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# QUOTES FROM THE EDGE OF NOWHERE

The Art of Noticing Unnoticed Life Wisdoms

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**“Destiny and fate will always offer us opportunities to change the status quo.”**

While sitting at my desk contemplating the origin of this quote, I suddenly felt a thirst for a bottle of cold sweet tea. Fortunately, I had purchased a bottle of tea earlier that same morning during a trip to the grocery store. There it was, just as I had left it, on the top shelf of my refrigerator nestled between the milk and orange juice. The only obvious difference from when I placed the tea in the refrigerator until now was the glistening hint of dew-like condensation covering the cool surface of the bottle.

Destiny and Fate... (Continued)

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Still distracted in thought, I removed the bottle of sweet tea from the refrigerator and attempted to set it on the kitchen counter. It was at that moment when everything transformed instantly into one of those movie scenes where things move in slow motion. For several milliseconds my senses, memories, and unconscious thoughts unified in their focus on the following events...

As I pivoted from the refrigerator toward the kitchen counter, I could feel the dampness on the bottle's smooth dew-covered surface. That condensation caused my hand to slip just enough for the bottle to escape my tight grip. The bottle of sweet tea collided firmly enough with the counter's edge to jolt it out of my hand completely and allow gravity to take possession of the bottle's weight.

Immediately, I could sense my now empty hand communicating with my brain to stop daydreaming and begin evasive maneuvers. My gaze watched the bottle careening off the counter's edge toward the kitchen floor. Instantly, a flash of probable outcomes erupted in my brain. In one scene, I saw the bottle crashing to the floor and the contents splashing from the shattered container. In another scene, I saw myself painfully injured by the heavy bottle that was accelerating toward my left shin and foot. It was far too late to realistically reach out and catch the falling object, so that scene never materialized in my consciousness.

Without any noticeable conscious thought, I extended my left leg into the path of the falling bottle. A falling glass bottle full of sweet tea would hit my tibia (shin bone) with such force as to certainly inflict a great degree of pain, but somehow my subconscious mind recalled the fact that when I purchased this particular bottle of sweet tea earlier in the day, I had noticed a subtle change in the product. Even though it looked like the other bottles of tea in my refrigerator, these new bottles of sweet tea were now made of plastic. Subconsciously, I had confirmed this fact from the weight of the container moments prior when I lifted it from the refrigerator shelf. My leg continued its extension into the path of the bottle creating a forty-five-degree angle, leg-to-foot incline for the plastic bottle to harmlessly bounce on and gently come to a spinning stop in the

adjoining dining room. No broken glass. No injured leg. No river of sweet tea to clean up after the accidental drop.

This two-second event caused me to remember the genesis of the quote for this chapter. Years prior to this seemingly innocuous sweet tea encounter in my kitchen, I might have simply witnessed the status quo reaction to a bottle falling off the edge of a kitchen counter. If I could not catch the object in time, I would have simply moved out of the way, allowing the bottle to collide with the floor in order to prevent an undesired injury. However, on this occasion, a few deeply embedded experiential memories instantly offered me the opportunity to create an alternative outcome (fate) to an event by sequentially analyzing the many variables destiny had offered. Destiny and fate will always offer us opportunities to change the status quo.

As social beings, we invest a great deal of our lives into achieving a comfortable status quo. We often make compromising life adjustments to fit in with acceptable social norms. Achieving an acceptable social status or just classification as "normal" is the goal. Somewhere deep inside our labile consciousness there resides an intrinsic understanding of what it means to be normal. Perhaps some would define a "normal" human being as one who is in optimal physical, spiritual, and emotional health. This definition might also include a normal life as one where a sense of joy consistently resides within our spirit, and where we perceive no obstacles to achieving our imagined ambitions.

