

Why doing and being 'more' doesn't always mean growth.



Illustration by: Nadine Roba

Do you often find yourselves exhausted and beaten when you can't keep up with your to-do and to-be lists?

Living in an age where self improvement is made to be the only way to grow and be productive, it's no wonder that many women, including myself, often find ourselves grappling to keep up with the goals that we've set to achieve.

And we're not even talking about the big grand life-changing goals like, "growing comfort zones", "trying something new" and the list just keeps growing. There is nothing wrong with setting these goals for ourselves and having big challenges and hopes for our lives, but we must accept that these are really huge goals. Setting the goals are the easiest part of the whole process but I know many of us fall through when it comes to being consistent with them.

And then, there's the day to day grind - our to do/to be list for our routines. There is so much content out there and self help books/coaches/gurus who tell us about how we can improve our daily life through small habits; and I must admit they've got really helpful and proven strategies. However, we often end up confusing ourselves because we're just trying everything that everyone else has claimed worked for them. We try it once, a week, maybe a few months and we always have to keep going because that's the only way to keep a habit. Most of us don't.

Another thing about consuming self improvement content is that it tricks your mind to believe that you're being productive. This naturally makes us feel good as humans. Until you meet your first setback or the first time you slept through the alarm and missed gym or you broke your plant based diet and had steak because it was just too tempting, we see ourselves slowly caving in, forgetting, losing motivation; this is when we search for the next best thing that promises 'better' (or so we want ourselves to believe) self-improvement. By the way, I'm telling you, there will always be a next one.

You keep going on this cycle, believing that there must be something more you can do or be so that you can do and be more. Can you see the vicious cycle now?

What happens then when you don't get the results you want? Most women shared that the first thing that comes to their mind when they can't keep up with the goals and expectations they've set for themselves is that they feel like a failure. Some of us carry guilt, shame, embarrassment, doubt - basically our image of self gets even lower and smaller when failure happens.

Observing myself and listening and reflecting on the experiences of other women has made realize that perhaps its not so much of the quantity of what we do that proves us as being productive or is a measure of our self growth in our lives but rather our understanding and acceptance towards the concept of initial failure.

When we don't meet our expectations, we're often quick to give it up the first time and avoid facing our emotions towards it because nobody wants to feel bad about themselves, right? It's always more convenient to not address the root cause but just jump on the next bandwagon and do something new.

But what if instead of taking initial failure as a signal that we're weak, what if we took [initial failure as a signal that is motivating us to try again?](#)

What if when initial failure happens, we take it as a signal that we need to practice [self compassion instead of self blame?](#) What if we learn to accept that practicing self compassion does not mean you're lazy or stagnant but rather you're learning at your own pace of what works best for you and that may take a few to a few hundred tries, and that's okay too?

And if we tried to do or be something new and realize it wasn't going to work and apply in our lives, what if we learn to [trust ourselves enough to listen that it's okay if something is not working for you even if its working for everyone else.](#) What if we listened to our judgements and what our bodies tell us and understand that [the fact that you tried and learn that it didn't work was brave, not cowardly.](#) You just learnt a little more about you instead of trying to keep up with what the world tells you is good for you.

We grew up being told and we continue to tell other little girls out there "You can be anything want" And I say yeah, you sure could and you sure will.

You just don't need to know, do and be everything.

And if something matters to you so much yet you meet failure in the beginning, in the middle, in the end or throughout, it's okay because it's going to be the WHY you're doing this. Failure is a necessary part of growth. Until we understand that, no matter how much we do and try to be, we will always be unhappy and unsatisfied of ourselves and our lives.

In a world that tells you that doing and being more is the only way to grow, I'd say do less and make it count.

X,

Asha. A

Note: Due to the recent corona virus, we will be postponing our Moved By Words Circle Event at Marina Barrage till further notice. If you have signed up, a refund will be given. Our monthly walk is still on for now but we will continue to monitor and be updated on the situation. Meanwhile, take care of your health, growth warrior!

Ending my letter with my favourite picture of February's Communal Cooking Session! Check out the Kuih Troopers!

