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Constructive Living...



Purposeful Living

Every now and then we do an informal survey about what impact Japanese Psychology has had on people's lives. One of two things we hear most often has to do with purpose. Most people put it something like this: *when I remember my most important purposes on a daily basis and take action, my life works better.*

Being clear on our purpose can influence how we spend our time, our money, where we live, how much we work and at what, how we use our words, and how we get along with others. Purpose provide us with a bright light to navigate the overcrowded pathways filled with things calling out for us to do. It can counteract the lethargy of doing nothing when we don't even know where to begin. Yet knowing our purpose doesn't mean we act on it.

Author Eknath Easwaren tells a story in one of his books about how we distract ourselves from what needs doing.

"If what needs to be done is income tax preparation, then it must be time to clean the refrigerator. If what needs to be done is to work on our unfinished novel, then it must be time to pay bills. We keep busy, convincing ourselves that we are productive and hard working. Our failure to do what is important is disguised as busyness. Easwaren writes, "In India we call this "painting the bullock cart wheels." Just when the harvest is ready to be brought in, the farmer notices that the wheels of his bullock cart are looking rather shabby. Instead of going out into the fields, he takes a day to go into town for paint and then spends a week painting beautiful designs on the cart and wheels. When he finally gets around to harvesting the rice, he has to work twelve hours a day just to keep up."

A teacher of mine poses interesting questions, for our reflection:

- ~ Can you identify with this strategy, of "painting the bullock cart wheels"?
- ~ Can you see the ways that you keep busy so you can avoid doing what is really important?

We assume we need to feel like doing something before we do it. Until we feel comfortable or motivated, we assume that it is not possible to go forward and take action.

Even amongst people who are highly productive in their



Trudy Boyle and
Gottfried Mitteregger

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For all of my dreams I am what I do.

-Dr. David K. Reynolds

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professional lives, they will often not do much in their so-called free time. Surprisingly, according to Professor Csikszentmihályi's research at the University of Chicago even the things we like to do, don't get done. The initial 15 minute effort it takes to start the process to go skiing, write, work in the garden, fill out an application, take a walk, or paint a picture is more than most people are willing to invest when they aren't in the mood.

**It is easy to say
“don't wait for a feeling”
to do what is important.**

**But the gap between
‘Saying It’ and actually
‘Taking Action’
is wide.**

Yet, when we ask anyone what they *feel like* after accomplishing an important task, we all know the answer. We feel great and many of us wonder why we don't keep it up on a consistent basis.

Purposeful living is not about being on a treadmill of “doing.” It's about knowing what is important, about both the things we have to do and the things we want to do and it is about doing them.

No more information is required. In spite of initial discomfort, it is about applying yourself to the work or activity at hand. And when that is finished for the day you pour yourself into the next thing that you choose to do. Before you know it, meals have been served, books read; children raised; seeds planted; wounds healed... one moment and then another add up to a string of pearls that becomes your life.

As C. S. Lewis writes, “the one thing we want to avoid, is to finish up at the end of our lives not having done the things that we had to do nor even the things that we wanted to do.”

“Flylady,” who is in the business of helping people get things done, begins all her email reminders this way: *You are not behind! I don't want you to try to catch up; I just want you to jump in where we are. O.K.?* www.flylady.com

Trudy Boyle is a Constructive Living trainer for business and individuals. Contact her at 1-877-247-2032 or www.constructiveliving.ca



*photo:
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