This may not be an appropriate definition of normality for all humans. However, it is reasonable to assume that most rational thinking human beings have a desire to achieve some form of the socially accepted definition of "normal." To some degree, we can achieve this by making enough precise observations about the world where we exist to predict intuitively both immediate and remote life outcomes. If our acquired knowledge integrates correctly with our

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biological instincts and intuitive awareness, we can accurately predict life outcomes providing a sense of joyful tranquility. We feel normal when we can correctly predict outcomes.

Let's pause for a moment to do a thought exercise. Let's try to imagine a society where everything is predictable. No mysteries of life for solving. Nothing about which to be curious. No families wrestling with the terrible twos, adolescent unrest, or the stress of a mate struggling with a midlife crises. No political disagreements or even the need for political parties because we are all on the same geopolitical page. No more desire for human warfare. Each of us would find our perfect "happily ever after" life partner on the first attempt. No longer would prejudice and envy cause emotional strife because our social resources would predictively provide for every member of society. The word "hope" would seldom be used in this imagined world where even the daily weather forecasts are accurate. Breaking news would be limited to those rare unpredicted events of fate occurring in society. In this world, a bottle of sweet tea falling off a counter and crashing onto a kitchen floor would be noteworthy as "breaking" news.

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**“Because of the unpredictable nature of life, we, by necessity, must learn new experiences and evolve in our knowledge of the unknown.”**

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While to some this absurd imaginary world might seem desirable, this is not how we have evolved as a society. Because of the unpredictable nature of life, we, by necessity, must learn new experiences and evolve in our knowledge of the unknown.

Because of our insatiable desire for knowledge, we have evolved in our ability to develop new communication technologies better equipped to predict the outcomes of socially disruptive situations. However, unpredictable natural disasters, political upheaval, acts of civil disobedience, and the presence of social discourse continue to be a modern-day Tower of Babel impeding our ability to create a precise,

tranquil future where “normal” is the status quo.

A brief examination of history reveals a reoccurring theme of social chaos erupting as humankind made seismic psychosocial or major technological transitions to more advanced cultural norms. During these intervals of transition from the Bronze Age - through the Iron Age - the Middle Ages - the Renaissance - the Age of Enlightenment - the Agricultural Age - the Industrial Revolution - to the Modern Era, each was punctuated with major social discovery to enhance life or military conflict where millions of human lives were lost. World War II was the deadliest military conflict in history. Over 60 million people (about 3% of the world's population at the time) died during this global military conflict. Despite having the benefit of objective history in our wake to assist us in forecasting these devastating outcomes, we continue to use primitive mental processes to repeat the same human error of social self-destruction all because we desire others existing on our planet to fit into a model of what we perceive as the acceptable normal. “If only the rest of the world thought like me, it would a better place to live.” It would be very predictable. However, as we stumble through our current interval of cultural transformation, which some future historians may identify as the digital Information Age, we must use this information to avoid the same destructive tendencies of those who proceeded us.

Fate will always lead us to new destinies. It is our nature to be curious. Children are curious about their environment. This is how they learn and discover the world around them. As we age, however, some of us tend to lose our natural curiosity about life. Imagination wanes along with our desire to seek new possibilities. We get “stuck in our ways” of doing things. We become entrenched in our social bias based on personal or virtual life experiences (TV, radio, internet, social, or print media). Many of us allow opportunities and blessings to pass us by because we do not wish them to interrupt our routine rhythm of life.

Destiny and Fate... (Continued)

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Have you ever taken a different way home for some unknown reason and located a new restaurant that becomes a favorite? That restaurant would have remained undiscovered had you not listened to something in your spirit telling you to turn right at the next stop sign. Perhaps you were one of those individuals who was disappointed because you failed to get into your first choice for college and settled for your “back up.” As fate would have it, you immensely enjoyed your college experience as it introduced you to a previously unimagined career opportunity, or better yet, your life long soul mate. Ask yourself, “Are the majority of your friends experiencing the life they expected to be living when they left high school or college?” On a more personal level, could you have imagined being where you are today 20, 10, or even five years ago? If not, why not? Did fate reroute you to an unforeseen opportunity or a new destiny?

