

Quality #5: Finding Joy in the Journey

Joy and Sorrow

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OG MANDINO FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Joy and Sorrow

The question has been posed, “What creates or threatens joy at this deep personal experience in the here and now?” Let’s explore the topic of joy and suffering.

When we engage in fantasy driven by vivid thought processes or other forms of counterfeit pleasure designed to anesthetize reality, we can get a very unrealistic perspective of life. Fantasy does not have bad breath, body odor or normal bodily functions. It has no bills to pay, no work to do, no schedule to keep. It never gets ill or has any accidents. It never gets discouraged, frustrated, disillusioned or angry. While in fantasy our car never breaks down; we never have to work late; nothing ever gets spilled; everyone gets along; there is always love at home; committed relationships are filled with courtship, romance and intimacy; babies never poop, throw-up or cry; everyone does what they are supposed to do when they are supposed to do it; there is never an emergency or imposition; the sun is always shining; and everyone obeys the traffic laws and drives curiously.

Was your response, “That would be nice.” But would it really? Joy requires opposition in all things. To know the good, we must know the bad. To see the light, we must know the night. To feel the joy, we must first know the pain.

In one of my favorite little book, *The Prophet*, Kahill Gibran shares the following. He writes, “Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow. And he answered: Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.”

Og says it this way, “I have been given eyes to see and a mind to think and now I know a great secret of life for I perceive, at last, that all my problems, discouragements, and heartaches are, in truth, great opportunities in disguise. I will no longer be fooled by the garments they wear for mine eyes are open. I will look beyond the cloth and I will not be deceived.” I unmask my sorrow.

Kahill continues, “And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears. And how else can it be? The deeper that sorrow carves into our being, the more joy we can contain.

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Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hallowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy."

Put this to the test. The joy of being out of debt is heightened by the depth of pain experienced when buried in debt. The joy of being with a loved one lost to years of addiction who is now becoming whole and complete is heightened by the pain of past memories – the destruction and damage. The joy of intimacy is heightened by the amount of love, devotion, sacrifice and service and hard work invested in the partnership. The joy of summer is heightened by the memory of a long winter.

In what ways has passed sorrow heightened new found joy in your life?

Kahill continues, "When you are sorrowful look again in your heart and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, 'Joy is greater than sorrow,' and others say, 'Nay, sorrow is the greater.' But I say unto you, they are inseparable. Together they come and when one sits alone with you at your board (your table), remember that the other is asleep upon your bed."

He concludes with a very subtle principle, "Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy. Only when you are "empty" are you at standstill and balanced."

In other words, to avoid joy and its inseparable partner, sorrow, we must be empty – dead – unfeeling - disengaged. Would we want to be empty to be balanced?

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Then the warning, “When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and his silver, needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall”

When life shows up and it always does, will it lift our joy or will it lift our sorrow. It will be one or the other. The only temporary antidote is fantasy – it’s temporary joy is counterfeit and the price that it exacts for this fleeting moment of repose is always counterfeit sorrow. Living life brings with it moments of sorrow and moments of great joy. Live life, experience joy and sorrow with open arms. Be alive. Grow.

Too often we want the joy without the sorrow. They are inseparable. We can fight this immutable principle or we can embrace it. Life is a laboratory – a journey. If we are to find joy in that journey we will want to embrace sorrow.

It what ways has your life been a laboratory for experience? It what ways has sorrow helped you stretch and grow?

Og took us one step farther in this quest in Scroll X: I will seek guidance. In this scroll, Og encourages us to accept obstacles and challenges.

Why would we want obstacles, challenges or sorrow? Isn’t life tough enough already?

We will experience disappointment and sorrow, heartache and sadness. It is part of life. We cannot avoid it. If we cannot avoid it, why not embrace it? If we expend energy avoiding, resisting and even attempting to escape from it, we end up in even a worse place and impede growth. If we resist it and even rebel against it, we will live in resentment and anger.

Yet if we embrace it as part of the journey and see it for what it is, an opportunity in disguise – and opportunity to grow – to become the very person we want to become, we can be about the work of growing instead of resisting and fighting. The energy expended is moving us forward not holding us back. And when we grow, we see everything differently. We rejoice and our joy is full. That which caused our sorrow is the foundation of our joy.



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A little weird huh? Not really, just a little different from how the world wants it to be. But wanting it to be different doesn't make it so. The world will offer all kinds of distractions in an attempt to avoid sorrow. In the end most facilitate additional sorrow – more than what is really required to grow. Yes, detours create even more sorrow. Why take one.

Commit to stay true to the principles that create success. Embrace sorrow when it comes knowing that you are about to grow and with that growth will come a requisite amount of joy.

In truth, when we finally experience this deep sense of joy, we really wouldn't want it any other way.