

Leadership Lessons from Groundhog Day

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In the movie, *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over again. Sometimes he is completely self-destructive, which causes him and the groundhog to drive off a cliff. Some days he is horrible to other people and some days he's horrible to himself. At some point he even thinks that he is a god.

But a little more than halfway through the movie, he hits a breaking point and decides that he wants to be better. He begins to work on himself and support people. His focus shifts from himself to others. Thanks to the time loop that he was stuck in, he eventually becomes the person he was destined to be. However, it took a choice and lots of repetition.

Like Bill Murray's character in *Groundhog Day*, we too can feel powerless and stuck. There are days when it seems like our decisions don't make a difference. So, how can we change our attitudes in the same way that Bill Murray did?

As leaders we need to make better choices over time. Our little choice today adds to tomorrow's little choice and so on and so forth until all the little choices that we make become big choices. Whether it's learning a new skill, or trying to be more empathetic, or trying to make a significant impact – sometimes it's difficult to know that the small leadership choices we make are going to have long-term effects. **It's all about being intentional and making choices. Again and again and again.** Bill Murray's character was interesting because he had the opportunity to correct his past mistakes. We do as well; we just don't get the same day to live over and over again.

Another leadership lesson to consider is from Punxsutawney Phil himself. Every year, in early February, the groundhog pokes his head out of the hole. If he sees his shadow he freaks out and retreats back into his hole, giving us six more weeks of winter. Or, the groundhog looks out of his hole, doesn't see his shadow, doesn't

get scared and comes out to bless us with an early spring. **With this in mind, why don't we act as if we don't see our shadow?**

We're constantly surrounded by shadows. The things that we're afraid of (both real and imagined), the things that hold us back, the things that keep us retreating to our holes. The next time we see those shadows, what if we act as if they are not there? We should act as courageous, optimistic leaders who are confident in our abilities and believe that the future is better than the past. We don't gain anything by playing small; we're in the world to play big. Much like the groundhog who doesn't see his shadow – can we play large and bring about spring sooner than later?

Share your strategies or experiences in the comments below or send me an email at thomas.epperson@innerwill.org. I'd love to hear from you!

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