

## The Alternative to Doing Nothing

Dr. Ron Kaiser January 23, 2014 No Comments

### The Alternative to Doing Nothing (Transcription)

Hi, this is Dr' Ron Kaiser with a podcast from The Mental Health Gym. This podcast is being produced in July 2012 after a layoff of a couple of months while we were getting our new website into shape. I hope you are enjoying the website and I hope you are again enjoying the return of the podcast. Today's podcast is entitled the alternative to doing nothing.

The inspiration for this podcast is the work and life of Dr. Ben Carson. Some of you may know who he is, I'm sure that the name means nothing to some of you but Dr. Carson is the Chief of Pediatric Neurological Surgery at Johns Hopkins University. What's particularly impressive about him is the fact that he achieved his honor at the age of thirty three. Despite the fact that he was in the bottom of his class when he was in fifth grade and he also was the highest ranking African American to achieve this kind of an honor at such a prestigious academic teaching hospital. So he made quite a change in the probably less than twenty-five years between the fifth grade and his completion of his fellowship and appointment to the Johns Hopkins Chairmanship.

I've heard Dr. Carson speak and I've read some of his books and I find them to be particularly inspiring and demonstrating some concepts of that fall in line with The Mental Health Gym and goal achieving psychotherapy. One of the things I particularly like about him aside from his accomplishments is that he tends to be quite modest and expresses a lot of praise for people who helped him along the way including his mother and quite a few mentors from elementary school on up through the completion of his residency. I particularly recall one of the things that he learned from a neurosurgery professor at the University of Michigan Dr. James Taron

who taught Dr. Carson to be quite willing to take risks and do difficult neurosurgeries and a lot of people would have some real problems in doing some of the things that Dr. Taren did. What he told Dr. Carson though was when faced with those difficult complex surgeries you've gotta think of one thing. Look at the alternative if we do nothing.

In many case the alternative might be life as a vegetable for somebody who is brain damaged, life as an invalid and in some cases very conceivably death. The alternative is particularly good and that's one of the things that inspires great neurosurgeons to do the risky things that they do. Now I think there is a great lesson for us. For those of us who have to deal with overcoming difficult odds and trying to move forward, it's one of the reasons why I enjoy working with some very challenging cases at the office and it's one of the reasons that I strongly encourage people to consider the alternative when they start getting down on themselves and getting depressed thinking that there are no changes that are possible. I always like to have people think in terms of the fact that you've got it known if you do nothing.

You know the things are not going to get better. You know you're not going to get that job, you know you're not going to make that friendship, you know that you're not going to be able to confront your spouse, or child, or coworker over something that's bothering you and you know you're not going to be able to use your good intelligence, personality, things of that nature to advance, if you choose to stay stuck. So the alternative to doing nothing often times is risky, at often times brings us into the unknown, into ambiguous situations and it often times is uncharted waters. But the safety of an uncomfortable known state really isn't a great alternative.

I always feel that it is important to recognize that doing nothing produces nothing. Now that's great if you're going on vacation, it

may be good to get away from overdoing things and to spend some time doing nothing but if you're talking about getting yourself out of a hole, getting yourself out of a state of depression, getting yourself to move forward and achieve goals, doing nothing usually gets you nowhere and there are alternatives. So consider the alternative to doing nothing, risk taking is not a bad thing. Ambiguity has been discussed before is not an intolerable thing to live with and sometimes the process, the journey, the challenge makes it all worth it, whether or not you are successful in moving forward from your current state. But the fact is you're not gonna do it unless you try.

I hope this gives you some food for thought maybe even encouragement. Obviously there are a number of blogs and other materials on our website, other podcasts and some new things we've produced that hopefully will continue to help in the process of doing something as opposed to doing nothing. Doing something is often a preferable alternative.

This has been Dr. Ron Kaiser with your July 2012 podcast of the Mental Health Gym. I hope that it has been helpful to you and I'll certainly be glad to hear from you if any comments. Please just go to the website and send us a comment. We'll be talking again next month and I'm looking forward to our continued work together.