



**GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP**
of East Central Wisconsin

THINK SMALL for Gluten-Free Success

Educate / Motivate / Advocate

I took this picture during one of my bike rides last year in Manitowish Waters, WI. It got me thinking about perspective and how we view things.

I imagine this sight would be very daunting to an ant as she climbs up this lofty tree. It must seem like an impossible journey.

Do you ever feel like an ant? Where you feel so small, and everything around you seems so large and overwhelming? The tasks you must complete are too complex and too many to count? The knowledge you currently possess feels grossly inadequate? Yeah, me too.

Similar feelings can happen when reality sets in after the doctor gives you a gluten-related disorder diagnosis. You now have an answer for your sickness, but it sets off a rapid-fire chain reaction of questions. What is gluten? What can I eat? What can't I eat? How will I manage work and social functions? What if I don't feel better? What will friends and family think of me? The questions keep coming, and the meltdown begins.

After my Father-In-Law passed away in 2010, we needed to clean out his garage and shop. He was an electrician but also performed home renovation projects. Over his lifetime, he accumulated a lot of "stuff." I saw stuff stacked on stuff, piled on...more stuff. My gosh, where do I start?

"Pick one and look at the others," came down from the heavens. This phrase was my Father-In-Law's advice when deciding upon a card to throw down while playing the card game Sheepshead. Thanks, Lester! Okay, I'll pick one area of the shop and work it until it's clean. Rinse and repeat to the tune of almost 20,000 steps to the dumpster. Whew, I survived Day #1.



"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Lao-Tzu.

Let's say you have a goal of running a marathon. Going from the couch to 26.2 miles in one day will bring on a world of hurt. You're setting yourself up for failure before you start. Just getting around the block will be an accomplishment. After the first 100 yards, it'll feel like you're suffering a myocardial infarction (you might be after logging all those extensive couch miles). Out of breath and clutching your chest, you'll say, "<gasp>I'm <gasp> done!<cough>" You'll get frustrated because you are not mentally or physically ready. It will likely result in aborting the entire endeavor. That is not going to end well. I've been there. I went from a 30-year running hiatus to participating in half-marathons and Duathlons (Run/Bike/Run). It wasn't easy and took time - slowly increasing my fitness from around the block to one mile, then to three to five to six, to 13.1 miles and beyond.

Sometimes seeing the expanse of the big picture is paralyzing. There's so much for the brain to process. Out of frustration, you shut down; you lose focus, you lose motivation. Finally, you give up.

"Do. Or do not. There is no try." -Yoda

When it comes to being gluten-free, giving up is not an option - not if the goal is to rebuild your life and health. What if we approach this gluten-free journey differently? What if we narrow our focus and think small?

But how can we achieve this goal by thinking small?

"It is the small changes you make that will add up to something bigger. But in this case, small doesn't mean easy. It requires focus, dedication and effort that, over time, will start to pay off." — Owain Service, Think Small: The Surprisingly Simple Ways to Reach Big Goals

When you take a trip, you fire up your GPS app. To start the journey, you enter the destination. After pressing Go, you follow the turn-by-turn directions the GPS feeds you. Your focus is on executing that one command. Then you wait for the next direction, the next lane change, the next turn, the next exit, the next gluten-free snack. [Gotta eat on a road trip, right? Remember to pack your gluten-free cooler!] One-by-one, you reach your journey's way-posts. Before you know it, the destination is on your left. I think you can see where we're going with this.

Do not sell yourself short - you can rock this. When you have a long-range goal in mind, like executing a gluten-free lifestyle, map out a plan to get you there. The key is breaking it into small, manageable goals. How small? Things you can easily accomplish monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, or by the minute if need be. Each breath, each thought, each action brings you closer. Those small successes may not seem like much. Yet, they compound to build the motivation, confidence, and momentum required to propel you forward.

Andy Stumpf, a retired Navy SEAL and SEAL instructor with a decorated 17-year military history asked SEAL candidates why they quit during their training. He discovered they were often overwhelmed even though they had lifelong goals to be an elite SEAL. Stumpf maintains they didn't keep their world small enough.

Stumpf suggests, *"Don't look at Hell Week as a five-day pipeline. Just make it to your next meal, because they have to feed you every six hours. Get to the next meal, get a mental reset, and keep stacking those six hours segments. If you apply that resilience and approach to your goals, you can accomplish an insane amount."*

This concept is pure brilliance! So many situations can benefit by using this mind-set. I use it almost daily. If it can get someone through SEAL training, it can make you successful in executing the gluten-free lifestyle and beyond.

"There is only one way to eat an elephant, one bite at a time." -Desmond Tutu

Desmond Tutu, South African Anglican cleric, theologian, anti-apartheid, and human rights activist, puts an elegant spin on an African proverb on dealing with an elephant in your path. There is no question about it; transitioning to gluten-free is a big elephant in your way, but you can handle it, one step at a time! The [Gluten Intolerance Group](#) has an outstanding how-to guide.

"Getting Started on a Gluten-Free Diet: A Step-by-Step Guide" consists of these five basic steps:

- Step 1: Learn What Foods to Include or Avoid
- Step 2: Carefully Read Food Labels
- Step 3: Explore Gluten-Free Goods
- Step 4: Watch Out for Cross-Contact with Gluten
- Step 5: Join a GIG Support Group

To learn more, read the article: <http://bit.ly/GIG-GF-StepByStep>

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