



ONE MINUTE SERIES #7

Dear First Responder, Medical & Mental Health Professional,

Human beings are instinctively programmed to avoid pain in order to survive. Throughout the day we try to keep ourselves safe by **avoiding** dangerous things that we suspect might cause us pain and harm. For example, we may attempt to **stay away** from people that we perceive can hurt us or take advantage of us.

Avoidance is generally an adaptive behavior that serves to protect us from harm. Unfortunately this is not always the case. **Avoidance** can sometimes be maladaptive as well and can get in our way of being successful or safe.

For example, if we feel unsafe in a relationship but **avoid** taking the necessary action to sever ties with that person we may ultimately be harmed by them as a result. If we are concerned about a health issue but **avoid** making an appointment to ask an expert's opinion, this is **avoidance** that is not serving us well and the potential problem may snowball and worsen. If we are in debt and have to work out things with our bank or relearn how to manage our money but **avoid** doing so this is **avoidance** that does not cater to our wellbeing and can lead to more suffering and chaos.

What can we do to help ourselves deal with maladaptive avoidance in our lives?

First, we can **make a list** of things we are currently **avoiding** resulting in a compromise of our safety or success. The idea is to **become aware of the cost of avoidance** in our lives.

Secondly, try to **determine the cause** of why you are avoiding these things-is this due to fear, a perceived low self-worth, or other possible reasons? Consider exploring this with a close friend, therapist, or spiritual guide.

Thirdly, try to learn ways to manage the **anxiety, fear, or thoughts of self-doubt** that prevent you from doing important things for your growth and wellbeing.

Finally, seek out people who suffered due to avoidance but managed to learn how to **willingly and courageously engage** their issues head on. Ask them to share their experience, strength, and hope with you so that you will be closer to overcoming these challenges.

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