

Pathways

THE CHRIS DEWEY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER

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“When you talk, you repeat what you already know; when you listen, you often learn something”

Jared Sparks



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Balance and Harmony

Anyone who is watching the news and the world right now, will not be surprised to know that I have been giving a lot of thought to two allied concepts: Balance and Harmony.

I don't see a ton of either in our human world right now. I do, however, see Nature making some effort to reestablish her own balance and slowly move back towards harmony as rivers run clearer and air is purer because we are not travelling as much. I was up in the Snowy Range a couple of weeks ago with a friend and I don't believe I have ever seen as many flowers in July as we were witnessing on our trip. The hillsides were an absolute riot of color.

As many of you know I'm a geologist by original training so I tend to take a long view of ecological disharmony...heck if life can cruise through several mass extinctions in the course of the last 3.5 billion years of its existence, it gives comfort that nature will always return to balance...well at least till the end of plate tectonics or the death of the sun (but that's a few billion years out from now...so no real cause for concern there).

But what of humanity? I don't see a ton of balance nor harmony here.

In my clinic I am seeing a lot more stress, anxiety, depression, fear, worry, doubt, uncertainty and all of their attendant physical allies: digestive upsets, joint aches and pains, headaches, migraines and insomnia...to list just a few.

Doesn't exactly scream Balance and Harmony at me.

If you are reading this and hoping that I have some erudite answer...I don't. Sorry.

I will, however, say this: There is a thing in our medicine called homeostasis, the tendency for systems to

find, or to return to, balance. Unfortunately humans are pretty good at taking on stress, adapting to it and calling that the new normal. The body then responds and adds on more stress and calls *that* the new normal. Well, that's all fine and good, but a system can only do that until one too many stressors causes the collapse of the system due to unresolvable internal strain as a response to internal and external stress.

A loss of balance is created by the things to which we cling and which disturb our inner sense of calm...our inability to recognize that “this too shall pass”. Much of our imbalance is due to fear. As one of my Judo teachers used to tell us... “We are all afraid of everything, all the time, so face the fear and do it anyway.” In this case we have an individual, societal and global fear. So what is a body to do? Face the fear and do it anyway? That's a choice.

We either let circumstances control us or we control circumstances. We have choices, we can become enmeshed by fear, or we can liberate ourselves from the chains of fear. It might not change what we do from day to day, but boy, the effect is gonna be huge. We have choices about what we choose to do moment to moment.

In so far as I am able, I choose finding moments of balance and harmony. I cannot change the world, nor do I have pretensions of being able to do so. I can, however, control what I choose to feel and think, and thereby affect in some small way the energy field of my interactions with those around me.

You see, it's all a choice...what do you wish to manifest in the world in this moment? How do you wish to affect the world in this moment?

Fear

Humans are such interesting creatures...what are we doing in each moment of life?

The simple answer is: 'struggling to survive' as individuals and as a species.

Really?

Well, yeah, Abraham Maslow aside, that's pretty much it.

Well OK, there's a bit more to it...why do we call it 'struggling to survive'? And what does that imply? Of course it implies that we might *not* survive.

So what does that tell you? We have fear...fear that we won't survive...either as individuals or as a species.

My answer to that is: "So what?"

The planet was fine before we put our footprint all over it. The planet will be fine when we are gone. It would be paramount hubris to think it would be otherwise.

OK, so that's not really helpful, but it is a starting point of a sort.

So let's unpack this a bit.

Humanity's greatest fear, it seems to me is fear of death...the recognition that each of us either writing or reading this newsletter will end our mortal (physically embodied) existence after a finite span, the length of which seems unknowable for each of us.

Now let's come back to the "So what?". What if we were not afraid of death? What if we embraced life for what it is: An uncertain journey full of experiences, a.k.a. lessons in what we each perceive to be a physically tangible universe.

Is that it?

Who knows, but it is what most of us *do* know, so why not embrace it for what it is.

If I let go of my fear of death does it mean I become reckless? Heck no! It means that I am liberated to live to the fullest. It also

means that I live with more focus, meaning and consideration of my actions.

