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Living things vs nonliving things

This quote from poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson is a simple reminder that we often prepare endlessly while never actually actively pursue what it is that we want. Practice is certainly important, but without applying it to real action it is nearly pointless. It's easy to get in a path of endless preparation. You want to be your best. You want to come out of the gate being great. You don't want anyone to see the imperfect process, filled with failures, that lead you to something great. While you don't want to move forward until you're ready, often times you're ready before you know it. And there's a value in failing—it's one of the best ways to learn. So if you've been privately practicing for awhile now, consider moving forward. You may not feel ready yet, but better to give it a shot than wait forever. Photo by Seth Sawyers. 50 Quotes on Living Well | Psychology Today "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." -Friederich NietzcheHospital beds are filled with people whose bodies are connected to machinery that keeps hearts pumping, lungs expanding and contracting, tubes providing nourishment and draining excess fluids. These are external forces offering life sustaining activity. It may very well be, that in combination with an intangible... the will to live keeps them from crossing over the line between this life and the next. In recent conversation with a friend, she posed the question: "What do you think gives people the will to live when they are in chronic pain or when faced with serious illness?"This came in the midst of the hospitalization of two friends. One is in an ICU, following open heart surgery and the other is receiving major doses of chemotherapy and radiation for metastatic cancer. Both have made it clear that they although they know death is one possibility, they have no conscious intention of "leaving the building" at this time. Is it fear of death or love of life that helps us to remain incarnate? When visiting the second friend a few days ago and then today, she related that she wants the hospital staff who have been carring for her to "love my life as much as I do." She was propped in bed, wearing pretty pink floral pajamas. Her hair was combed and she had a sparkly headband at the ready, should it become unruly. At the foot of her bed was a laptop computer. Although the nurses sometimes chided her for working when she should be resting, she retorted, "What if I live?I will have all this work to catch up on when I get home." She also made it clear to us that if she was to die, she wanted to be sure her co-workers knew what needed to be done in her absence. Two friends and I visited and offered her Reiki. We get the strong sense that she is there to teach the staff how to work with patients who don't fit the typical mold. She looks far better than they expect given the prognosis and what they view as the norm. Decked out in Hello Kitty jammies with strawberries on them, newly showered, her hair being brushed by her wife, sense of humor intact big time. She joked about many things. Then she mentioned this song, feeling that she was ready to play centerfield. I pulled it up on my phone and all of us in the room bopped around to it, including her. I made a sign to put up on her bulletin board that reminded staff that there was absolutely no place for negativity in that room; only love, only healing intention. She said that she thought she was there to give the staff hope; not the other way around. The other friend who had the cardiac surgery and is still receiving dialysis and is breathing via a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine that is predominately used by people with sleep apnea, has a strong desire to continue on this side of the veil. He has a wife and many friends who are praying for his recovery. The strong support system, he has acknowledged, has helped greatly. What Gives Life Meaning? When asked this question, responses included: "The promise of tomorrow. The beauty outside. It does change from day to day sometimes moment to moment moment to moment moment to moment moment to moment times it is not but I ignore the not times. I don't want to leave that kind of legacy to my young ones. Surely I can do better than that! Leave them with intangible things worth living for. "Sharing my joy and how I increase it gives my life meaning. In physical illness, I know there is a way out and it will be revealed. Depression is my cry for help. My guide grants me hope. My spirit assures me it's true. It changes day to day because there are so many aspects of me that the each require time and attention. This is me grounding, refining, nurturing, teaching, learning, exploring, enjoying and expanding." I don't always have the will to live, or at least not for myself. What has typically pulled me out of it has been the desire to help somebody else, knowing I was needed to help them. I suppose if I had children or people in my life who literally needed me, that would be my answer. But since I don't, it's usually the need of an outsider. I can somehow put them in the way no one else has chosen to do." "Knowing that we are all here for a reason... learning lessons from past lives to hopefully "get it right" this time to be able to move forward to the next chapter... at least that's what I believe today!""I was a caregiver for a decade for my late husband. He REFUSED to give in because he didn't want to leave me. After he transitioned, my will to live became a testament for those that lose the struggle, like my husband. I feel as if I do not live life to my happiest... I am slapping people like him in the face." "Knowing that life is impermanent. Indian masters have said that to come into a body is a powerful way to heal a soul, because we can reach out and get help. I am reading a text