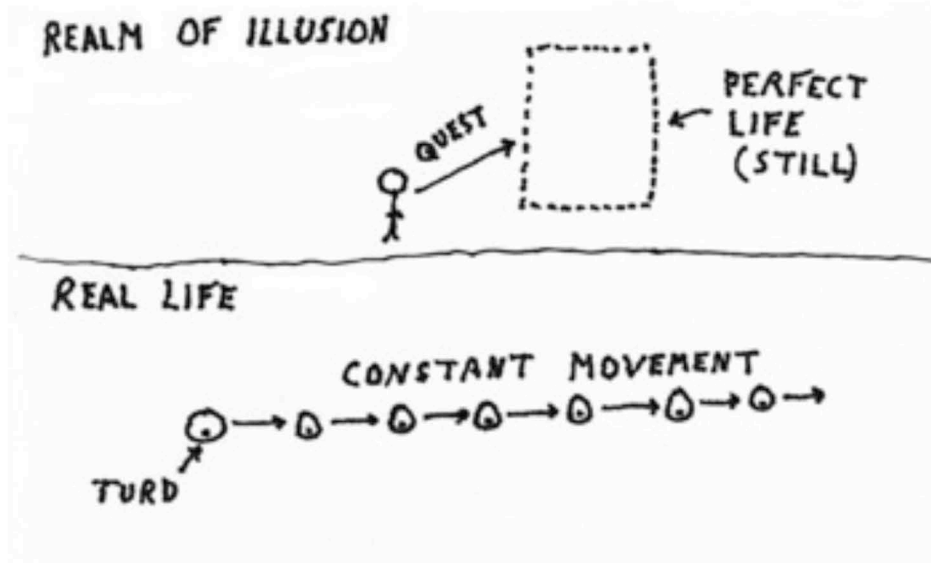


REALM OF ILLUSION



Our culture denies reality. It suggests that you can live in a world that is free of hardship. The media portray the beautiful people who inhabit this world. Their lives seem like glossy magazine photographs—air-brushed, like a “perfect moment” frozen in time. Phil Stutz was the first person I heard give this mythical world a name: the Realm of Illusion. We’re trained to feel like failures if our lives don’t resemble this ideal world.

But there’s a way to accept the imperfections of real life and still feel good about yourself. First, you must face the truth about reality.

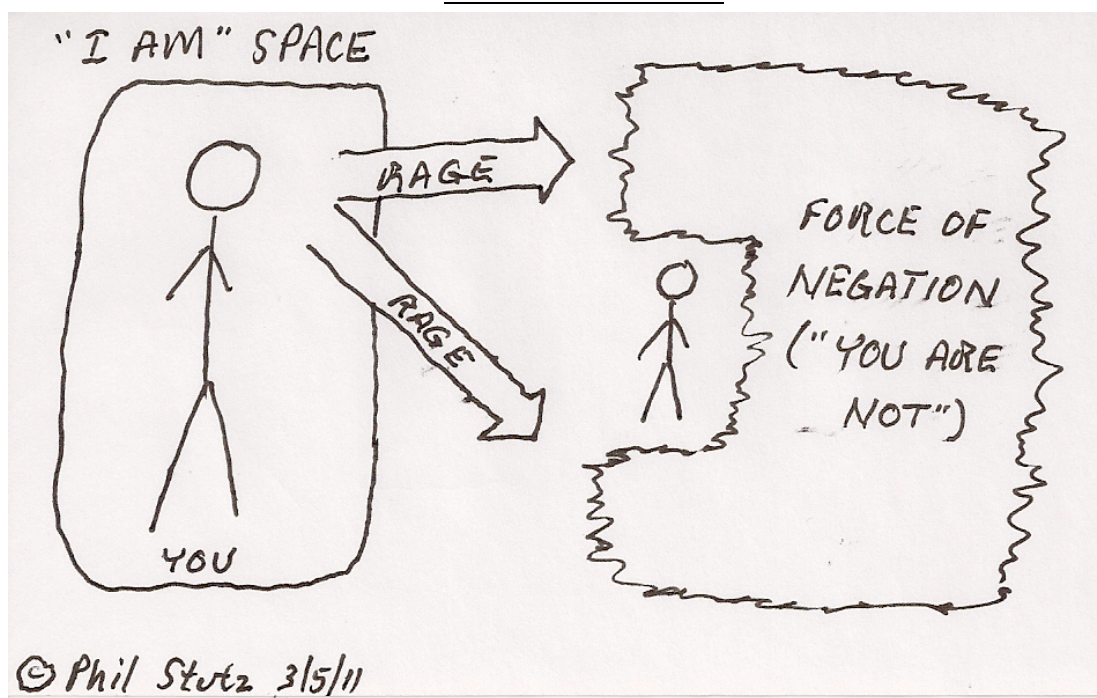
Phil encapsulated this truth in the drawing above. The Realm of Illusion is depicted above the line. The stick figure is you on a quest for the perfect life (symbolized by the square with the dotted line). This realm is just an image. It has no more depth or movement than a still photograph.

