

My Quest

Today's Meditation - We all have our own ways of viewing life. Some people see it as a game or a competition while others see life as a great adventure. Still others might see it as an exercise in survival. For years I struggled to find my own view of life. I wanted to live life as an opportunity to experience love and joy and to be able to be the best person I could be, but this ideal was drowned out by my own desperation and dysfunction. I was always in crisis and seeking a way to end the pain. My ideal remained just ~~that~~ that. Sadly, it took coming to prison to see that all those crises and all that desperation - they were ghosts, self-made illusions.

Anyway, today I have found a way of viewing life that I find extremely helpful, comforting, and rewarding. I see life as a fantastic quest, a quest for what? A quest for transcendence and fulfillment. For me life is about learning ~~how~~ how to transcend my lower nature, to let go of ego-attachment and the Great Distraction, and to wake-up, as Buddhists might say. Wake up to my true potential and it is here where the quest ~~is~~ truly begins. Now I am trying to actualize my true nature, to let go of ~~the~~ conditioned programming that has been running my life for years (life-times?) and come into ~~my~~ the potential that is at the core of my being. Learning to love, to accept, to fulfill and live in harmony with the spiritual potential of life.

This quest is ~~is~~ spoken of in all the great myths. The work of Joseph Campbell is fascinating in regards to this. But I'd like to suggest that we think of what this view really means to us.

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In the book The Alchemist Santiago is sent on a mysterious quest for treasure, but what led him on this quest was a dream. I'd like to suggest that God, life (whatever you wish to call it) puts dreams in our hearts and it is in the journey and struggle to make this dream a reality that we begin our quest. Our dream, whatever it may be, mine is to create LifeQuest, is what guides us and motivates us. It is like a beacon calling us forth and only when we have the courage to throw our heart and soul into achieving our dream are we able to begin our quest in earnest. Until then we are merely distracted by life - paying bills, acquiring status, numbing our pain with pleasurable pursuits (I know this one well!), we are fascinated by the Great Distraction and until we have the courage to truly go after our dream we lead busy, empty, or frantic lives without true purpose. If we wish to begin our quest we must find out what our dream is, then we can go after it with all our hearts. The journey of the quest is similar for everyone, hence popular mythic archetypes and patterns, but our dreams are unique, these babies are ours. I wish you the courage to begin the journey of making your dream a reality and so take the first step on your personal ~~quest~~ quest of self-actualization and enlightenment. Good luck, fellow travelers!

Current Events - I just completed the ~~retired~~ advanced AUP weekend (Alternatives to Violence Program). It was a truly transformative experience. At one point we were doing an exercise called The Sharing. Now try to imagine this: Twenty or so convicts sitting in a ~~circle~~ ^{circle} sharing their deepest pains, being totally vulnerable. Big, bald, tattooed guys crying, tissues being passed around. Amazing! What I learned is that no matter who you are, no matter how much ego, bravado, or dysfunction

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is operating in your life, each person still has that beautiful core inside, and we each struggle with tremendous pain. Each of us is engaged in an epic battle between our hurt, ego-attached selves and our ideal, core self and we each hold a lot of pain. Even guys who are normally careless, violent, selfish, ignorant and the rest, even in these guys I was able to see ~~their~~ their struggle, their pain, and their beauty.

That said I struggle a lot in relating to people, I'm prone to be easily frustrated. For example, my cell-mate is a great guy as far as cell-mates ~~can~~ go, but he has an amazing arsenal of annoying habits! There are times when I find myself absorbed in frustration and judgemental thoughts. I tell myself that he is usually a great guy, he is one of God's creations and holds a ~~be~~ core of great beauty and potential. I try to think how his ~~own~~ struggles in life are just as hard as mine and that he hurts from these struggles like myself, ... but I still want to ~~tell~~ ~~to~~ him, "knock that shit off, asshole!" Luckily, I'm able to control myself these days, and I know that this is my issue, not his. This is an obstacle I am currently facing. My tendency to get annoyed so easily continually throws me off track - distracts me - from the work of loving people and ~~and~~ moving forward on my quest. One way I deal with it is to first try to find love for myself, to appreciate myself, ~~then~~ once I do this I try to extend this love and appreciation to the person I'm annoyed with. It works, ... when I do it.

I won't be going to Norfolk Prison. It might be between 6 months to a year before I can get a move. Oh well. Now I'm working on getting myself into a single-cell. They use "seniority" to decide who gets single cells. I've been here for nearly 4 ~~year~~ years, but I went to Seg. (the hole) last December for yelling at an officer. I'm told that my seniority date ~~now~~ is

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now reset to December, 2010, I'm working on getting that changed. I had been on psychotropic medications for twenty years, but in late 2009 I was slowly weaned off of them. 2010 was a year of adjusting to life without meds.

I actually had to feel the ~~the~~ full force of my emotions, take life head-on without any buffers for the first time - no drugs, no alcohol, no medication.

I made fantastic ~~progress~~ ^{Progress}, but the adjustment was extremely difficult. I went to the hole 4 times in 2010. ~~A~~ My institutional record does not reflect that kind of behavior.

Adjusting to life without meds ~~was~~ clearly a difficult process, I did have a manic episode in June, 2011. Wasn't able to sleep for 3 days straight and my mental functioning was nearly non-existent.

Because of that incident I ~~do~~ still take a light ~~of~~ sleeping medication.

My bipolar is controllable if I'm able to sleep, ~~and~~ I still cycle, but I can function in a healthy way. If I cycle without the help of a sleep med. I'm

unable to sleep then I reach a full-blown manic episode. My hope is to be able to come off the sleep med as well, but this is a highly stressful environment. Without the ability to meditate at night I can't reliably get the sleep I need, I've tried many times, but without meditation and

being in such a high-stress place, I ~~must~~ must rely on the help of a sleeping aid. I'm not happy about it, but the alternative has proven not to be an option at this time.

Anyway, I was told that if my therapist ~~do~~ informs administration that 2010 was indeed a year in which I ~~do~~ was adjusting to a significant medication change, then my seniority date will go back to 2007. Wish me luck! Single-cells are like gold around here 😊.

Quest info - In the book The Celestine Prophecy, it was suggested that we all have a spiritual lesson to learn in this life. Now, I don't buy into

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the entire ideology of this book, but some of its points are of interest to me. If we look at the story of our life, we can generally find a theme of some sort, ~~repeated~~ as if we keep having the same issues over and over again for a higher purpose. I think it is to our great advantage to figure out what our spiritual lesson is, so we can get to the work of learning it! Then, maybe, we can put an end to those recurrent issues and move forward to the next step on our quest, more experienced and armed ~~to~~ with wisdom.

My spiritual lesson is to learn how to not look to people or circumstances to gain my sense of well-being and wholeness, but instead to draw my sense of wholeness from God, myself, and Nature. All my life I was desperate to feel whole, loved, and "okay", and I sought to fill that void through people or circumstances - two outside forces that are not in my control, two ~~sources~~ ^{sources} that, in truth, are incapable of fulfilling those needs. Now I must learn to gain my sense of wholeness from the truth of my being, from God, and Nature. Once I can do this I will no longer feel the need to seek love from others, instead I will be free to ~~love~~ love rather than needing to love. The difference ~~is~~ is life-changing.

What's your life lesson?

Puzzles - last week's answer: What goes up must come down
New Puzzle - eye cexcept - what popular phrase does this represent?

Daily Quote - "It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere." Agnes Repplier