called A Course of Love that speaks about unity consciousness. It takes a village to get me through. When I am depressed, I have to reach out, sometimes at 4:00 in the morning and ask someone if I can sleep on their couch, because I am that scared."In an article written by John Grohol, Psy.D, entitled The Power of the Will To Live, he explains that in anticipation of pivotal events, such as holidays or birthdays, people have the capacity to hold on a bit longer, if they are facing death. They are referred to as "ceremonial finish lines," over which they want to cross before giving themselves permission to die.Is it fear of death, self-preservation or purpose that keeps the heart beating? Is Depression Draining the Life from You? Depression is one of the most prevalent mood disorders and can be caused by genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Each person responds in a different manner to the occurrence. Signs and symptoms of depression include: Self-described or other observed persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" moodFeelings of hopelessness, or pessimism ... "Why bother?"Uncharacteristic irritabilityFeelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness... "I don't matter."Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activitiesDecreased energy or fatigueMoving or talking more slowly; a feeling of heavinessFeeling restless or having trouble sitting stillDifficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisionsProblems sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleepingLittle desire to get out of bedEating too much or restricting foodAppetite and/or weight changesThoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attemptsA therapist who has worked with clients who have either expressed suicidality or acted on the commensurate impulse to end his or her life, observed that what prevented someone from following through with the outcome that led to death, was a stated will to live. Sometimes the reason de'tre is another person, or a milestone achievement, such as a child's graduation or wedding. Others have said that they are continuing to live for their dog or cat. She noted that learned resilience was a key factor. When people are able to look back at life events and determine that they have survived each of them, they are better equipped to move forward. In conversation with someone in crisis, she asked what had gotten him through previous challenges. He had learned helplessness that was no longer serving him. He reported that relying on his parents was his M.O. Now that his father has died and his mother is in a nursing home, he needs to formulate a new strategy. Another person reported that her parents had "taught me how to live without them," so that when she feels overwhelmed, she calls on her resiliency reserves to get her through every eventuality. Even in her darkest moments when the thought that "it would be better if I wasn't here," that certainty that she would emerge triumphant helped her to keep on keepin' on. The will to live is a powerful force that can be generated and sustained in the face of love. monkeybusinessimages/Bigstock Give In Honor & Memorial Sign Up For Email Cancer A-Z Stay Healthy Treatment & Support News Our Research Get Involved Our Partners About Us Search "The trouble with the rat race," the great management guru Lily Tomlin once observed, "is that even if you win, you're still a rat." For years, Mark Albion ran at the head of the rat pack. Every step of the way, he built his career on a succession of triumphs. He earned three degrees at Harvard University: a bachelor's in economics, an MBA, and a PhD in business economics. In 1982, at the age of 31, he won an appointment at Harvard Business School, the West Point of capitalism, where he taught marketing. His success at Harvard attracted attention: He appeared several times on "Nightline" and was profiled on "60 Minutes" as part of a new breed of marketing wunderkind. He was called upon to help the best and the brightest: Blue-chip companies such as Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola flew him in for advice on how to fine-tune their brands. He had brilliant colleagues, unlimited resources, few bosses, a flexible work schedule, and personal wealth. Oh, and one other thing: He was miserable. Without realizing it, Albion — a go-go guy with rapid-fire speech and the ability to function on four hours' sleep — had allowed himself to get trapped in the rat race. He had always believed that he was on this planet not just to make a living but to find a way to enrich other people's lives. But in his quest to get ahead, he had left his core values behind. Albion was making a great living; he was failing to make a life. If there is a promise at the heart of the new economy, it is this: We should all do work that matters. Today, we all put in too many hours, and accumulate too much stress, to work at something that isn't personally engaging and rewarding. That said, far too many of us are willing to accept the notion that the new economy's promise simply doesn't apply to us. We still trudge off to work in the morning, tacitly accepting that we're stuck with whatever life deals us — or, alternatively, that while our work may be unsatisfying, at least it provides the material definition of success. As a result, we feel that we're forced into making a fateful, either-or decision: Either make a life. Mark Albion has taken on an audacious challenge — to replace the "either-or" with a "both-and." His mission is to demonstrate that you can make both a living and a life. In 1988, Albion chucked the prepackaged definition of success that had buoyed him at Harvard. But what was he going to replace it with? He wasn't sure. But he knew one essential thing: He had to do work that mattered. Albion never did find the right "job" — but after much struggle, he invented one: He launched an