Real life is below the line. Each circle represents an event (one project, one confrontation, even one day). The black dots inside each circle are turds. That means that no event is perfect; pain, uncertainty, loss are always with us. But, whether you consider an event a success or a failure, life will keep moving and produce another event. It’s this constant movement that gives life its creative power.

Look at the picture every morning. It reminds you that the Realm of Illusion doesn’t exist. No one’s life is without turds, no matter how successful people appear to be. Practice projecting yourself into the illusion at the top and then forcing yourself downward into the flawed (but alive) reality at the bottom. You’ll develop the following strengths:

- 1) You’ll become more accepting of yourself and stop judging yourself against an impossible standard.
- 2) You’ll deal with difficulties calmly and rationally as a natural part of life.
- 3) You’ll begin to feel a sacred kind of wisdom in events, even the bad ones. This builds faith.

COSMIC RAGE



We all have moments when we feel judged and put down by others, even if it's in our imagination. This weakens your confidence and spontaneity because you've given some other person the power to define who you are.

To overcome this, you need to think of the enemy not as the other person but as a negative force surrounding that person. Someone may leave your life, but the force is always out there, and it will transfer itself to someone else.

Your response should always be the same no matter which person is carrying the force at a given moment. To push back the negativity, you need to use rage in a new way. The picture above shows how this works.

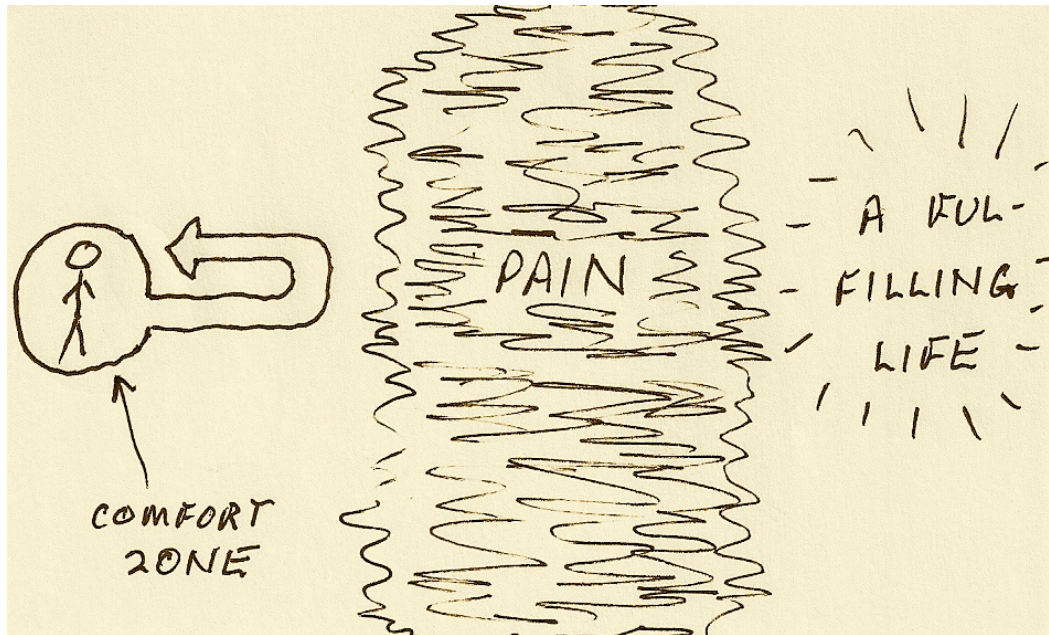
The stick figure on the left is you; the one on the right is the person (or group) judging you. The cloud around the person represents the force that's trying to negate you in some way (via judgment, hate, envy). To generate the rage, use a short phrase, silently repeated like an inner scream ("Screw you," "Get away"; any direct cursing is good). The more emotion, the better. Be careful not to direct the rage at the other person—direct it to either side of him, where the negative force is.

You're not trying to eliminate the cloud. You can't eliminate a force. Instead, see the cloud moving away from you. This creates space for you to be yourself, free from outside pressures. This is called the "I AM" space. The Old Testament God, when asked His name, answered "I AM THE I AM," avowing His intention to introduce individuality to mankind.

The cloud wants to take your space from you (hence, "You are not"). Cosmic Rage protects your space and asserts that you don't need anyone's approval to get it. When you take this inner space for yourself, you'll feel a freedom and confidence you've never felt before.

