

Of Hermit Crabs and Entrepreneurs

The growth of a hermit crab is a metaphor for the importance of embracing long term learning process and living outside the safe shell of mediocrity. As a hermit crab outgrows his shell he lumbers away from his comfortable home and out into the world, in search of a new shell. For a period, he is uncovered in all his squishiness - exposed to predators. Eventually, he will build himself an appropriate new home. Growth occurs in this time between shells.

The entrepreneurial process is similar. The budding Entrepreneur sheds the structure and stability of the old system in pursuit of a structure that more suits his or her vision and passion. The period in-between shells of stability is one of vulnerability, discomfort, exposure, and raw nakedness. This dynamic is amplified when the budding Entrepreneur is in his or her twenties or thirties. College friends are going off to their corporate jobs with health insurance and 401Ks, marrying their college sweetheart, buying a soccer van, and moving to the burbs. Our shell shedding Entrepreneur is living on ramen, desperately trying to raise enough money to support the passion, which initially launched them into their own business. The dream has taken a back seat to the grind. Loneliness, exhaustion, poor health, depression, anxiety, and downright fear are often byproducts. Pursuing your passion shouldn't make you sick.

Technical skills give way to psychological skills in this pink squishy vulnerable place. How can I manage energy, time, and emotions? How can I increase my self-confidence? How do I get back on my game after I've been thrown off? How about dealing with rejection? How can I maintain and invest in my relationships outside of work? What if I do become depressed? How do I know when I need some help? Does how I think really affect my outcomes? Are there more effective ways to say No or to set boundaries. These are some of the issues that my clients have asked and answered.

Here are three tips to help you march rather than lumber from shell to shell.

1. Know yourself. Wise men back to Aristotle have opined that knowing oneself is the key to growth, success, and happiness. It is difficult to know oneself in a vacuum. That's why we need assessment instruments, coaches, mentors, therapists, friends, and spouses. Get honest feedback. The mirrors we look in every morning are warped with our perceptions and distortions.
2. Unplug. Create a routine hourly, or daily to stop the noise. It's impossible to create when distracted. Take time to think. End the day. This means end the day. Go play. Play is essential.
3. Connect to others. The person sitting at the next desk. Your friends who miss you. Others in your entrepreneurial world. Being isolated is a sure road to depression.