My family and friends would attest to the fact that I am an ‘immediatist’; I want results, action and joy on demand and without delay. All of my life it has frustrated me to no end if someone said “I’ll do it tomorrow,” especially when, it could be and should be done right away. As I get older, I have realised that some things cannot be done immediately. My most recent romantic break-up refers. I hasten to point out that I wasn’t, technically in a relationship beyond the confines of my imagination. Alas. nonetheless, I have comforted myself with platitudes (which I swore I would never use, much less to myself) such as “take it one day at a time”.

One evening while wallowing in acute agony of “what could have been”, just as I was reaching for my Joni Mitchell CD (only ever listening to Both Sides Now), the wisdom of the Bards took on a new synthesis. Never before had I really paid much attention to compound interest, unless it concerned my modest unit trusts. My mother very studiously conveyed this message (along with others, which I diligently ignored) to me as a rebellious adolescent, “Always put a little bit away”. I however, followed the advice of Miss Piggy un成功fully for the umpteenth time, none of us concluded “Oh well, I guess I wasn’t destined to walk after all, I’m just not cut out for it, I think I will just crawl for the rest of my life.” The fact is that before there was any murmur of success, a period of successive failures or misguided and different attempts to succeed were endured. The success versus failure ratio wasn’t favourable at all.

I digress; back to my secret. I found that somewhere along the line, I forgot that the discipline of doing little things every day led to achievement of great things over a period. I blame my ‘immediatism’ on the culture of instant gratification in which we all now find ourselves. But our culture is not wholly to blame, I am – we are. Culture does not disclaim personal responsibility.

Shakespeare said “to climb steep hills requires slow pace at first”. How often has an opportunity been lost because we were ill-prepared, didn’t read the manual or meeting pack or didn’t have the time? Yet, we expect things to be instant. While I agree that on some days even instant coffee takes too long, there is certainly merit in studying that meeting pack, investing the time and making the difference.
A related problem might be that a lack of clear, unambiguous goals. The quote "if you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there" expresses this aptly. It might sound obvious, but if you didn’t set goals before you thought of a method to realise them, how would you know whether you had achieved them? AC Grayling in his book *The Form of Things* writes: "To draw together the threads of one’s various experiences, one does well to look for where the threads’ ends touch and intertwine in the multiplicity of the world. That, in turn, involves being alert and observant; it involves reading, thinking, conversing, learning, enjoying, judging, being sceptical, being open-minded – in short, in involves electing oneself a votary of ‘the considered life’".

The fact is that before there was any murmur of success, a period of successive failures or misguided and different attempts to succeed were endured.

I’m sure we’ve all at some point in our lives heard this story, if you were offered R1 million right now in cash, or one cent every day, doubled each day for one month, which would you choose? If you’ve heard this before, then you probably know the answer. Most people would take the million up front. That is the wrong choice. If you took a cent, doubled each day, you would have R 10 737 418.24 at the end of one month. Geometric growth is incredible, right?

The Challenge

If you were to improve just 0.003 each day (that’s 3/10 of one percent) and you kept that up for five years, this would be what happened:

- In year one you would improve 100% (you would be twice what you are today).
- In year two you would improve 200%
- In year three 400% and year four 800% improvement.
- In the fifth year, that is 1600% or 22 times what you are today.
- Those figures aren’t even compounded.

This effect or principle is always operating, for or against us. What we do with it, where we end up, is totally up to us. The thing is this we know we ought to study, we ought to finish that book, we ought to do whatever – but those things are easy not to do. The good news is that things that are up building and edifying are just as easy to do; especially in 0.003 increments. If you don’t do apply this principle, will it totally and irrevocably destroy your life? Not today, no. But a simple error in judgement compounded over time will be devastating.

One cannot “go it alone” in life, and one needn’t. Everyone needs support. People are likely to hurt you, disappoint you, sometimes very deeply. Support anyway. Love anyway; irrationally and recklessly. Do it anyway. That might be your 0.003 for today, or maybe theirs.

I have found the following model to be useful, and share it with you in the hope that you too will benefit in some way. It is adapted and integrated with various models, but primarily stems from the work of Lazarus & Folkman.

1. **Primary appraisal:** Where am I? What are the problems that I face?
   - One needs to realistically assess what the current challenges are;
   - Be open with yourself, make a list. It is nobody’s business but your own. The more honest and open you are, especially with yourself, the better.

2. **Secondary appraisal:** How bad/good are the various situations? What are possible solutions to the problems?
   - Rank the items in the first step in a type of order that makes sense to you;
   - For example, if the bank is about to repossess your house, that would rank quite highly on my list.

3. **Make a plan:** Research and look at various alternatives or combination type approaches to best address the problems you have identified.
   - It might be helpful to seek the help of a Debt Counsellor (to try and sort out about the debt repayments) and/or see a psychologist (having someone to confide it and be open with is incredibly important, especially in hard times);
   - Important: set deadlines by which certain things must have happened (and stick to them unflinchingly!), but be realistic.

4. **Implement the plan:** Make the call to the Debt Counsellor, speak to a psychologist/minister. Taking the first step is always the hardest. Any long journey starts that way.

5. **Evaluate the results:** Go back to your list of problems, and compare that to how well (or not well) your efforts to sort out the problems has gone. It is likely that whatever problems are apparent at the moment didn’t appear overnight and are therefore not likely to be sorted out overnight either.

**OFF BALANCE SHEET**