electronic newsletter. He started a business. And he wrote a book, "Making a Living: Reclaiming Your Purpose and Passion in Business and in Life" (to be published in mid-January by Warner Books), which profiles 11 high achiever, Fast Company founding editor Alan Webber), who found their way into work that mattered to them. Recently, we turned the tables on the author and asked him to recall his own search for work that matters. "It's a difficult journey," Albion cautions. "There's no road map." But there are fellow travelers. Albion's trip report shows you how to connect with those travelers. Albion's trip report shows you how to navigate your escape from the rat race. Face It: You're LostIn a recent column for Career Central for MBAs (www.careercentral.com/mba), Albion wrote about the day that his father, as a 19-year-old radar navigator in the air force, flew his first mission over Germany during World War II. Before he boarded his plane, Donald Albion made an utterly courageous decision: to wear the Star of David (a symbol of his Jewish faith) when he went on his missions. "He knew that if his plane were shot down, his chances of survival would plummet because of that star," writes Albion. And yet, he couldn't afford not to wear it. "We aring the star was a declaration to himself of who he was—and of who he was—and of who he was—this challenge daily." That challenge, says Albion, is to take a cold, hard look at those unvarnished questions that often get lost in the day-to-day grind of work: What do I believe in? What are my values? Am I doing work that matters? One semester, Albion surveyed his retailing students to find out what they wanted most out of Harvard. Their answer was unanimous: to learn how to make more money. He didn't begrudge their desire to "make it" — not when he was already making a lucrative living himself. In fact, he'd often quipped that his big goal in life was "to find a way to be a Marxist and still have a Jacuzzi." But he was stunned to learn that many of his students had the sole goal of increasing their net worth. "It all started to feel wrong," he recalls. "While my high-paying, high-prestige job made me the envy of my neighbors, I could feel the life being sucked out of me." Albion had to face facts: Something vital was missing from his work — and, for that matter, from his life. Consult with People You TrustDespite his misgivings, Albion couldn't quite bring himself to give up the good life at Harvard. He could have gone on like this for quite some time. But then he got the "wake-up call from hell." Albion's mother, Leni Joyce, was on the phone. She arranged an urgent meeting with her son. "I have something to tell you," she said. "I have cancer." Albion was devastated — and also amazed. Despite her illness, his mother, who owned Leni's Inc., a high-end textiles company in nearby Watertown, Massachusetts, continued to drag herself into work on a regular basis. "She would lie on the floor of her office, overwhelmed by fatigue," he recalls. "But the company and its people meant so much to her that she refused to give up." He was stunned by the dedication his mother, now 71, displayed. Never in a million years would he do the same thing for Harvard. And that realization opened his eyes. What he needed in his life was to connect to his work in an elemental way. Ultimately, his mother survived two operations, a round of chemotherapy, and the cancer itself — a near-miraculous recovery. Albion realized that his mother's passion for her work, and her life, came from thinking of her work and her life as an integrated whole. At the same time, he knew that mattered. He shared his dilemma with several senior faculty members at Harvard — friends (and one mentor) whose respect and opinion he valued. Their feedback came as a shock: They too had experienced many of the same doubts about teaching MBA students, and they wouldn't blame him if he bailed. "For the first time," says Albion, "I felt I wasn't crazy or just a big whiner." Albion left Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he "Professor Mark Albion, Harvard University in the summer of 1988. No longer was he was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held to be a summer of 1988. No longer was held t Business School." Now he was simply "Mark Albion." He was on his own. "I knew that nothing would really change until I looked inside myself," Albion says. "What did I want to do? Something that would make me happy? Yes. Something that would prove fulfilling? Yes again. Once I allowed those thoughts to surface, I ran up against the usual fear and doubt: Great idea, Mark, but how will you make a living?" Albion knew he wanted work that would mesh with his personal values. And he suspected that such work would somehow involve combining business with some kind of service to a larger community. He decided to use a training program that he'd created at Harvard as his escape hatch. A few years earlier, he'd developed seminars to teach senior executives how to leverage their PCs to help them make business decisions. Albion decided to continue those classes, but with a twist: He included interactive video disks (then a new innovation) in the curriculum. This was not exactly a project worthy of Albert Schweitzer. But he thought that it would make a good exit strategy. Albion was in for a rude awakening. To round up business for his new project, he began calling all of the CEOs who had once sought him out when he was a hotshot without a portfolio, his messages weren't being returned. But while searching for backers, he was introduced to the Social Venture Network (www.svn.org), a group of 400 socially conscious business executives, investors, and entrepreneurs. There, Albion discovered a core group of like-minded people with whom he could trade ideas, find inspiration, and not feel like a complete misfit. His new network of contacts introduced him to a video