



Pause With Purpose

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...to refresh

...to grow

Wounds, Loss and Life

He stood before his audience and gazed across the sea of faces. His request had been clear and to the point. "Would all those who have never been hurt by another please stand and be recognized." Hundreds had come to hear him speak. Hundreds sat and gazed around in awkward expectation. But no one stood. So he presented another request. "Would all those who have never experienced the pain of loss please stand and be recognized." Again he was met with a horizontal sea of silence.

What was going on here? Was the room simply filled with people trying to avoid attention? Or was a greater truth being revealed? Is the experience of being wounded and suffering loss really that universal? All we need to do is look at our own life and ask, "If I had been there, would my response have been any different?"

One of the results of living in a beautiful though imperfect world with special though imperfect people is that we experience the consequence of all that imperfection. People wound us - intentionally, accidentally, through ignorance, and through casual disregard. Often these wounds are teamed up with loss - the loss of status, of employment, of security, of dreams, of health, of relationship, of possessions, of peace, even of hope.

How do we experience such wounding and loss and still rise from bed the next day/week/month to live the life we have been blessed with? How do we keep moving forward when we receive life's blows? It seems that at these times, as is true throughout life, we are faced with choices. Often, these are "second stage" choices which follow an initial reaction. (For example, if we are cut by a knife, we may not have the choice to bleed or not, but we can choose how to deal with the wound and the knife.) These choices, though second stage, are powerful.

Let's look at some of our options. Following a wound or a loss, we might withdraw and retreat. Such a move might be strategic and wise, at least at first. It allows us to shrink our world, reestablish a corner of stability and security, and tend to our wounds. However, withdrawing for an extended period of time inhibits moving forward with life and may indicate the presence of depression. The help of a good therapist is invaluable at this time.

We can also respond to our wounds with bitterness and resentment. Sadly, this internalized anger is quite toxic and tends to poison our spirit, robbing us of our strength and our ability to experience joy.

Anger is a common survival response to hurt, but it often outlives its usefulness. It can lure us down the path of revenge, which typically just continues our spiral of misery.

So what other choices do we have? Let's briefly note three possibilities.

1) Let's not be surprised that hurt and loss happen, even in our own life. While a specific event may catch us off guard, let's not expect that ours will be a charmed life free of hurt or loss.

2) Let's view times of wounding as opportunities for forgiveness. We must remember, however, that there is no casual forgiveness. Forgiveness is personal, focused, and intentional. The deeper the wound, the more work involved in the forgiveness process. Such forgiveness is essential, though, if we are to move forward in freedom.

3) Let's step back and keep our eye on the bigger picture of our life, the one that includes a future. Trauma tends to draw us tightly into itself, as if it is the only reality. And for a brief period, it may be! Stepping back, however, frees us to reclaim a vision for our life, and the freedom to move forward into it. It may be a *revised* vision, but still a vision of *life*.

Let's claim our vision, embracing life with its complex weave of gold and burlap, and stubbornly use even life's wounds to build our path of purpose.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you through the challenges and transitions of life.

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Just One Change

Let's admit it. As much as we have been wounded by others in life, we also have done our share of wounding. Not that we are bad people who enjoy seeing people suffer. But it does happen, sometimes in spite of our best intentions. We forget to follow through on a promise. We gossip. We blow up at someone "for no reason." We withdraw and withhold kindness. We take credit for what someone else does. We criticize when we should encourage. We assume ... the worst. We belittle.

There are hundreds of ways to wound others, and we all have our own specialties. At times, we try to normalize them, saying, "Oh, that's just John ... or Tom ... or Mary." But it really doesn't stop the hurt.

So, I offer this challenge. Let's identify **one** specific way we wound others, and *let's stop it*. Let's change one behavior, or one attitude, or one form of speech.

In doing so, we prevent multiple future wounds and once again demonstrate the ongoing power of positive change.

*Happy
Thanksgiving*



"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

-Jeremiah 29:11