



Pay attention to the patterns in your life

Bởi:

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“When not preoccupied with ourselves, we actually have a chance to expand the concept of who we are. Loss of self-consciousness can lead to self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward... It almost seems that occasionally giving up self-consciousness is necessary for building a strong self-concept.”

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: *Flow*

“My life is made of patterns that can scarcely be controlled,” went the Paul Simon song. An essential element of self-awareness is to identify the driving patterns of your life, determine which patterns can be controlled and which cannot, and then to follow the advice of the Serenity Prayer: to have the courage to change the patterns that are within your power to change (e.g. eating and spending patterns), the serenity to live with the patterns you cannot change (e.g. weather and the price of gasoline), and the wisdom to know the difference.

In his book *The Power of Story*, Jim Loehr writes about how our perception of ourselves is profoundly influenced by the stories we allow to shape our thinking. These stories both shape and are shaped by the patterns in our lives (“there I go again – it’s the same old story”). The Authenticity journey often begins by recognizing, and quite often interrupting, those patterns. Here are several examples:

Career Patterns: One of the biggest mistakes I’ve made in my life was spending too many years chasing what I thought was my dream job, and in the process running away from my real strengths and passions. I ignored many signs along the way that I was on the wrong path, a path that for me lacked heart. Only after being fired for the last time (a friend of mine says that if you haven’t been fired at least three times, you’re not trying hard enough – on that score at least, I was an overachiever!) did I recognize the patterns which had so often caused me to act in ways that were counterproductive to my stated goals, and only when I interrupted those patterns with a radical career shift (the founding of Values Coach) did I see commensurately radical improvements in my own life. So

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the question I have for you is: *What are the patterns evident in your career, and what are they trying to tell you?*

Behavior Patterns: It's no fun being depressed, but for many people depression is a symptom of self-defeating behavior patterns. Many studies have shown a direct correlation between watching lots of television and being depressed; many other studies have shown a direct correlation between physical exercise and the amelioration of depression (as well as anxiety). So if you're anxious and/or depressed, before you make an appointment with your shrink try turning off the TV and going for a brisk walk. And if part of the reason you're anxious and depressed is that you're in debt, read *The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey, cut up your credit cards, and make good use of the time you've saved by turning off the TV and get a second job or start a home-based business. Changing your life begins with changing your patterns of behavior.

Personality Patterns: Some psychologists will tell you that your personality is substantially fixed at a ridiculously early age, that you are stuck in your Myers-Briggs box and there's nothing you can do about it. I don't buy it. If Keith Harrell can go from being a shy and insecure kid who stutters to being a world-class professional speaker, what says that you can't get out of whatever personality box you've been living in? No doubt, it won't be easy. You might have to get way out of your comfort zone by joining Rotary and the Toastmasters Club, or taking Dale Carnegie classes. You might have to sit on a busy street corner trying to sell home-made poetry. (I did this once as a way of overcoming an inner demon of my own. I met a man who had spent the previous night in a jail cell talking to Jesus – and having Jesus talk back.)

Think about his paradox. There are six billion (give or take a few hundred million) souls on the face of the Earth. Of all those billions of faces, the only one that you will never be able to see is the one that is most important to you - your own. You can glimpse approximations - a photograph, a reflection in the mirror, a cameo shadow, a friend's description - but you are forever barred from directly laying eyes upon your own face. That's a great metaphor for self-awareness. It requires indirect measures. The more willing you are to make the journey of inner exploration, the more certain it is that you will discover and become the meant-to-be you.

Do you want to be one of a million or one in a million?