

It's Never Too Late To Give Up

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As paradoxical a title that this might appear, I have discovered to be truly successful at our own personal happiness, it is in the realizing that giving up is a readily available option at any moment in time. Ironic I know. Our entire life we are confronted- nearly bombarded- by the mantra of “never give up”. We have built a culture out of efficiency- efficiently and effectively doing things before it's too late. Even after hearing all the stories of people who have been on their deathbeds only to realize their entire life's work-ethic of going into obtaining titles, accolades and accomplishments meant nothing in the end. How most people in this end of life scenario comment only on how they had wished to simply have spent more of their time with loved ones, or dedicated more of their life to exploring their creative outlets.

Anyone who has dealt with major life upheaval or a threatening health crisis will say the same. The very pulse that has kept me going over the years is the fact that I have become closer and closer to realizing that the key to personal freedom lies dead center in the fleshy palms of our own hands. I believe this is the key to healing all our wounds as well- in the acknowledgement of what is and what isn't working. How to say no to a past-self- perhaps an inadvertent insidious self.

This past self is the self that has established as sense of nostalgia deep in our bones that may or may not be based on reality, as is often the case in the human mind. These blissful mental images and movies tend to take the creative license in glorifying a past image or event that never truly existed. It is in the clinging on to this past self that can maintain an illness, injury or emotional wound as it continues to stay associated to a certain ideal, identity, career, relationship or standard only true in the terrain of the mind. In fact to heal, it can be as simple as relinquishing ourselves of this past identity. This relinquishing has profound power to open us to the unlimited possibilities that exist at any moment in time, as long as we are able to truly absolve that which tethers us to the past. I think this is healing.

Over the past couple years in my own seeking to heal, let go and move on, I have become increasingly interested in how people become who they are. There has been three characters along my journey who specifically got my attention in regards to this inquiry: a mechanic in San Diego, a wood sculpture in Vancouver Island, and a bookstore clerk in New York. What did all these people have in common? They all gave

up, so to speak. They all used to be something entirely different and each one at a very poignant time in their lives came to a decision that giving up was the only viable option that could offer them their happiness. What does this mean? Well, the mechanic gave up his career at a prestigious university as a biology researcher for what he considered a better life of beach living and more socializing. The sculptor left his career of practicing Law to escape to the redwoods and learn the fine art of wood-manship. And the bookstore clerk made the exodus from his career as a historian to a less academically demanding life that still nurtured his desire to read and learn, only at his leisure.

The lessons that these individuals has shared with me, unbeknownst to themselves, was that even though one might have invested money and countless hours and precious decades into building a career, an identity, and a purpose, if the summit ascended doesn't feel appropriate or in alignment, then it is okay to try another journey. It is in the giving ourselves the option for taking a different path that can bring levity to an unhappy immediate situation. This is the most selfless act we can do- to be our most authentic gift in the world. As it is those very selves, not the roles or the masks behind titles and experiences, but instead our best selves that will inspire and change lives.

When I was teaching teen circus arts up in Northern California at the age of 25 one of the fathers asked what the next step for me was at that point in my life. I gave him a long laundry list of my hopes and dreams, that was delivered with a frantic energy of needing to implement my plans all at once. He looked at me kindly with eyes that had seen far more years that were possible for me to comprehend at that stage and said "life is long, enjoy it."

So I'll leave you with this, life is only short if that is the mantra we have been singing to our weary souls. It is the elders and the wise that understand that no matter what physical barriers time might entail, it's the nuances of discernment, the unpredictability of attraction, and the liberty of the endless possibilities to the creative spirit that reminds us- no, in fact, this life is long, enjoy it. And if you stop enjoying it due to the myriad of things that shake the human condition, perhaps it can be in giving up a piece of you associated with that past self that you can in fact give more options and opportunities to a future life and a future you.