

Pathways

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Follow your bliss

Joseph Campbell

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Shopping at the GAP

Have you ever considered how much we talk about what we *don't* want? Or how about this one...the things that we aren't? For instance: I'm not good at math, or I've got a terrible singing voice, I've got no head for business....the list goes on.

The problem is fairly obvious...in all these settings, we are describing what does not exist. We are, in effect, defining *nothing*. The net result of course, is that's what we create for ourselves...nothing.

These might be tough words to hear, but think on it for a moment.

If the words of Earl Nightingale have any validity, we bring into our lives what we think about the most. So if we think about what we don't want...that's exactly what we get.

If I think I am no good at math, then all the study in the world will change nothing, because, well...I'm no good at math.

So how do we change it? Could it be as simple as changing my internal dialogue? Possibly.

Think about your dominant thoughts as having some sort of purchasing power. You buy into what you think about. If you think about what you don't want, you'll buy into what you don't want. If you think about what you do want and can accomplish, you will be buying into what you do want.

O.K., so you've heard it all before. But let's take it one stage further. The more you focus on what you don't want, the further away what you do want gets. In essence a gap opens up between what we say we want and what we think about. The thoughts of inadequacy, or lack, or inability can

overshadow our dreams and our reality will then reflect the distance between our prevalent thoughts and our original dreams and goals.

Of course, I'm perfectly willing to admit that I'm simplifying some fairly dense psychology here, but the notion remains valid, our thoughts define our reality. So the question becomes this: What do you want to think about? You have choices.

You can focus on what there is to learn or achieve, or you can focus on your inability or lack of skills. They are just mirror images of the same thing. One will get you more of what you want, the other will leave you frustrated.

I can give you a very concrete example: Studying for exams. It's easy to look at a body of information and see it as overwhelming, that you can't possibly learn it all in time...and if you repeat the line often enough, it will become your reality.

Conversely, you can study consistently, confident in your brain's ability to absorb and make sense out of a mountain of new data.

Either of these thought patterns will create a feedback loop that will be reflected in your exam performance. As one of my dear friends and Judo coaches, Jim Bregman, used to say "Whether you believe you can, or believe you can't, you're right."

So I guess it's up to you. Do you want to use your thoughts to shop for nothing, or do you wish to spend your thoughts on worthwhile purchases...it's all about bridging the gap between where you are and what you want. ☺

How to lose your 'but'

One of the hardest things to do in life is to accept that everything you know about yourself is a limitation of some sort.

How many of us can truly say we have lived up to our potential? What *is* my potential as a human being? What is that anyway?

Look at some of those statements in the first paragraph of the last article. What is written there, is not just a series of statements about 'self', it is also a comparative statement about 'other.'

Let's take one the hardest ones for me to deal with: "I'm not good at math." Not only am I creating a limiting belief for myself, I am also creating a default condition in which there are others out there who are good at math, and that therefore by extension, I'm not as good as they are. And that, by extension, becomes the *status quo*.

So what emerges then are the self-limiting structures that we use to define 'comfortable.' It is these same structures that prevent us from embracing opportunities, from seeing beyond our 'limitations' and from reaching our potential.

And here's the kicker...I can hear you say, "Yes....but..."

So to move on with the article...we might talk about the future, we might say we've got plans, *but* often we are firmly rooted in the past and the narrow definitions that we have set for who we think we are.

O.K. that was harsh too. **But** ☺ how often do we let our past experiences

define what will happen in the future?

In an effort to hide from that nasty little truth, we compensate with 'should', 'need to', 'ought to', 'try' and so on.

For example: "I should get a better job, but..."

"I'll try harder next time, but...."

It's not the 'should' that kills your dreams, it's the 'but'.

Ponder on this for a moment with me. How many times do we say something and then stick a 'but' on the end of it?

For instance: "I love coffee, but I like mine black and strong."

The truth?

Don't give me weak coffee with milk or sugar in it. I actually have a very narrow window of what is "acceptable coffee." In fact, I can be a real 'but' about coffee.

So you can extend this to any area of your life you want. For instance: "I want to spend more money on marketing my business, but I'm not sure I can afford it right now."

If you get the 'but's' out of the way, plans become clearer and more positive.

Go back to the example:

"I want to spend more money on marketing."

Good. How?

Do you see the difference?

By removing the 'but' you really start to plan. Things become possible, excuses vaporize. Without a 'but' you don't have challenges anymore, you have opportunities.

Let's try another one: "John you've done an outstanding job on the manufacturing process and were want to give you a pro-

motion, but..."

Is John getting a promotion?

Do you see what happens? The 'but' pretty much negates everything that went before it. The 'but' justifies the excuses that follow.

The formula is almost always the same: *Personal pronoun + desire or action of some description + BUT + excuse.*

But...It takes courage to plan and not give yourself the safety net of an excuse.

But what if I fail?

And what if you do? What then?

Have you ever heard the question "What would you do in life if you knew you could not fail?" Perhaps it's the wrong question. On the face of it, the question is full of possibility.

