



One Small Adjustment

In the 2010 movie, “How Do You Know,” actor Paul Rudd (George) gives Reese Witherspoon (Lisa) a can of Play-Doh for her birthday and explains to her how the kid’s putty-like substance was invented. Originally used to remove soot from wallpaper before WWII, the product was very successful until coal heat was replaced by oil and gas furnaces. Then paper wallpaper was replaced by vinyl wallpaper which could easily be cleaned with soap and water. What to do? The inventor’s sister was a nursery school teacher and needed cheap materials for craft projects. So, she used the wallpaper cleaner, added some coloring and the concoction became a huge hit. Today, Play-Doh is owned by Hasbro and they sell over 100 million tubs a year.

One small adjustment—that’s all it took. Just one small adjustment. So George, who is trying to convince Lisa that he is the man for her, ultimately wins her over by telling her the Play-Doh story and ending with the line, “We are all just one small adjustment away from making our lives work.” Lisa has her ah-ha moment and George gets the girl.

It brings to mind how often we are all “just one small adjustment away” from making things work. Sometimes, just tweaking something we’ve been doing forever is all it takes. But maybe making just one small adjustment is not enough. Perhaps we should be making several small adjustments or if that gets overwhelming, try making one small adjustment each day. With a new year in front of us, instead of setting goals, try a “daily adjustment.” For instance, instead of grabbing a cookie or sugary snack when dashing out the door in the morning, put the oatmeal in your Crockpot the night before and set to low. Wake up and add some agave syrup, a few blueberries and get a healthy start.

Tired of adding to your bucket list and wondering if you will ever get a chance to scratch off some of the items? Ever heard of YOLO? I recently did. It stands for “You Only Live Once” and gives one much more incentive to take the trip you’ve been putting off or signing up for tango lessons. Start your YOLO list this year and when you read those words about only living once, it will get your attention.

I made a small adjustment last year and took a fiction writing class. Yes, I’m a writer but my weakest area is fiction. For years, I convinced myself I did not need to go sit in a room with other writers, have my precious words critiqued by struggling authors and listen to a PhD read excerpts from Faulkner and Barthelme. Yet, when he said that if Hemingway were to walk into the room and present any one of his famous short stories, we’d no doubt even rip that apart, I mellowed. And I even learned a few things—OK, many things. So, for 2013, let’s all get out the Play-Doh and start adjusting.