- Barry Michels

COMFORT ZONE



The most common human tendency is to avoid pain. Rejection, vulnerability, risk, loss, and tedium are some of the most common types of pain, but there are countless others. If you have no tool to deal with pain, you avoid the activities that cause it. We try to create a pain-free level of existence that Phil Stutz calls the Comfort Zone. The most extreme example is an agoraphobic; his Comfort Zone doesn't extend beyond the house he lives in, so he can't leave home. More commonly, the Comfort Zone isn't a place; it's a series of avoidance habits.

Life is dynamic; it creates endless possibilities. But the world isn't designed to meet only your needs. When you leave your Comfort Zone and enter life, there will be pain. It may feel that hiding in your Comfort Zone keeps your life safe, but really it just keeps your life small. Meeting new people, expressing new ideas, being a leader are all impossible if you don't leave the Comfort Zone. The picture above shows this trap.

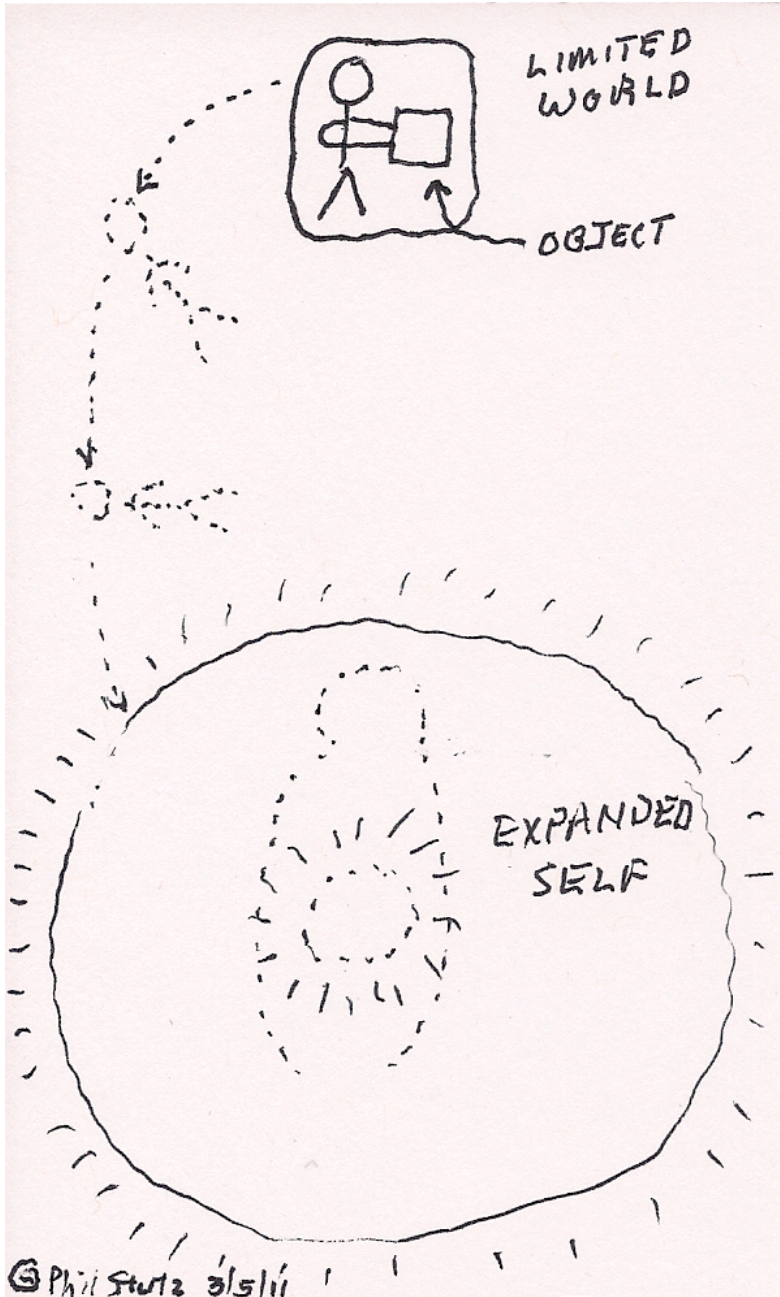
The stick figure is someone who lives inside his Comfort Zone (drawn as a circle). An attempt to venture out into the world is indicated by the thick arrow. Maybe it's a call to an intimidating person or speaking to an audience. The shaded barrier is the pain people meet doing these things. When they feel this pain, they retreat back into their Comfort Zone—but a fulfilling life can be found only beyond the barrier.

