

Pathways

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“Each moment describes who you are, and gives you the opportunity to decide if that’s who you want to be”

iPEC training manual

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Live at the cause of your life

So some of the feedback I got from the last newsletter, focused on what I mean when I talk about living at the cause of your life.

For the most part we understand the notion of ‘cause and effect’, and how it plays out in our lives. We can, however, end up spending a lot of time living at the effect end of that plexus. Living at the effect of your life means that you are living a life of reaction, rather than living a life of pro-action. Additionally, it means that we live at the tactical response end of engagement rather than the strategic end.

So what does that mean?

The upshot of living at the effect end of your life is that there are effects that are beyond of our immediate control, and sometimes, once the effects gain momentum, we get carried along in the flow of events, seemingly incapable of creating change until the events lose their energy.

A graphic example might be living through a hurricane and rebuilding after the event. None of us has the power to avert a climatic event. We can plan ahead and make wise choices, but once the hurricane hits, we are at the mercy of the storm until its energy is spent. Once the storm is over, we can begin the process of rebuilding.

Many of us will never live through a major natural disaster, but there are plenty of minor examples in daily liv-

ing that we could cite, from getting involved in an argument, to racking up credit card debt.

If we take the latter example for instance; it is easy to spend money without really thinking through the eventual consequences of the action. Running up credit card debt removes financial flexibility, incurs interest payment costs over and above the initial cost of the items and reduces the purchasing power of each dollar earned. In this case we end up living at the effect end of the transaction because we find ourselves in the position of dealing with the add-on consequences of the long-term debt.

So what about living at the cause of your life? How does that work?

Living at the cause of your life relates to notions of intent and focus. Think in terms of knowing what you want and taking deliberate action towards moving in that direction. The idea has relevance at all scales of life, from the most minor of events to the great purposes of your life. Living at the cause end of your life gives you choice, and allows you to be proactive, rather than reactive. Living at the cause of your life is about having a vision for living and making it your mission to live the vision. (even in the little things).

How much freedom of choice would you like in your world? What could you do to increase your degrees of freedom? ☺

Dying to Self to really live...killing the story

One of the interesting things about putting myself back into school after retiring from an academic life is that my old story no longer applies.

I am no longer the martial arts business owner, I am no longer the university professor. Curious, that.

Given that I now own a life performance coaching business and am full-time student in a professional graduate program, means that my world has changed in profound ways from what it was just a couple of years ago.

In a very simple way as a university professor and a martial arts business owner, I was always expected to have the answers.

As a student, however, I am in the position of acquiring new knowledge, so I have questions...lots of them.

Ditto that as a professional coach. In coaching, I ask questions and believe that my clients have the answers within them. In the role of coach I am acting as a catalyst for personal change for my clients. I help them get from where they are to where they want to be more efficiently and more rapidly. What I don't do, however, is give them answers...that's not my job.

In order to successfully negotiate my new world, there is a degree of letting go that is required. Perhaps it is a lesson in humility, but I think that there is a lot more than that to it.

I have talked about this before. We carry our past like an identity badge, and what sustains the past is the way we think about it and how we carry it forward from moment-to-moment.

One of the things that I have learned as a student of Traditional Chinese Medicine, is that a lot of my standard paradigms

are getting challenged and I am learning to look at the world with new eyes. What that means is that the visual acuity has acquired new dimensions. I suspect that this holds true for any acquisition of new knowledge...think about learning a foreign language for instance...what was non-sensible babble becomes intelligible conversation as the knowledge of a new language deepens.

Another thing that I have learned is that the voice of the inner critic can have staggeringly damaging effects upon my ability to learn and grow, so it is time to face those demons head-on and let them go.

My point here is that in order for me to be successful in this, the latest iteration of change in my life, I am required to take skills that I have used in the past, refine them and use them in more effective ways, discover new skills, and let go of old barriers to growth.

So here, finally, is where the title of the article comes home to roost: The story that we carry from the past brings with it the voice of the inner critic (the Gremmlin), the assumptions we make about how things tend to play out, the interpretations we make about what things mean when they happen to us, and the limiting beliefs that we acquired as we grew up.

So here's the deal: If you knew that your past held you back in some way, what would you want to do about it?

Think of your inner critic, and the assumptions, interpretations and limiting beliefs like heavy weights that prevent you from running at top speed. Give yourself a minute to visualize the image. How does that look to you? More to the point: What would you do if you did not carry the extra weight?

Dying to self involves entertaining the notion that some of what you think (inner critic, assumptions, interpretations and limiting beliefs) might actually be preventing you from reaching your potential.

The learning to live part of the title is about cutting the old story adrift and entertaining the idea that there might just be more to you than you previously thought. It is also about the idea that this thing we have called life, is a place to make bold discoveries about self, a place to discover what is humanly possible!

Now there's a nifty idea for you!

So just how liberating would it be for you to cut the story loose? What would it take to do that? (Yes, that was a pair of coaching questions).

These are scary questions.

We have taken a lifetime to build the characters that we parade around. We built our stories carefully, one event at a time. Cutting the story adrift is a scary thing to do. Since we often define ourselves by our stories, cutting them adrift leaves us with lots of 'what if' questions. How wonderful is that?

So *what if* I fall flat on my face?

