

Pathways

THE CHRIS DEWEY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER

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“It is not death that a man should fear, but, he should fear never beginning to live”

Marcus Aurelius



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Soul Train

In the last issue, I spoke about getting on the thought train. I have also spoken recently about SMART goals.

In this issue, I would like to blend those ideas and talk about the Train of Life. We are all on it, and we all know where it leads.

So instead of talking about the destination, let's chat about the journey.

Looking back over more than six decades, I am beginning to take a different view of the journey. The journey of life is the essence of life. So let's ask ourselves some questions:

How do we choose to live?

What goals do we set?

What things do we achieve?

Do we fail, or successfully discover things that do not work so well as we might hope?

Do we give up, or find new paths?

Have we been lost, or were we a pioneer?

Have we had the same experience over and over or have we lived a life of diverse experiences?

Are we snared by our fears or reach to discover our potential?

Are we tied to the past or always looking for something better in the future?

Do we live with a sense of gratitude for all things?

Are we fully and completely HERE, NOW?

Some of those might be tough questions to answer. Some might even make us squirm if we are honest with ourselves. Good.

You see the fact of the matter is that the train of life never goes backward. It might get shunted into a siding, but you are still sitting on the train as time ticks inexorably by.

So all of this comes down to how we choose to spend the time we have.

We have choices. We can choose the path of the victim or we can choose

the path of the creative spirit. In truth, most of us have probably done a bit of both. But I ask you: Which choice gave you the most satisfaction and greatest sense of vibrancy?

I am not saying that the train ride will always be easy, but that's not the point is it? It is not about how easy the ride might be for any stretch of the journey. It is more about how we choose to respond to the seemingly easy and the difficult stretches and how we choose to be defined by those experiences.

It would be totally fair to say that my life has not gone as I expected, although I have achieved almost every goal I have set for myself...just not in the ways I expected.

So here is a key element: It is important to understand the motivating force behind your goals, so that you can use both tenacity and patience as well as the willingness to adapt and adjust along the way. Knowing what motivates us to want something is an important element in understanding how the achievement of the goal might play out. Perhaps, even more importantly, the knowledge reveals how we will respond to twists, turns, bumps, hills and uncertain terrain that we encounter along the way. It is all too easy to set out on the journey, wanting something, but never understand the reason for wanting it, or more importantly, the intention behind wanting it. If we lack an understanding of both reason and intent, then it is difficult at best to negotiate the uncertain terrain that we will almost certainly encounter.

At some point you will draw your last breath in this life. When that moment arrives, what would you like to be saying about the journey that you just took? ☺

Voices...I hear voices.

To whom do you listen to in life? Who makes your decisions for you? Interesting questions aren't they? You might even have a knee-jerk response to them, but the actual answer could be a little bit more surprising than you might have imagined.

One of the exercises I do with my coaching clients is called the Board of Directors exercise.

It seems like a bit of an odd exercise to begin with, but when we stop and examine our inner dialogue, it makes a lot more sense. The key words here are 'inner dialogue'. So who in fact am I talking to when I have an inner dialogue?

Each of us has multiple aspects of our character and each of those character states has been molded by our experiences of life.

Possibly the most obvious voice is that of the Inner Critic, the Gremlin, Inner Child, call it what you will. I am sure you know who I mean in your own life. It's the voice that tells you that you are not good enough, smart enough, beautiful enough, rich enough...*whatever!* We also have other characters, some of whom are brave, resourceful and tenacious. Others are timid, uncertain and doubtful.

All of the inner voices clamour for attention and some of them gain more air time and clamour more loudly than others. Whenever you are working on coming to a decision, the voices will be there.

If I take some of the big decisions of my own life like: Do I want to move to Canada to do a PhD? How much do I really want to be a university profes-

sor? Do I really want to open a business? Do I want to take early retirement and go to Oriental Medical School?

Some of those decisions were relatively easy, others were not at all easy. Some of them kept me awake at night until I found the right answer for my life...which is to say: The decision that was congruent with my life values.

Each of these questions was an opportunity for my inner voices to impact my big life decisions. Each decision changed the course of my life and the lives of those around me.

Given the potentially life-changing effects of our decisions, it is critical that we understand how we reach a resolution in the decision-making process. From that perspective then, it is important to know who it is who is making the decisions.

Of course the voices are also at it every day, perhaps in less impactful and more subtle ways, but the key point right now is that voices to which we grant power will be the voices who chart the course of life.

Let's say I gave power to my Inner Critic who tells me that I am not smart enough or good enough. Would I have gone to Canada for a PhD? Become a university professor? Opened a business? Gone to Oriental Medical School? Moved to Wyoming to open another business?

Doubtful.

The job of the Inner Critic a.k.a Gremlin, a.k.a Inner Child is to keep me safe and secure, and for that I thank the voice, but what it most definitely does not do, is make the big decisions

of my life. If I gave the Inner Critic that much power, I would never do anything of significance, because well, I simply wouldn't be good enough. On the plus side, when its energies are channeled correctly, the Inner Critic *can* be an objective Voice of Reason.

So who made the big decisions in my life? The Risk Taker? The Adventurer? The Poet? The Martial artist? The Geologist? The Healer? The Teacher? The Scholar? They are all there, exerting pressure in one way or another. Sometimes the voices sing the same song, in which case the decisions are easy, sometimes they tug at each other, in which case, the decisions are not so easy to make. If that is not enough there are other voices: The father, the son, the brother...

Do you see where I am going now?

The Board of Directors exercise is a way of identifying each of the voices with whom you dialogue, get a gauge on their main interests and likely their age. Also, you get to decide who you want as the Chairman of the Board. Think: Which voice deserves primacy of position?

Knowing who the voices in your head might be, helps you to understand the decisions that you make and what is motivating those decisions.

