

Beginners Luck For Non-Beginners

Contributed by Steve Gillman
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{bot_wrgoogle}That's just an example of probabilities and human psychology. We notice the exception, ignore the common, and mostly don't know a thing about odds. On the other hand, there is a type of beginners luck that is very real. It isn't based on any magic or unusual "forces," but on another kind of psychological phenomenon.

This kind of luck (or whatever you want to call it) is seen in the success of a new entrepreneur, or a first-time actor getting a choice role, or the new kid in school getting asked out to the prom by the most popular guy or girl. This kind of luck is often a result of the person being a beginner. And there are reasons for this.

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few. - Shunryu Suzuki

Beginner's Luck - Beginner's Mind

There is a concept in Zen called beginner's mind. It points to the mind that is free of limiting ideas, at the beginning of understanding, and open to all the many possibilities. It is something that can be achieved through meditation, but in a certain sense it is something that we all have when we begin in an area that we don't know well. We are open to learn and not yet full of opinion and belief.

For example, many young men and women in their twenties have had "beginner's luck" in real estate investing over the years, often after buying an expensive course from a late night info-mercial. Had they bothered to ask, the "experts" would have probably given them many reasons why the techniques in those courses wouldn't work, and these non-beginners would have been right in many cases.

They also would have been wrong in some cases. The truth is that we all tend to get set in our ways as we do something over and over. Eventually we know a lot, and this is very useful, but we also develop many ideas about what isn't possible or practical. In other words, a long-term investor has knowledge, but also has a very limiting set of opinions and beliefs that prevent things from being tried. A beginning investor just says, "I'll try this, and then this," and though he may fail more often than succeed, he eventually succeeds because he doesn't "know better" than to try.

Furthermore, an expert is an "authority" who has built a reputation and an ego based on what he knows. This makes him less inclined to try new things or ask for advice, or be open to new ideas - three elements you need if you want to find new ways to succeed. At the start we know little, and we claim little, and with this smaller involvement of the ego, we can be more open to opportunities.

The Lesson

There are other aspects to this phenomenon of the beginner's mind and the luck it helps create, but this is enough to see the advantage. Now, what if you are not a beginner? What if you already are the expert, but you want to get more creative and go to higher levels of success in your endeavors?

Why not adopt the frame of mind of a beginner? In that way you get the best of both mind-sets. You have the knowledge, but you want the creative and open mind too. Start by assuming much of what you believe is wrong. It may not be, but challenging what you know and believe immediately opens your mind. Argue against your own ideas if necessary to overcome the ego attachment to them that is always there. Then suggest new and even crazy ideas, just to explore the possibilities. Pretend you are absolutely new to whatever you are working on, and ask the questions such a beginner would ask.

That may be enough to change your approach and find creative new opportunities. Meditation or simple mindfulness exercises can also help. They can help you identify what is going on in there, so you can again challenge those thoughts, and then help you clear your mind of its constant chatter of ideas and thoughts, so new ones can enter. That's a beginner's mind, and it leads to beginner's luck.

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