



**A Personal Note from Single Steps Strategies Founder
Mary Grace Musuneggi**

Taking Responsibility for Where You Are

Have you ever heard people say that if they had the money, they would go on a cruise? Or if they had the time they would take a trip overseas? If the kids were older? If the weather were better? If gasoline weren't so expensive? If, if, if!

So often on the road of life, excuses for why we don't accomplish our goals are very much the same. It's someone else's fault. Your spouse, your employer, your family. It's the economy, the society, the government. Circumstances. Or the popular, "I had an unhappy childhood." It is always easy to blame someone or something else for where we are. But the only way to get beyond where we are is to take responsibility for it. Only by doing that do we have a chance of getting what we want. Taking responsibility means we have made the choices and now we can make better ones. Responsibility gives us control and power.

Years ago I was introduced to a woman named Jane, the mother of four boys, who had lost her husband to cancer. At the time, she was not working. Her friends were hoping I could give her some guidance through this period and get her life back on track. Although she was not responsible for her husband's death, she was responsible for how she handled it and how it impacted her life. She said she was running out of money and wanted to know what she should do. She was getting Social Security for her two youngest sons, but she knew that would stop in a few years. She was forty years old, had been trained as a nurse, and was healthy and attractive. She lived in a large, beautiful home, and appeared to be very prosperous. Two of her sons had good jobs and all four boys still lived at home.

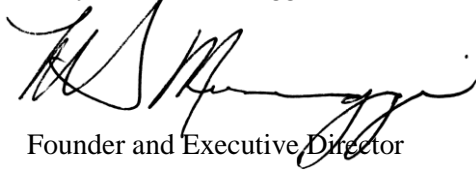
As I knew that nurses were at a premium in my city, I first suggested that she look for a job. I could recommend a career counselor that she could speak to. Her response was that she was hoping not to work, as she hadn't had to work when her husband was alive. At that point I decided not to argue with her about how things weren't the same now that he was dead, and that working seemed to be a simple solution to her problem. Instead, I suggested that she consider selling the house and moving to a smaller place. She said that she would never want to sell the house, and that the boys would be really upset if she did. Although I started to recognize that I might be taking to a wall, I suggested that if the boys chose to stay in the house, they should contribute to the bills. Two of them had good incomes; she could charge them rent. She told me she could never ask her children for money.

So I said, "Well you don't want to work, you don't want to sell the house and you don't want the boys to contribute, so what were you thinking?" She replied, "I have no idea. That is why I came to you. I thought you could help me, but obviously you can't."

If only I'd had the magic wand to make things "all better." But if I had, I would have used it on myself long ago. Jane had a goal: to maintain the lifestyle she'd had while her husband was living. But she hadn't taken a good look around and figured out where she was now. And she wasn't willing to take responsibility for where she was at that point in her life. Her journey of thousand miles could never happen, because she was unwilling to take the first step.

Sometimes the first step isn't clear. Sometimes it is very obvious. In any case, it isn't truly a step until you pick up your foot and move.

Mary Grace Musuneggi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Grace Musuneggi', written in a cursive style.

Founder and Executive Director

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