The picture lets you experience the forces involved. Project yourself into the circle, feel it as safe and familiar. Now imagine yourself doing something that, for you, is outside the circle. Feel yourself following the course of the arrow and meeting the pain barrier. Follow the arrow back into the Comfort Zone as you retreat from the pain. But don't let yourself feel relieved. Feel it as a trap. You're using this exercise to change the meaning of avoiding pain.

Phil was adamant that anyone could conquer his fear of pain. He said the secret was to learn to desire pain. This sounded like some kind of masochism until he showed me how it worked. The tool he used was called the Reversal of Desire.

- Barry Michels

LOSS PROCESSING



We all have things we cling to: a relationship, a job, status, an idea. We imbue these things with the magical power to make us happy. Really, our attachment puts us in a limited world where we can't change or be creative. It doesn't matter what you're attached to; the state of attachment takes away your power.

The solution is to pursue whatever you desire but to be able to walk away from it if you have to. There's power in this: the more willing you are to walk away from something, the more ability you have to get it. That's called the "potency of non-attachment."

The tool that gives you this potency is called Loss Processing. Close your eyes and imagine something you feel attached to (a person, a prized possession, your life savings). Let go of the object and feel yourself falling backward. This may be a terrifying and/or grief-filled moment. Imagine that you fall into the sun, so that your body is vaporized. All that's left of you is your consciousness, which becomes one with the sun. Feel the tremendous force of the sun radiating outward and expanding you limitlessly. Notice that you've gone from an attached state, in which your energy clings and sucks in, to a non-attached state, in which you let go and radiate out.

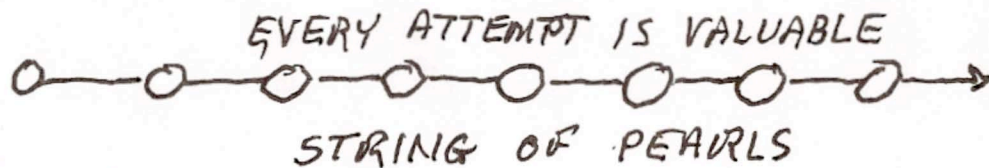
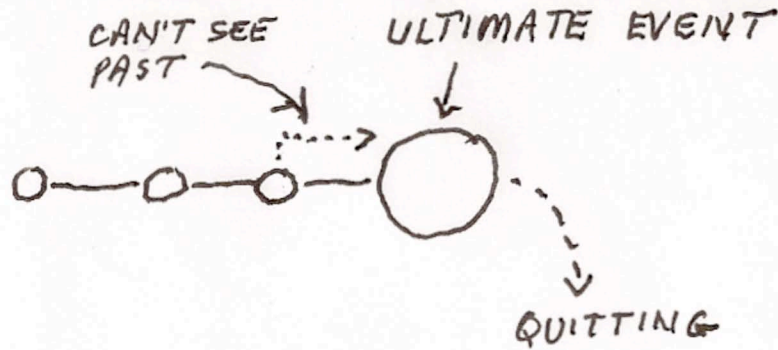
You'll see this depicted in the drawing on the left. On top is a person attached to an object and living in a limited world. If he uses Loss

Processing, he lets go of the object, falls into the sun, and becomes as vast and radiant as the sun.

This tool should be used whenever you find yourself obsessing about whether you'll get or keep an object. You can also use it after a loss has occurred, including the death of a loved one. A third use is to make yourself non-attached before an important event whose outcome you're unsure of.

- Barry Michels

STRING OF PEARLS



©Phil Stutz 3/5/11

There's a secret to success: you have to take action without becoming fixated on getting the result you want. Typically, we motivate ourselves with visions of how great it's going to be when we achieve something—fame, fortune, etc. The problem with this is that the result becomes too important: if we don't achieve it, we give up, and if we do achieve it we lose our motivation to continue. (Think of how many people stop eating healthfully as soon as they reach their “target weight.”)

When a result becomes too important, Phil Stutz calls it an “ultimate event.” It could be getting a big promotion, selling a screenplay, or marrying the right person. In the top part of the drawing above, it's represented by the circle that's much bigger than the others. You can't “see past” the event to know that the future will require more effort, whether you get the result or not. That's why ultimate events are debilitating, which is represented by the arrow curving down to the right. You stop making an effort.

The bottom part of the drawing (called the String of Pearls) depicts a better way to motivate yourself. Each circle represents an effort you put out, and it's the effort that has significance, not the result. This doesn't mean that you lie to yourself—throwing a wedding will mean more to you than giving a dinner party for six people. However, in an inner sense, you can choose to put your best effort into both, and make them of equal value to you. Your job is simply to put another pearl on the string, regardless of how big or small the event is.

The reward you get for this is major: you become unstoppable because no event is so significant that you depend on it for motivation.

- Barry Michels