There are few coincidences in life. However, there are a sequence of fate driven options offered to us during the course of our day. We select these options based on biological instinct, our experiential memories, inductive (intuition) or deductive reasoning, personal or virtual advice, a hunch, random chance, or by raw emotion. Fate can intervene at any ordinary moment to lead us to a devastating outcome or an extraordinary, life altering blessing.

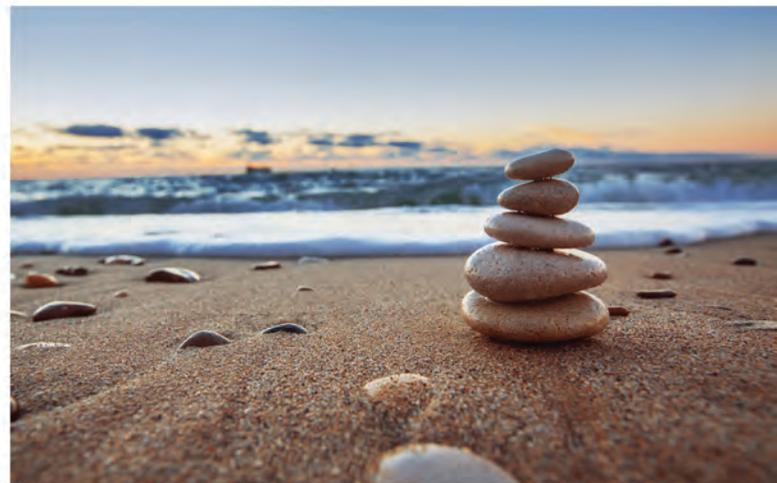
Why can't we turn away from a car wreck on the highway? Perhaps it is because the accident was an unexpected event intruding in our ordinary daily routine. It is astonishing that millions of us climb into our two ton plus vehicles and navigate them toward our respective destinations at speeds unimagined by previous generations of men or beast. We perform this feat using our stored memories and inductive reasoning to avoid colliding with other distracted motorists who are driving on emotional autopilot. In a rare instance, fate intervenes resulting in a misfortunate automobile accident. We come upon the accident and cannot resist the temptation to rubberneck. We witness a moment in the lives of the individual(s) involved. We feel for all the motorists subsequently impacted by the unexpected shared fate of the automobile accident. The little voice in our head asks us, “Could the person in the mangled vehicle be someone I know?”

You wonder how the accident happened. Perhaps there were fatalities. Some, just frustrated by the traffic delay, fear being late to their expected destination. Others in the resulting traffic jam are angry because fate placed them on this particular highway today. “I knew I should have taken that earlier exit,” screams the little annoyed voice in your head. Nevertheless, we still slow down to look as we pass the scene of the accident.

Thus, here is the conundrum we struggle with each day. Our technologies have expanded exponentially since the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the three-pound super computer each of us carries around in our skull has adapted at a much slower pace. No matter how amazing our brains are, our more primitive hormonal “fight or flight” protective mechanisms can override our brain's contemporary experiential logic capability rapidly.

These rudimentary neurophysiological functions transition us through various phases of stress alerts. Left unchecked, the constant presence of stress hormones circulating in our bloodstream damages our physical body. A medical doctor routinely cautions his/her patients to reduce the fat in their diet. However, I find myself advising my patients to take the FFATT out of their life as well. My meaning of the acronym FFATT is:

**Frustration, Fear, Anger, Threat, Terror**



Destiny and Fate... (Continued)

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The unpredictable nature of life results in reoccurring frustration. Frustration is a common human attribute. I may become frustrated with my inability to solve a crossword puzzle. I am frustrated that my favorite sports team just lost a critical game. My car is making that strange sound again; that frustrates me. At a grander level, I may also become frustrated because I have squandered an opportunity to achieve a lifelong dream because I made a poor decision. Frustration comes disguised in many forms. It can unexpectedly rob you of an otherwise perfect day. One moment you are living the dream; then in the next moment, you are on your knees mopping up your shattered (life) bottle of sweet tea.

