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Feeling Sorry for Yourself

Pity, from the Old French *pite* ‘compassion,’ is a feeling of sorrow caused by suffering and misfortune. Pity also causes regret and disappointment. You can have self-pity or you can take pity on others. You can even have a pity party, although they aren’t much fun.

Everyone gets sad from time-to-time. That’s okay. What’s not so good is when you feel sorry for yourself on a regular basis; in other words, you do it every time something doesn’t go your way. Here’s what we mean.

Say you’re competing for a spot on the baseball travel team. Say you don’t make it. You’re disappointed and sad about what’s happened. Disappointment and sorrow are natural healthy responses. Feeling these emotions is how you work through and accept the fact you weren’t picked for the team.

But, don’t confuse those healthy emotions with self-pity. Your disappointment and sadness turn into self-pity when they go on and on, you get angry with the coach and the players who made the team, and you start making excuses for why you didn’t make it. You play the role of a victim by blaming others for the situation in which you find yourself—dwelling on, wallowing in, and clinging to the sorrow and disappointment.

Self-pity feels good. It gives you excuses to rationalize why you failed, to escape the reality of what’s happened. Playing your version of it over and over in your head allows you to scapegoat your personal responsibility. People who are wrapped up and bogged down in self-pity believe they’ve been wronged and that everyone should feel sorry for them. Not good.

Try these things to avoid sliding down the slippery slope into self-pity.

1. Be on guard. Recognize when you’re crossing the line between disappointment/sorrow and self-pity.
2. Make a deal. Don’t allow yourself to indulge in the behaviors associated with self-pity.

3. Improve yourself. Make new goals. Try new things.
4. Be successful. Do things you can accomplish.
5. Stay busy. Don't stagnate.

Feeling Sorry for Yourself Dos and Don'ts

- Stay in the game. Don't let self-pity put you on the bench.
- Take responsibility for who you are and who you want to be.
- Don't make a habit out of feeling sorry for yourself.

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