

March 12, 2012

The Tao of the Hamster Wheel #2

On January 22, 2012, I embarked on a campaign to run a marathon (26 miles) once a week. Since I run this distance on Sunday, I called the workouts "Sunday Specials". As of yesterday I have completed 8 marathons in 8 weeks and just for the record, the novelty for consecutive weekly marathons wears off at 4. :)

For me, I have discovered that it is important to clearly define my relationship to the things that I do. This way when I find my resolve wavering, I have something to focus on and anchor to. So my Sunday Specials are a way to affirm and bare witness to my willingness to continue to access my "muchness" (Johnny Depp's Mad Hatter to Alice, "It's as if you've lost your muchness". This fact brings me to the purpose of this Blog entry, which is to discuss a newly discovered existential factor in my life. **My new actual self is grieving this life term of incarceration which is a direct result of the behavior of my old actual self.**

For the past ninety days this overwhelming sense of dismay and pain has been wearing on my very soul. It is a pain that I knew was associated with my incarceration but I could not understand exactly how and why it was affecting me in such a way that it rendered me unable to articulate a coherent expression of what I was experiencing and reduced me to tears at moments. There was no relief from this emotional pain, only fist cinching, repetitive exercises aimed at tolerance. Although I was coping, I was frustrated because I did not understand its source and my mind was playing tricks on me trying to convince me that the only way to stop this prison pain was to die and release myself from this state. I knew this to be "bull----" but was tired of hearing it.

Then I started running my Sunday Specials and the power of the Tao of the Hamster Wheel saved me, which is another example of personally significant coincidence or synchronicity. These runs allow(ed) me to fuse my emotional pain with the physical pain of my run. So I ran. During these runs I exercised my muchness and worked my cerebellum and I was able to put a few things together. The first clue came from my understanding of how some emotional pain (abandonment, rejection, grief) travels on the same neuro-pathways as physical pain and since I was definitely getting enkephalin and endorphin soothing during my runs, I suspected the pain was related to some form of grief. So instead of running from this new pain, I simply ran with it. So for the last 90 days I've been crying a lot behind my sunglasses, but I have not been quitting.

Friday I was speaking to someone who always helps me put things in perspective. In fact, they're the person who gifted me with my motto, "It may be hopeless but it's not that serious". So I mentioned (whined just a little) what I was going through and they suggested it may be an existential condition that I may not be considering. That got me to thinking and as I ran the Sunday Special yesterday (3:36.) I formulated a plausible theory.

This is nearly the twelfth year of my incarceration but only my sixth year as an emotionally mature adult. :) When I was emotionally retarded, being incarcerated was not a problem because I was completely disconnected from and unaware of my emotions and had no sense of self efficacy or self-worth, so I believed prison suited me.

Now my recovered and rehabilitated self absolutely loathes prison and is grieving all the things that "cannot be", due to my physical incarceration. However, I must not ignore the things I can do and have done. I've reconnected with members of my family, come to know I have value and discovered I am a person worthy of love and most importantly been able to establish, develop, and maintain relationships that are authentic and of substance. For the first time in over 30 years I have done things that my ideal self longed to do without my actual self getting in the way.

It is amazing how "the chorus members" who are made up of the memories of my abdications and past failures still try to capture my attention, but I will continue to move them further and further back from the stage. I realize that the feeling of wanting to die is a soundtrack sung by the chorus from some emotional artifact, but I am not the quitter I once was and that song no longer resonates with me.

Right now, in this moment, I am a person whom I love deeply and am unwilling to hurt further. I will not flag nor fail and remain true to my vow to live, with muchness.

It may be hopeless and it may take me a few miles, but in the end, I always remember it is not that serious.