

Incrementality

by Phil Porter

from the upcoming book *The Slightly Mad Rantings of a Body Intellectual Part One*

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As the ancient saying goes, “the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, preferably in the direction of an airport.”

Little teeny-tiny steps. It’s the way we get into trouble and the way we get out of trouble. As much as we might like to bungee-jump our way out of our current, pick-of-the-day morass, chances are excellent that the most effective approach will require those annoying but absolutely necessary teeny-tiny steps. Some of us may be able to do much of that breaking-down-into steps sort of work on the inside with no one even noticing. Others of us could use a list to get ourselves from the front door to the car.

Some of you out there know how to do this and do it well. You recognize when a task is a bit too complicated or long-term to hold in the middle of your head, or is just plain daunting. You know how to break the too-big pieces into smaller ones. You know how to play with discouragement when you are only on step seven of a process that has seven-times-seven steps. You know that is prudent to ask for help, or at least support. And the most highly advanced among you know how to celebrate along the way to completion. Heck, let’s celebrate each teeny-tiny step along the way! Who’s to stop us other than that inner voice that murmurs in the back of our skull “you got yourself into this mess and you need to hightail yourself out of it right now and what do you mean you’re going to party down before the job is finished now get back to work!” (Just ignore that. That voice is no friend to you. Cross that voice out of your address book, move and don’t tell it where you went to!)

I have to say, though, this incrementality stuff may take a little while. In an age of “I want it all and I want it yesterday,” this may be the biggest challenge. What? I can’t have it RIGHT NOW!!! Take a deep breath and relax a bit. Time will pass and you will end up where you need to be if you keep at it. And from that future end of the picture, the time that has passed will seem insignificant. (For those of you who need a good dose of reality to keep you on the path, imagine all that time passing and NOT ending up where you had hoped to be. How will THAT feel, missy!)

Of course, if we paid a little more attention to the getting-into-trouble end of the incrementality picture, we might not need as many steps to get ourselves back to where we want to be. We put on weight just a tiny bit at a time, the water quality decreases little by little until we can only drink it out of a bottle, the traffic gets just a tiny bit worse each year until it strangles us, and so on and so forth. Obviously, this getting-into-trouble thing can be a group activity.