It is curious to me that almost all major faiths and religions in the world talk about the immortality of the soul...some spiritual part of our being that transcends the portal of death...and yet...

Yet, we are still afraid of dying. We cling to life because it is, for most of us, all we know.

At the risk of sounding dismissive, it really doesn't matter that the religions of the world talk about immortality of the soul, or even *how* they talk about it. What matters to me is a) that they do, and b) what we do with the information.

Suppose for just one moment that we accepted that the soul is immortal and that we really are spiritual beings having a human -physically embodied- existence.

How might that change what you do, think or feel from moment to moment?

Suppose for a moment that each of us is here to learn something...what are you learning...Right Now?

Interesting question.

Are you learning lessons driven by fear or lessons driven by freedom from fear?

That might be a tricky question to answer.

When I coached elite martial artists, in order to help them reach their potential I used to find out what motivated them. It seemed to me at the time that we are either running away from the things we don't want in life, or towards the things we do want.

In brief, that means we are either seeking pleasure or avoiding pain. OK, I apologize to all the psychologists amongst you, but cut me some slack here...alright?

If we are running away from what we don't want, we are responding out of fear...fear of failure, fear of success, fear

of rejection...whatever. If we are running towards that which we seek, we are seeing a potential self out there. A potential self that is attainable. A potential self not constrained by fears, but liberated by the freedom of possibility.

I ask you...are you your very best self? Have you fully tapped your potential?

OK sure, I grant you that in this moment you can say, absolutely, yes...but...now project into the future. Is there more to attain? You see, the goal posts of actualized potential are always moving relative to our current perspective.

Now...and this is the central thesis of the article...if the spirit is immortal and the physically embodied experience that we call a mortal life is just a series of lessons, what then?

What portals of possibility open for each of us?

What fears drop away?

What freedom appears in place of fear?

OK, you can bring back Maslow now, complete with his pyramid. At the bottom end we have survival. At the top end we have self-actualization.

It's a call to action.

Living with fear of death is living to survive for the longest possible time.

Living to actualize our fullest potential calls us to cast aside any fear of dying because it is just a chimera, created by our perception of a mortal body.

I can't speak for the rest of you, but I find huge comfort and peace in this awareness. There is so much to learn, to experience and to let go....from my current vantage point in life, this is all very liberating.

***“The wise person possesses humility.
He knows that his small island of knowledge
is surrounded by a vast sea of the unknown.”***

Harold C Chase

Patience and Wisdom

If there is one thing the generation of instant gratification does not do well, it is patience.

And...if there is one thing that we seek, but about which we have little practical understanding, it is wisdom.

I am no expert in either, but what I do know is that the former is a re-requisite for the latter.

Patience with what is, is, however, difficult for many of us to muster. It doesn't come easily. We want things the way we want them, when we want them the way we want them. Unfortunately the desire for change leads to resentment, frustration, anger, sadness, dissatisfaction; in short ...stress.

Not exactly a recipe for patience.

It is hard for us to sit with what is and be grateful for what is, just because it is...well...what is.

If we don't get what we want, we want to change things.

It's only natural. Isn't it? After all isn't that where all progress comes from? A dissatisfaction with the *status quo*?

The truth of the matter, however, is that the patience of which I am speaking here, is an acceptance without judgement.

Ouch!

Not an easy thing to do at all.

Patience asks us to be at peace with what is, accepting that 'what is' will change in its appointed time without resorting to forcing change for the sake of enticing what we want to manifest, when we want it.

Even if we go back to the idea of progress and invention...there is a seed of the evolutionary about it.

Evolution of anything takes time. Evolution can only occur when the time is right. It doesn't matter whether we are

talking about the evolution of life over spans of geological time, or the invention of new technology, a societal change or a person's character...it all takes time...and can only occur when the timing is right.

And...here's the rub: We cannot judge what was by our new perspective. In short we cannot judge the past by the present.

The past is what was, not what is, and therefore cannot be measured by the standards of the present. To do so would be like expecting a child to be responsible for abstract thinking and then punishing the child for an inability to think like an adult.