It is amazing to me though, the number of times the answers come back with a 'but' attached.

What *does* it matter if you fail?

I would like to suggest that if you are committed to discovering your potential it might be time to look at something other than your 'but'.

Instead of asking the question about not failing, maybe a better question might be: "What are you willing to believe about yourself?"

What are you willing to risk, when all the but's are removed and you stand there vulnerable without a safety net?

It's scary. Absolutely it's scary.

And what's more, you *might* fail.

Then again, you might just succeed and open up new vistas of opportunity that you previously only dreamed of.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not telling you to plan without careful consideration, or awareness.

I am simply suggesting to you that you do not sabotage your plans with a few well chosen, and debilitating... 'but's'.

It's all up to you. ☺

In life, we cannot avoid change, we cannot avoid loss. Freedom and happiness are found in the flexibility and ease with which we move through change

Jack Kornfield

Happy, Happy, Joy, Joy

Following on with the theme of this newsletter, I would like to ask a couple of questions that have been with me for a while...O.K., years.

Question One: When is "Now" a good time?"

Question Two: "If not "Now" then when?"

Question Three: What are you waiting for?"

So in the spirit of this newsletter, let's think about some common thoughts that might have crossed your mind, maybe...once or twice in your life.

"I'll be happy when I'm out of debt."

"I'll be happy when the semester's over."

"I'll be happy when I get over this cold."

"I'll be happy when....."

Does any of this really matter?

No, seriously, think about it for a moment. When I was taking my coaching class, in one of the sessions we were invited to consider what we want from life. We all spoke up, and every time one of us stated a life goal, the instructor said "Nope, that's not what you want."

At one level she was absolutely right, we didn't really want any of the things we stated, we wanted something else.

In real terms we all seek happiness, peace and love in our lives.

The problem arises when we believe that 'the other stuff' will get us the happiness we seek. It won't. I'll grant you that it may make a fine band-aid, but it won't fill the void.

The trick, of course, is to be happy with what you have, with who you are and yet

be thrilled by the prospect of change and growth.

I am not the first to suggest that happiness is entirely up to you. You can have it now, later, or never. It's your choice.

You can make happiness dependant upon the size of your bank account, the right job, the color of your wallpaper or the right mate. But if you do make that decision, I might be willing to suggest to you that you will never be deeply happy, because happiness has become contingent. Happiness has become something that's out there, not in here.

Happiness will always be the promised reward of a day that never quite gets here. And the reason is really very simple.

Once we have achieved something that we said was a condition for being happy, we will create a new condition for being happy and delay the onset of happiness. How sad.

You can call me dense, but it took me a few years to get this. Shortly after I opened my first business, I hired a life coach to help me work through some goals and plans. My first business/life coach kept asking question number one: "When is now a good time?"

I kept coming up with excuses. Why I wasn't ready to publish my poetry, why I wasn't ready to (fill in the blank). But what was truly sad, was that it wasn't about the excuses I made, it was what the excuses represented: I was not good enough to be happy and to *enjoy* success.

So I filled my life with perfectly reasonable-sounding excuses. Of course I'd be happy one day, just not now. Well, not yet.

I had passion, I had goals, I had determination, I was happy enough. Really?

As a part of an ongoing evolutionary process that has involved several coaches,

mentors, books and meditations and soul-searching, I have let some preconceived notions of my life go in order to embrace the notion that I am good enough already... or put another way I am all ready to be happy.

Or put another way: Now **is** a good time.

O.K., truly embracing that statement was something like step 28, and it has taken me some time to work out the kinks.

The first step though was that I started to focus on my internal language...was I promising myself something, "if"?

Anytime I caught myself doing something like that, I'd re-state the idea. Basically it was a process of becoming attuned to, and aware of wishful thinking. "I wish I was better at...", "I'll be happy when...", "If only...then..."

Once you start to notice your own internal dialogue, you can short-circuit the process and rewrite the language. Each time you rewrite the language you are re-training your brain process and creating a new habit, or thought program.

One of the unseen benefits was that I began to see life as a series of opportunities, rather than a series of problems to be overcome. Next I began to see that there are lessons to learn all around me. And lastly, I began to realize that I could be happy in the midst of the process. I didn't need the right 'anything'. Yes, those 'right circumstances' were nice, but they did not prevent me from being happy *in the moment*.

Happiness becomes an undercurrent of life if you wish it to be so. Sometimes the current runs deeper than others, and sometimes I will want to remind myself that the current is there to tap into. The point is that there is much to smile about each and every day, and when you start expecting to smile, magic happens. ☺

Time flies like and arrow fruit flies like a banana

The Marx Brothers

Search

We search for beginnings at the end.
We search for meaning in the result.
We are blind in the moment,
Because we lack the insight
To see beyond the shell of existence,
That we each create moment by moment,
In our effort to define what is.

To step beyond,
Is an act of faith,
Of courage,
And intent.

And so we cling,
Attached without reason
To the delusions of ignorance.

Poem excerpted from:

SEEING
and
BEING



Collected Poems By
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