

Personal Responsibility (II)

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1 Problem Statement

People often say “I don’t (didn’t) have the [*resource*] to do [*task* / *goal*]”. This is a pretty normal and reasonable phrase, but what it really means is more like “[*task* / *goal*] is not important enough for me to spend my [*resource*] on”, meaning it is not more important than the other things I spend that resource on. It follows that your resource usage ought to mirror your priorities and values. There’s nothing wrong with using the phrase I’m calling out, but it can be a helpful reminder to substitute the true meaning, if only mentally (this would almost certainly come off as abrasive or harsh socially).

2 Examples / Pragmatic Considerations

No one can do all the things you’re ‘supposed’ to do, or that ‘they’ tell you to, or even that are objectively good and important. You must choose things that are important to you and live out those values in your behavior and resource usage. For example, you ought to be well-informed politically, ideally active in supporting candidates and causes that are important, be knowledgeable about local political activities: attend town halls, board of education meetings, and other local political events; do research to be well-informed on candidates and issues. At the same time, financial literacy and security is important: do research on your investment and savings strategies, organize your spending to optimize budgeting and tax status; don’t just depend on others to do this. Actively seek money-making opportunities. You could add examples from other spheres of life: volunteering and service, active engagement with a club or group over some activity, involvement with family (esp. like having kids), learning and personal growth, vehicle / home care and maintenance, exercise / fitness / physical ability, and artistic expression. It’s not possible to be maximally competent and achieving in all important areas. You must identify those things that are important, participate in each as much as is appropriate (with careful consideration of your values and behavior).

3 Tripping Hazards

It can be easy to just ignore areas you aren’t good at or don’t like, to your detriment. (Though if your value system is more hedonistic in nature than Kantian / ascetic / classical liberal, maybe that’s the way to go.) You have to choose what you believe to be important, and, at least recognize what you don’t focus on and know what it will cost you. Don’t complain about ‘losses’ in arenas of life you chose not to invest in.

4 Lesson / Rationale

Take responsibility for the expenditure of your resources, especially those related to the individual life, such as time, energy, mental effort, thought. If you live not in accordance to your values,

letting yourself be talked or coerced into spending too many resources on an objective or for a reward you don't value, it will cost you, and you will likely become resentful (see Post 10. This doesn't talk as much about resentment as I thought, but you could imagine the application of those ideas to resentment as a more negative-emotion centered extension. I should write on that.). Prioritize how you spend yourself out. People will get different answers as to their spending hierarchies, but ensure you are at least self-consistent.