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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 NietzscheHospital 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 caring 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?! 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 day to day sometimes moment to moment.”For me, it does change from day to day. Starting down death lately does have a way of addressing this very important question. Sometimes the will is there and other 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 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 evening. Even in her darkest moments when she 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 living or 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 Life, 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 achievers (plus one dubious 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 — and 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. “Wearing the star was a declaration to himself of who he was — and of who he wanted to be.”I come from a different era,” Albion continues. “We had no popular war, no common enemy. Yet I do know that 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. 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