producer who had invented a character to promote antidrug messages. Knowing a marketing opportunity when he saw one, Albion believed that he could transform the character into a big-time brand. "It was the ultimate win-win situation," he says. "I'd get to run a profitable business that had a socially constructive mission." He worked up a business plan, recruited a management team, and nearly launched a company called Children Against Drugs Inc. But despite his great expectations, things quickly fell apart. After a year of work, Albion was back to square one. "That company was the ultimate platform for me — it became my real passion," he says. "It was an incredible setback when it failed." Follow Your Heart — and Listen to the New LogicBut once again, Albion's new network of colleagues came through. For several years, they'd been mulling over a way to reach out to business-school students who wanted to "do good" after they graduated. After much conversation, Albion and his colleagues hit on an idea: Launch a group called Students for Responsible Business. The mission: Form chapters at business schools throughout the country, signing up students who were looking for work that was both personally and financially rewarding. Albion spent much of the next few years on the road, speaking at business schools across the country. He worked relentlessly — and he had the time of his life. To keep in the road, speaking at business schools across the country. touch with far-flung members of the organization, which was later renamed Net Impact (www.net-impact.org), he started communicating through the Web.Creating a newsletter seemed like a good idea, a chance to write and expound on his thoughts about corporate responsibility. So he launched "ML2: Making a Living," an electronic periodical that is now read by about 2.5 million students and executives in 87 countries. Although publishing the newsletter was extremely rewarding, it wasn't making any money. And it wasn't making any money are for-profit arm of Students for Responsible Business, which would help recent MBAs use their knowledge and talent to make a living and contribute to the greater good. Thus was born You & Co., which helps attract MBAs to companies that are socially responsible. He calls this new kind of recruiting "heart hunting." At last, Albion had found a way to integrate his passion with making a living. He has come full circle. "I've realized that what I really am is an educator," he says, "someone who wants to teach and who enjoys listening to people talk about their lives." Like any good teacher, Albion has taken away a life-altering lesson from his experience: The only way to find true "balance" is to make your passion and your work one and the same. "When my doctor asked me how many hours a week I work," says Albion, "my immediate response was, 'I don't know, John. How many hours a week do you breathe?' It's one integrated whole." Albion is the first to admit that his personal crusade to meld his livelihood with his life is a work in progress. "We are all on a journey in which we must constantly be recasting our direction," he says. To ensure that his own journey — and that of the businesspeople with whom he works — stays on true north, Albion makes one observation and poses one question: "According to the "New York Times," nature has allotted no more than 1 billion heartbeats each to all living things, from mice to elephants. What are you going to do with your billion?" Freelance writer Anne Field (annearf@aol.com) also contributes to "Business Week" and "Worth." Action Item: Starter KitThe best place to get Mark Albion's take on work and life is Mark Albion's own writing. Start with his book and audiocassette, "Making a Life, Making a Living: Reclaiming Your Purpose and Passion in Business and in Life" published by Warner Books. You can also take Albion's monthly Internet newsletter, "ML2: Making a Living," is a mix of profiles, quips, and quotes. Download it free of charge from the You & Co. Web site (www.youcompany.com). Sidebar: It's Time for a Change "Nine out of 10 people who call me, desperately looking to change their careers, wind up staying in their jobs," says Laura Berman Fortgang, a 37-year-old career coach based in Montclair, New Jersey and the author of "Take Yourself to the Top." Most of the time, says Fortgang, people don't need a drastic overhaul to make their work rewarding; they just need some fine-tuning. But how do you know whether you're that 10th person — the one who needs to make a big-time career change? Fortgang suggests looking for these three signs. Your work doesn't mesh with your life. Here's an example: You travel every week, staying over for days at a time at sleek hotels. You used to love that life. But now you're married, and you have kids. Now living out of a suitcase isn't a blast — it's impossible. But globe-trotting isn't optional. In other words, no travel, no job. "In that case, there's no hope," says Fortgang. If your work severely clashes with your life, you have nowhere else to go but out the door. You've outgrown the job. Ask yourself why you chose this work to begin with. You wanted to work on cool technology? You planned to make \$1 million before you turned 40? Whatever your goals, if you've realized them — and you couldn't care less — the implications are serious: The job no longer jibes with who you are. You've fixed the things that drive you nuts — and you're still miserable. Maybe you've come to an understanding with a control-freak boss. Or you've slashed the red tape that ought to turn Monday mornings into happier occasions. But they haven't. In that case, your dissatisfaction with your work is now a chronic condition — and it won't clear up until you find work elsewhere. Coordinates: \$13.99. "Take Yourself to the Top: The Secrets of America's #1 Career Coach," Warner Books, www.warnerbooks.com; Laura Berman