Well, I have been doing Judo for most of my life (another part of my story), so my answer is simple: "I get up and I do it again in a slightly different way and see if I can generate a different result."

Cutting the story adrift leaves us feeling a bit naked and vulnerable, and perhaps not a little bit uncertain, but that's O.K., because there is always something new to learn!

As one of my Judo coaches used to tell me: "Face the fear and do it anyway."

☺

***"No problem can be solved
with the same level of thinking that created it"***

Albert Einstein

Make it happen, watch it happen, or wonder what happened

In part, this article goes back to the first article about living at the cause of your life.

We are all familiar with the quote I used as a title, but let's look at what is really at work here.

If we live at the cause of our lives, we make things happen. I'm not talking about forcing our will on the world here. I'm talking about the idea of having a vision of what we would like to create with our lives, and moving it from the idea of a vision to the actions of a purpose-driven life.

If we live a life that is risk-averse or fearful, we may have a vision of what we want, but we never take the necessary actions to bring the vision to life. We may see other people achieving the things we would like to do, but we never actually do them for ourselves.

If we live at the effect end of life, we can sometimes find ourselves looking at other people and wondering how they got to do the things they do.

Now let's bring back the Gremlin or inner critic, the assumptions, the interpretations and the limiting beliefs from the last article. The Gremlin keeps you safe and secure, and by definition, small. That's its job, and it is so very good at its job. Your Gremlin will always explain in wonderfully logical terms why you are not good enough to do whatever it is that you can imagine. The assumptions will tell you what is going to happen if you take a particular action, because that's just the way it always plays out....So what's the point?

The interpretations will tell you what it all means according to what you think you learned in the past. Our conditioned interpretations, by default, do not permit the possibility that some event could be interpreted in a different way from the way in which our story has explained it thusfar.

Finally, our limiting beliefs are the social, religious, cultural, political, economic and familial 'truths' that we accepted as we grew up.

Ultimately, a limiting belief is something that we accepted about ourselves, about other people, about the world, or about life in general that created some sort of limitation in how we act in the world. A simple example I have used in the other newsletters is that 'I am no good at math'.

Put this lot together and we can generate a lot of energetic drag in our lives. The net effect of the energetic drag is that forward progress becomes difficult and we experience difficulty in 'making it happen.' At the same time, we can watch it happen all around us, and we can wonder why other people *can* make it happen.

In short, the energetic blocks in our lives keep us blind and shackled, unable to live life full out.

So the opportunity here, is that we all have energetic blocks of one sort or another. We all have the opportunity to discover what they are, how they affect us, and what we can do to remove them.

I suspect that what separates those who 'make it happen' from the rest is that people who make it happen are

willing to recognize their energetic blocks, overcome them, and remove them as obstacles to forward progress. So just exactly how do we do that?

Well, obviously the first step is to recognize that we might actually have some energetic blocks. The second step is observing how they might be acting in our lives. This stage is tricky, because we do everything in life to gain some sort of benefit....or avoid some sort of pain (the avoidance of which is, itself, a benefit). So what benefit do you derive from your energetic blocks. How valuable is that to you? Using my example of math as a limiting belief...if I steer clear of math, then I can avoid the pain of failure or embarrassment.

Once you know what blocks exist in your view of the world, you can begin work on removing them by changing your internal dialog, and embracing the opportunity for different action. This part can also be tricky, because some of our reactions are almost knee-jerk reflexes. It takes mindfulness, awareness and the willingness to see alternatives before we can invoke novel choices and different actions.

Lastly, we recognize that we are a work in progress and that there is always more work to be done as awareness deepens...so we offer ourselves and those around us the gift of empathy and compassion...after all...we're all doing the best we can with what we've got, given our current state of personal awareness.

So, what would you like to make happen next? ☺

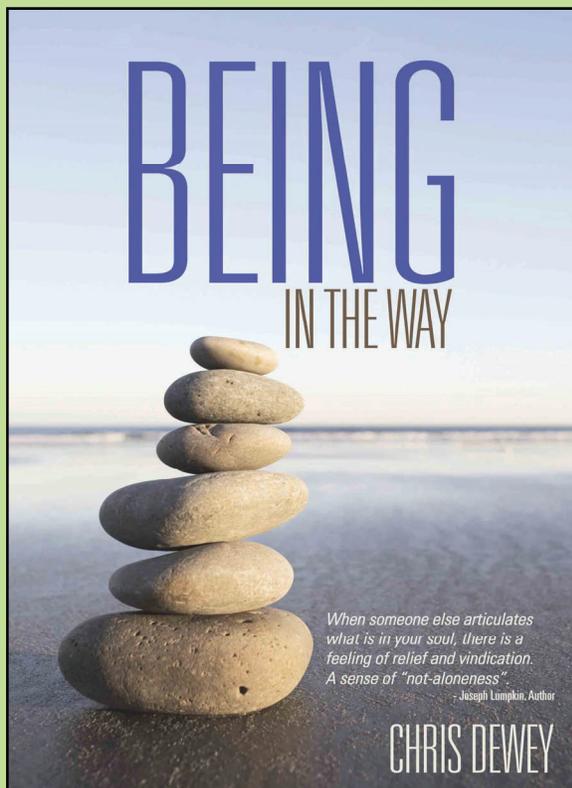
“Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice”

William Jennings Bryan

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For Martial Arts Instructors

