

## The Magic of Unlearning!

Do you find that you often use the **same excuses for situations that you don't like**. And because you do, your situation never changes?

I once met a man. A lovely man, who wanted more from life. I asked him if he could read and write and he said, "No, my parents died when I was young and I never got an opportunity.

I asked him how old he was and he said, "37 years of age." I asked him when he would learn to read and write and he said, "**You don't understand, my parents died when I was young.**"

When I was about eight years old, I was singing in our house. I asked my mum, a great singer, what she thought of my song. She answered, "You sang flat". I took upon myself a 30 year sentence of, "I cannot sing." And I was afraid of outside opinion. "No, I can't sing." I would say, when asked.

One day my incredible wife, heard me singing in the shower and said to me, "You have a beautiful voice." I could not believe her. My voice was flat. And **until I began to believe her and in myself, I could not sing**. I have now **unlearned my years of self-bashing**. I have gone from, "I can't sing.", to singing with freedom and joy.

Our country, with its past and its present policies, has helped us to build up a minefield of excuses and judgements. When we feel wronged we can find many excuses..... "The referee robbed us.", is a favourite. Forget the fact that **if our team had changed their behaviour on the field, we may have won**.

A common way is to put money excuses before our dreams. "I would have been famous but I had no money.", "If I had money I would have studied.", "I would love to go overseas, but unfortunately..."

Another way many South Africans handle conflict is through old group classifications. When we have a challenge with someone, we look first at their group for our reasons, rather than at the personal uniquenesses involved. Let's say that a person likes to keep windows open during a meeting, then it becomes "These whites/ blacks/ Indians/ coloureds are all the same. They never think of anyone else." An open window becomes an issue of race rather than one of personal preference.

We have been taught some weird things in our lives. And, as in my case, **we have taught ourselves some weird things**. We need to continuously monitor our common excuses and reasoning, and look for our mental traps. What is keeping us from singing, running, listening, caring or understanding? Once we have found what it is that keeps us where we are, we need to begin a process of unlearning what does not work **and learning what will**.

Would our man still be illiterate, if had he learnt that no matter what has happened in the past, you can find a way to learn to read and write. I would have sung far more, if I had realized that my mom spoke only of that particular song and if I had believed that I could sing. If we focus on the dream and or goal before the "money", **we will find the means to achieve it**.

Our relationships with others will improve, work challenges, strikes and arguments would be reduced, if we unlearn Apartheid's teaching and **learn those of a true Rainbow nation**. A nation at peace with itself and it's uniqueness.

**What are your favourite reasons or excuses - unlearn them and be free.**