So...be patient, let the present be what is, let the past be what it was and let the future unfold in its own time. Wherever you are in your own journey, be patient. Let it be. It will change when you are ready.

All of which brings us to wisdom. Wisdom is not some Gandalf-like or Galadriel-like, all-seeing, all-knowing wizard or elf-type character, nor is it a Dalai Lama-type character.

Wisdom is accessible to each and every one of us...all the time. Wisdom is the sublimation of knowledge out of the theoretical and into the experiential realm of practical application. Wisdom is therefore practical, not ethereal.

Wisdom is often learned in the School of Hard Knocks, but just as often it can be learned by an openness of spirit, a willingness to be taught by life...to see the larger lessons at work rather than the immediate 'must have' moment.

Wisdom is the result of learning and application, of patience and understanding.

Do you see where I am going?

Patience is the necessary hand servant of wisdom. The latter cannot possibly occur

without the former.

Even the wisdom or penetrating insight that comes in a blinding flash of inspiration does not arrive without much prior foundational work.

The foundational work can also look a lot like failure to the uninitiated. How many attempts did it take Edison to invent a light bulb?

Failure or no, there is always tilling before planting, patience before growing and patience before harvesting. Things cannot be otherwise...no matter how much genetic engineering or technology we throw at the concept.

So what makes any of us think that we can short-cut our way to wisdom?

Be patient, see the world as it is...truly see it for what it is and not what you want it to be. Struggle less against the things that you *don't* want and embrace all of it as a series of lessons leading inexorably, inevitably towards a wisdom of the spirit. Move towards what you seek, but do it with patience, tenacity, determination, commitment.

Accept where you are here, now, and move from that space into the future with gratitude for each lesson learned.

Patience reduces stress, releases fear and opens the mind and heart. Patience allows us to see opportunity. The inevitable result of patience is a freedom to be, see and live in the moment without requiring it to be different to what is.

In short?

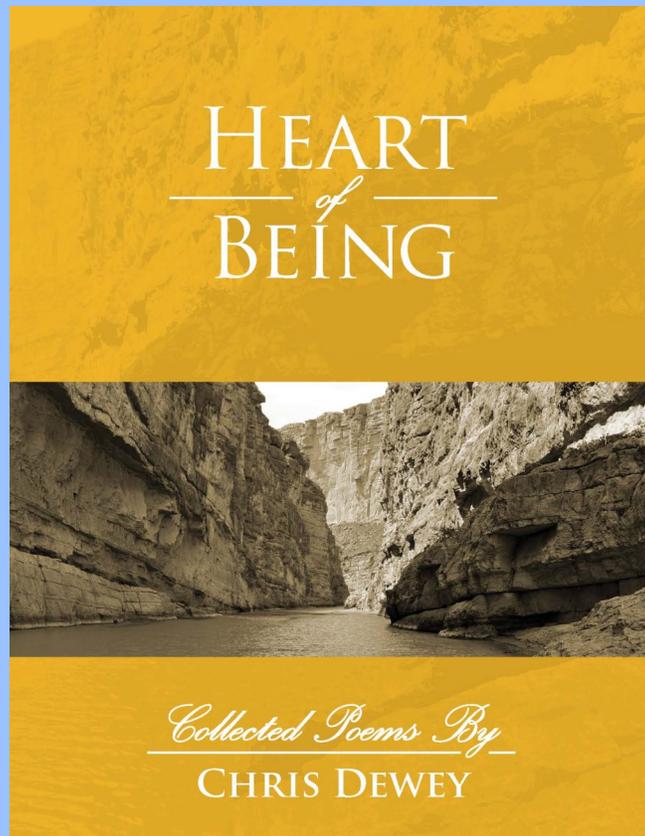
Wisdom in action.

Patience and wisdom grow in the soil of opportunity, of lessons learned, no matter how hard those lessons might be for us in the moment.

How are we doing? Are we patient enough to stop and look to see?

“This time cannot fail to teach us enormously about our planet, about family and humanity, about treating nature with the utmost respect, and about balance in our own lives”

Anonymous in an English Garden Center



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