Sometimes it can be challenging to know what is the right move to make in life, but if you can understand how your mind works when you are in the process of making a big decision, it will be easier to make the right decision at the right time for the right reasons. ☺

***“The most fatal illusion is the settled point of view.
Life is growth and motion; a fixed point of view kills anyone who has one”***

Brooks Atkinson

Value added

Well, it seems that this newsletter is about big life goals and decisions. Not sure why that might be, except that for some of you I have no doubt it is going to ring home.

The last thoughts I have on this topic for now, concern our value sets and how they guide us in the decision-making process and the achievement of our goals.

The last time I addressed values was in the February 2016 issue. Back then, I addressed values from the perspective of the rudder on the ship of life. Today, I want to discuss values from the perspective of goal-setting and decision-making.

The point here is that when we are making big life decisions and setting life goals (either short or long-term), we can compromise our own value set in the process and end up chasing after something that is not truly who we are.

Some things that feel like they work, might not be actually what I really feel called to do in life. Maybe an example might help.

Let's say that I am intuitive and want to go into nursing, because I think I want to care for people. Let us also say that what really aligns with my value set is that I can see things that others don't and get a real joy out of fixing things that others can't fix for themselves.

It might take me a while to figure out that I don't really belong in nursing or the health care system, but am in

actuality a brilliant mechanic. It might also take me some time to figure this relationship out for myself, especially if the voices (both internal and external) push me towards health care, and I see playing with engines as a hobby.

So how do my values line up here?

If we stay with the example, clearly I value service. That much is obvious, because both career paths are congruent with the notion of service. In both cases the idea of service revolves around the notion of providing something that someone else cannot do for themselves (we are all, after all not as independent as we like to imagine).

A lower level value might be related to the notion of resolving seemingly difficult problems using my intuitive and analytic skills. Maybe I like the challenge.

Perhaps it is here that the two career paths diverge. On the one hand, I may not always be able to 'fix' things for my clients as a nurse, but I believe I can always fix an engine given the resources and time. In one career I meet with frustration, in the other I meet with success because I get to control the outcome. Aha! There's the other value. I like to be the person in the background fixing things and I alone am responsible for the outcome. So responsibility becomes a value. The value isn't about control, it's about autonomy...give me a problem, give me the resources

and the time, let me get on with it, and I will give you a working solution...that's what I do.

Now ask yourself a question: Are these the words of a mechanic or a nurse?

Yeah, I know, it's a fictitious example, but can you see the point? By understanding how my decisions align with my TRUE values, I am going to end up being of greater service in the world and live a happier life as a result.

Let me finish with this: I worked for thirty plus years as a professor and a geologist. In all those years, if you total the actual number of days that I spent really working...I probably worked for less than six months during the entire time. The same is true now as an acupuncturist. Despite the fact that I am supposedly "working", I am having a total blast and love what I do...I haven't worked for a single day since I retired as a professor and graduated from Oriental Medical school.

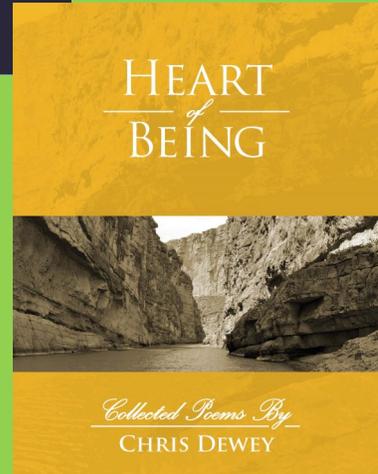
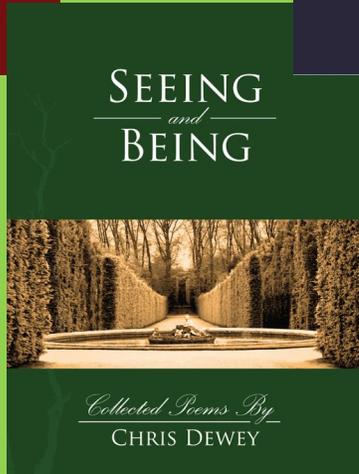
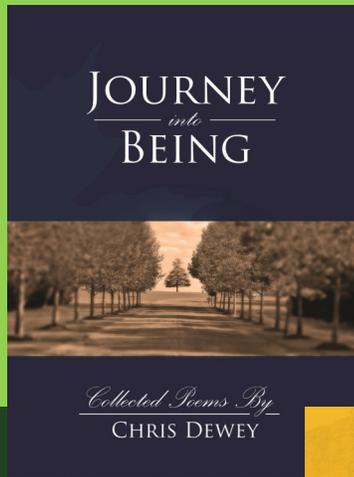
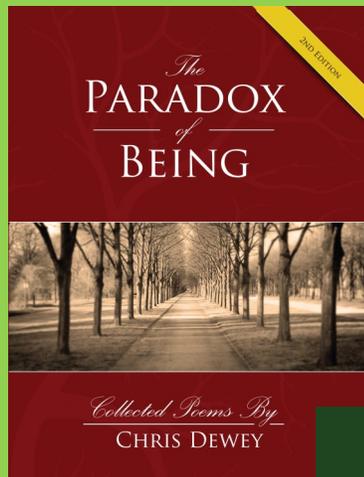
Bottom line? I am aligned with my values. I am listening to the correct voices in my life and the train of my life is still taking me to some amazing and breathtaking places.

All of which speaks to my highest life value...but I am not going to tell you what that is. You only really want to know your own top values and how they guide you through the decisions of life. Happy journeying!

☺

“Progress is always the product of fresh thinking, and much of it thinking, which to practical men bears the semblance of dreaming”

Robert Gordon Sprout



A life of poetry, all available on Amazon.com or direct from the author

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