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An Extraordinary Life

“I just want it to be over.”

The words were from a colleague of mine, a co-facilitator for a team retreat that we would be holding at her home in the mountains in two days. She has ALS, a life-threatening disease that slowly takes away her muscle control, bit by bit. What she could do 6 months ago, she cannot do today. Including preparing for guests in the way she would like, sweeping the front steps and clearing the driveway of nature’s shedding of pine needles. She tells me that in prior days, she would have run out to finish such a chore before anyone even noticed that it needed to be done. Now it pains her that she cannot have what she took for granted a year ago. Now, she just wants our retreat to be over.

My friend has been blessed with a built-in mechanism that reminds her to be present. Her body is constantly changing, in ways that are perceptible from week to week and day to day. She has no choice but to notice what’s going on for her in the moment. One moment, she is able to walk. Another moment, everything below her waist no longer understands the command of “Walk!” I remind her that her gift is in knowing how to work with groups in the moment, to mine the nuggets from what is right in front of us. Her disease has only intensified this gift, creating an awareness of “now” that is truly remarkable. She acknowledges her gift and still, her yearning is for a different kind of moment.

Another friend of mine recently returned from a meditation retreat with a well-known guru. I asked her what she got out of the weekend seminar. She told me that while nothing the guru had talked about was new, it was good to be reminded of what you know to be true. In her case, what she knows to be true is that when she gets “hooked” into the goodness or badness of a point in time, she no longer is able to be present, to live into each moment. The positive high or the negative low of that moment in time lingers on, holding her attention in the panoply of life, while the rest of the parade is passing before her. She is caught up in the drama of the fire engines, already three blocks ahead with sirens fading in the distance. She cannot hear the vibrant music of the marching band in front of her, nor feel the youthful beat of the drum section, nor see the sweat on the brows of the teenage musicians. She is still with the fire engines.

Which brings me to what it means to have an extraordinary life. There are as many definitions for an extraordinary life as there are human beings. My definition is this: **To live an extraordinary life is to live into each moment.** The simplicity of this is striking. And the difficulty of truly doing this is not lost on me. I have had plenty of times when I wished for a different moment than the one appearing before me, hoping I could take my mind to someplace else to avoid the pain or the hurt inside. I’ve also experienced times when I wasn’t even *aware* of the moment, when I missed precious packages of joy or delight or love being flung in my face, because I was too busy churning on this morning’s meeting.

I realize that when I’m coaching a client, I have no choice but to be present. I am forced to be present during regularly scheduled times each week, with my different clients. What a gift! My coach training has conditioned me to live into each moment with the client. What’s here now, for the client? What am I sensing right now that can benefit the client? Anger,

frustration, joy, delight, confusion, sadness. When I'm coaching, my own worries of getting the kids to school on time and figuring out how to pay for a new roof quickly dissipate. I am present and I am loving it.

Still, you don't have to be in the coaching profession to live into the moment. It doesn't matter what your circumstances are, whether you are a prince on Wall Street or a pauper in a Third World country, whether you are surrounded by a loving family or you live alone, whether you are in the job of your dreams or you know that sometime soon, something has to give, it is possible to live into the moment. Which means an extraordinary life is available to everyone. It is available, even in the face of war, disease, and the harsh realities of our modern day world.

I have an extraordinary life. I choose an extraordinary life.

Will you live into the moment? Or will you hope that it will soon pass?

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