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**“Certain social frustrations can assist us in our technological evolution.”**

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The constant presence of challenging life circumstances heightens our curiosity to invent new and better methods to combat daily frustrations. A century ago, a person might have taken a day to ride a horse or the public stagecoach 20 miles to talk to a friend in the next county. Less than a half century later, that person could drive their car over to the friend’s house in 30 minutes or less to have the same conversation. In today’s world, losing even 60 minutes to make that roundtrip to chat with a friend can be too much time to spare. Now we have the capability to use cellular phone technologies from practically anywhere on earth to call and talk or video conference with friends and family within seconds. Certain social frustrations can assist us in our technological evolution.

Emotional frustrations, left unchecked, evolve into fear. “This final examination is far too difficult. I know I’m going to fail the test and flunk out of college.” As fear creeps in from the darkest crevice of our conscience mind, logic begins its retreat. The increasing presence of the primitive neurohormones begins the process of corrupting the logic circuitry in the brain. As the stress neurohormones achieve a critical mass, our brain gives us the binary ultimatum of “fight or flight.” Do I pause, take a deep breath, and press on with the test (fight); or do I tear the exam booklet in half, hurdle its shredded remains to floor, and leave the room cursing (flight)?

In the example above, the presence of fear is the tipping point shoving us to the next phase of emotional deterioration. Was the examination too difficult, or was I just not adequately prepared? The student felt trapped in a situation of her/his own creation. Given the absence of viable options, anger arrives to fill the void. Bathed by the increasing presence of stress hormones, anger can roam unleashed with no rational master of higher executive logic to tame it. Left unchecked, anger will reside in our spirit long after removal of the causative insult. Just think about this for a moment. Have you ever gotten so angry at a situation or at someone that hours, days, or even weeks later you “feel” as if something deep inside of you has been irreversibly damaged?

Unrelenting fear or anger pushes our capability to think logically over an emotional cliff into spiritual free fall. The anticipated crash introduces the presence of an overwhelming threat intruding into your life. At this point, your bloodstream is teaming with stress hormones. If this physiological situation persists over time, the individual begins to exhibit signs and symptoms of emotional overload, nervous breakdown, or physical burnout.

The last phase of this emotional train wreck is terror. At this point, a virtual neuropsychological short-circuiting occurs. The fight or flight hormones are at a boiling point and the brain’s logic functions are at their lowest point. The individual is “unconsciously” operating in an irrational fashion.

If an advanced society desires to avoid repeating the tragic errors of the planet’s prior inhabitants, it must learn from their mistakes. Perhaps these earlier inhabitants lost their way by existing too long on the terrified axis of the FFATT equation. We may have more advanced technologies to relieve certain social frustrations, but if we continue to live our lives in fear and anger, we will surely arrive in a state of threat and terror at an accelerated rate. Our social technologies can either result in an enhanced ability to strengthen our social relationships or hasten by proxy catastrophic and socially destructive outcomes.

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Life events are not always a coincidence. The interweaving of our individual fates with the fates of others create a social fabric of opportunities. Social frustrations generate opportunities for the advancement of knowledge or emotional growth; however, a nation of people who have lapsed into angry debate, have a limited capacity to extract themselves logically from a destiny of self-destructive behavior.

The winds of fate guide us to lands of uncertain opportunities. It is up to you to see past the accidental frustrations of daily life and allow faith to take you to a designated blessing. These blessings can appear as bottles of sweet tea landing unbroken on your kitchen floor, or as unplanned life-altering events that deliver you to unanticipated, joyful destinies beyond your status quo.



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**“Blessings only become a reality if they are recognized and received.”**

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