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## Of Course It's Hard

*James Goering*

My wife once sent me a picture of a home decor sign that read:

*"Being an adult is telling yourself, 'Next week won't be so busy,' over and over again until you die."*

This might be hilarious if it weren't so true—or maybe that's precisely why it is. Over the last decade, the “adulting” meme entered the public consciousness. Adulting is when a person must learn how to do common skills or activities, such as changing the oil in the car or doing taxes.

In previous generations, these tasks were simply considered part of being an adult; no one received adulation for doing something so quotidian. Now, some feel they need recognition for accomplishing something “so difficult.” It's the grown-up equivalent to the participation trophy: “Congratulations! You made a good effort and didn't completely fail. Here's a pat on the head and recognition for doing the absolute minimum required.”

As much fun as it is to cast shade on others in my generation, there is a germ of truth in the adulting meme—being an adult is hard. You have to somehow make ends meet in a time when many expenses, especially housing, are much higher than they've been historically. If you are fortunate enough to own your home, you have maintenance and upkeep as well as property taxes. If you have children, you are engaged in an ongoing struggle with tiny humans who require constant guidance and training. Children seem perfectly skilled at causing frustration and disorder in your home, so you must daily fight the selfish impulses that keep you from being the giving providers and counselors you should be. Their souls will be dramatically impacted by your daily training and interaction with them—no pressure.

Laundry and dirty dishes pile to the sky, and now your dishwasher is broken, requiring you to wash dishes by hand, taking up even more of your precious time and leaving other tasks undone. Then the one car needs a checkup while the other one quits alongside the road. Now you need to call a tow truck or have a friend help you swap out the alternator. This is all happens while your evenings fill with going to church, working on house projects, gardening in the summer, cutting and splitting wood in the winter, and cramming a few moments of rest and refreshment in the cracks between everything.

I think Adam and Eve likely dealt with the same struggles we do. I can imagine Eve checking her sundial in the evening around 6:00, wondering when Adam was going to make it in from the field or whether he was going to be late again—the meal she had labored over for the last several hours going cold in a pot on the table. She balances Cain on her hip while trying to tidy up the mess he just made of the tent. She could be thinking, “Pain in childbirth might almost have been easier than the everyday slog of maintaining a household while dealing with petulant and spill-prone children.”

Adam and Eve were promised a hard life, and that is exactly what they got. Backbreaking labor, frustration, broken relationships, and unending toil to push back the broken world that kept creeping into their home. We have inherited the same world. Today, we may have electric ranges, vacuums, minivans, and toasters, but the struggle remains.

It’s easy to envision a time when the house is clean, there is nothing to fix, there are no spills to mop up, and the task list has everything checked off. When we carry this vision of perfection before us, it is easy to become frustrated or discouraged when we can never quite reach the shining city of “Perfect Home.”

When I was in my early teens, a pipe running from the well into the house sprang a leak. My dad tasked me with helping him dig up a section of the yard to find the leaking junction. We worked on it for a while, but as night fell, darkness fell along with rain. I put on a jacket, but I was soon soaked, cold, and muddy. Dad had to go elsewhere to take care of something, so before long, I was alone in the a muddy hole with the rain showing no signs of abating.

After too many minutes of self-pity, I finally gave myself over to the mud, rain, and cold, realizing that the best thing I could do was to *embrace the suck* and just get on with the task at hand. I threw myself into the work and found myself actually enjoying slopping around in the mud, braving the cold and rain. I finished up the job, then went into the house and rewarded myself with a steaming hot shower.

Counter-intuitively, it is when we accept reality and realize that we will never quite arrive at our idealistic vision of perfection and ease that it becomes easier to deal with the difficulties of a hard life. There is work to be done, and whatever is in front of us today, whether it is a diaper to be changed, a disobedient child to train, or a leaking roof to patch, is what we have been given to do. By throwing ourselves into our work, we join those before us in making this life a place where we and our families can thrive, even if the vision of perfection in our heads is never quite reached.

Those who embrace the difficulties of life are those who can improve their circumstances and maybe even occasionally enjoy the struggle. The sooner we disabuse ourselves of the fantasy that our lives will somehow become easier “next week,” the quicker we can roll up our sleeves and make as much progress as we can right here, right now.

Of course life is hard—let’s get to work.

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