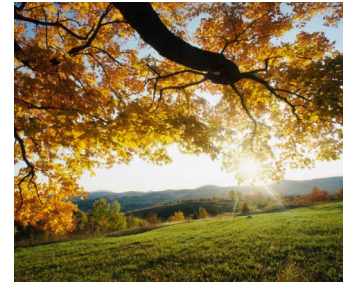


Living Beyond the Clichés

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We all know these age-old clichés: *Life is not a dress rehearsal. Live life to the fullest. Today is the first day of the rest of your life.*

They are great intending to spur us on to a more meaningful existence.

My favorite is *carpe diem*, or seize the day. I loved its use as the movie theme for *Dead Poets Society* with Robin Williams. Williams plays the role of teacher John Keating, who inspires a group of boys to think as individuals, live with passion and follow their dreams. He explains that authority should only be a guide; the place to find one's true identity is within oneself. By the way, *carpe diem* comes from a Latin poem by Horace written somewhere around 50 BC.

We read inspirational phrases and reflect on what they mean to us. Dreams take on new life. Passion is reignited. What-ifs abound in an I-can-do-attitude. With renewed vigor we move forward.

Until something happens. What happens? Why do we apply the breaks? It's disheartening and contrary to what any of these truisms is meant to accomplish. I fathom it's a realization of the change that is necessary to fulfill a dream.

Change is uncomfortable, and unless you live in a vacuum, any change made affects those around you.

If reaction to our changed self is negative, doubt begins, anxiety swells and fear takes over. Our inner chatter turns from energizing to mind-numbing.

"Well, I guess lofty dreams don't apply to me." "It was meant more for the fellow who penned those words of wisdom, him and his closest friends." "Maybe it's some secret organization of people who have more, do more, whatever more than I."

It's uncomfortable to think our new self is not welcome, but fear only stunts our growth.

When we attempt change, we hear two sets of voices. One set cheers us on and relishes in the courage it takes to follow the path of the heart. A second set exudes doubt. "Why the latter?" is a topic for another time. I'm intrigued as to why it is that we tend to turn down the volume on the former and focus our attention on the latter.

I don't have an answer, but I recently came across another saying that is helping me to pay more attention to the cheers: *Those who abandon their own dreams will discourage yours.* Awesome!

Inspiring truisms have existed for centuries. They have existed for so long for one reason: They have needed to survive because we haven't learned their lessons yet. We haven't 'got it'. We haven't incorporated their inherent truth into our lives. When we do, we will no longer need them. They will be set down and referred to nostalgically as a piece of our history on how we finally got to where we needed to go.

Like the maps that were used to chart courses of discovery throughout history, these adages will hold special meaning, but we'll no longer be dependent upon for the journey. They will be a reminder of the journey and a milestone from where we once were and how far we have come.

The path of the heart holds visions that we alone can see. The fact that no one else can see them is immaterial. Life is meant to be lived beyond the clichés. When we do, challenges become more meaningful, the view more rewarding, and contributions to society greater in proportion.

That to which we aspire is our greatest contribution.