to be evil.

Try to get to the root of why they feel the way they do. Why do they feel the need to tell you that you can't do whatever it is you've set out to do? Do they feel threatened? Are they projecting their fears onto you? Do they feel like they're a failure, and you're a painful reminder of that?

One counselor I met said she believed that human beings lived in two worlds: the world of reality and the world of thought and that sometimes we feel that "being wrong" in the world of thought is the equivalent to "being dead" in the world of reality and therefore people will do almost everything in order to not admit that they made a mistake. The more we talk with a person the more they stop this bad thinking and thus they allow themselves to finally admit that they had made a mistake.

A little encouragement may go a long way here, and in doing so, you might even convert a hater into a fan! Interacting with someone humanizes you—you'll go from being the faceless stand-in for your hater's fears and shattered dreams, to being a living, breathing, complex person in their mind.

Human beings are often like Sully from Monsters Inc. We do not always realize how scary we can appear to other people. The more we talk with one another the less scary we become to others and the less scary they become to us.

So, the next time you run into a hater that might be willing to talk about why they hate, try a little communication. It might just turn their "can't" into a "can."

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

November 25, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

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6. LEARN AND GROW

At much as you might not want to admit it, haters sometimes have a point. It's delivered all wrong, full of malice and petty spite, but if a grain of truth is there, it's there. The ability to accept criticism and use it to make yourself better than ever is a rare gift, but one that can be cultivated. When haters start saying "you can't" take a moment to analyze what they're saying. Now, this doesn't mean that you can't achieve your dreams, but it does mean that you should take a realistic look at the obstacles that stand in your way.

We are all in need of improvement because none of us are perfect. When people point out our faults, they make identifying the area in which I might need improvement. Like a house inspector, helps shows the areas of the house that needs improvement. For example when people criticize me when I speak into the microphone at Church "too fast." It annoys me, because I know I speak fast when I am nervous and their criticism makes me more nervous. It also though points out that I need to work on my preaching.

In a way, you're robbing your haters when you do this—you're taking the good and helpful parts of what they have to say, and leaving the hurt and pain behind. What better way to get revenge than to become even better as a result of their nasty words?

Becoming better at my ministry is the best reward I can get because I am more likely to succeed despite their criticism.

7. FORGIVE

Finally, in the case of any kind of hater, forgiveness is always the best option. Forgiveness doesn't mean letting someone walk all over you. You can confront or ignore a hater, and still forgive them. No—forgiveness simply means you've let go of the possibility for revenge, and you're consciously not dwelling on your anger. As much as you might want to put somebody in a sleeper hold when they tell you what you can and cannot do, resist that urge. Instead, forgive your haters. They're human, and they have their own problems. Be gracious and above reproach if you respond to them, and not only will you be a decent human being, but you'll look great in the eyes of others Above all, though, forgiveness simply lets you move on, so forgive whenever possible—it's the best way to respond to the people who lash out at you for what you do well.

Holding onto a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. You have much better things to spend your time and energy on.

*** HOLD YOUR HEAD HIGH**

Haters don't know the real you—if they did, they probably wouldn't be spewing their vitriol. Their words aren't true, but rather come from a place of angry ignorance. So, don't let them get you down. Hold your head high, and for each time someone says "you can't," you tell yourself "I can." Do this, and the haters won't be able to touch you.

Always remember that you are a child of God and that is really what matters. Jesus' success was not very successful in the eyes of the world but He conquered sin and death once and for all. God has given us all many gifts and talents.