Fortgang, lbf@intercoach.comSidebar: Stay Put, Change JobsYou'd be hard-pressed to find a more fiercely determined woman than Jill Jeffrey. She is, after all, someone who played professional basketball for a year, even though she's only five feet tall. After she joined EDP World, an IT recruiting firm in New York City, it came as no surprise to anyone that she quickly became one of the company's top recruiters. And that was how she measured her success: being one of the top billers. But after three years, Jeffrey started feeling that her performance — and her enthusiasm for her work — was slipping. Something was missing. She decided to sit down with the firm's two owners, lay it out, and hope for the best. She followed these guidelines. Don't sweat the details. Jeffrey didn't go into the meeting with a clear blueprint of how to restructure her work. But she knew the bottom line: She wanted to play a major role in the company's decision making. And that's how she approached her talk. "I told them that I should do more to contribute to the company — and we took it from there." Be prepared to leave. Jeffrey didn't intend to issue an ultimatum, but she was ready to walk if things didn't work out. "I went in prepared for the worst," says Jeffrey, 41. Armed with that resolve, she was able to convey the urgency of her situation. Go with the flow. Jeffrey didn't try to control the conversation. Instead, she gauged the owners' reactions as she talked. Was she a disappointment? Did they want her to stay? Then, once they agreed to let her take on more responsibility, she let them turn the meeting into a brainstorming session. Her strategy worked: Together, in a follow-up meeting, they drew up a new job description. Today, Jeffrey supervises a group of 15 new employees and helps plan the company's recruiting strategies. "I'm using my abilities to their fullest potential," she says, "and that's made my work even more rewarding."Coordinates: Jill Jeffrey, jillj@edpworld.comSidebar: Take a Break, Make a BreakFive years ago, Denny Stone was ensconced in a high-pressure job managing proposals for Computer Sciences Corp. in San Diego. But things fell apart when his wife of two and a half years died of cancer. Stone felt that he just couldn't go on. He sold his house and left the company, determined, he says, "to figure out what was important." He embarked on an unpaid, two-year radical sabbatical and ultimately returned to CSC — to a completely different job. How did he ensure that his time away from work didn't turn into a waste of time? He acted on these three principles. Reconnect with your passion. For years, Stone had been fascinated with race-car driving, but he had had little time for it. Now, however, he threw himself into his avocation: joining clubs and even building race cars. It was challenging, gratifying work — and it helped him get reconnected with the things that really mattered to him. Take on new experiences. After a while, Stone decided not only to drive race cars but also to teach others how to drive them. The experience turned out to be a revelation. "I found that helping people see things they might not otherwise have seen was as much fun as doing it all myself," says the 41-year-old Stone. He'd never taught before; he discovered that he loved it. Listen to people you trust. To learn if there was a place for his newfound interest in the world of work, Stone turned to his "board of advisers": consultants he'd worked with, friends at CSC, and family members. After months of lunch meetings and phone conversations, he and his colleagues developed a new job for him at CSC: training new employees and helping employees at all levels hone their leadership skills. Says Stone: "I don't check my life at the door when I go to work anymore, and then pick it up on the way out. Life and work are no longer separate." Coordinates: Denny Stone, dstone@csc.comSidebar: Life Change, Work Change Motherhood had the usual effect on Cynthia Cunningham, 38, and Shelley Murray, 45, BankBoston branch managers who ran operations worth \$100 million and \$250 million, respectively: Motherhood made it impossible to keep up with the 60-hour workweeks that they'd once accepted as a fact of life. It didn't, however, make them give up on their career goals. But how could they meld their work with their changing lives?. Two years ago, they hit upon an audacious plan: to package themselves and share one job. Here is their strategy for changing jobs without changing companies. Network like hell. Cunningham and Murray wrote a letter advertising their accomplishments, attached their résumés, and delivered the package to senior-level people with decision-making authority at BankBoston. They followed up with phone calls and eventually met with 15 executives whose paths they normally wouldn't have crossed. Find a backer. After two months of networking, they hit pay dirt. A high-level division head suggested that they connect with the division executive of the bank's Foreign Exchange department. His group was creating a job that would fit their skills — teaching branch personnel and small businesses how to sell their services to customers. Sell your merits, not your needs. They approached the pitch meeting as if it were a regular job interview. They highlighted their ability to make tough management decisions, and they made a convincing case for their organizational skills — critical to a successful job-sharing arrangement. The upshot: Each woman now comes in for a 20-to-25-hour week, sharing a vice president-level job at a "significantly" higher salary. They both participate in committees at their children's schools, and they intend to keep climbing the corporate ranks at BankBoston. Says Cunningham: "I won't claim we'll make CEO, but it could happen." Coordinates: Cynthia Cunningham, crcunningham@bkb.com; Shelley Murray, ssmuray@bkb.com

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