

LINKING POTENTIAL AND HAPPINESS

For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended consequence of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself. -Victor Frankl

It's no coincidence that Stephen Covey's newest book, *The Eighth Habit*, is grounded in finding our core, our inner light. A number of recent book titles appear with this theme. Parker Palmer encourages us to find our *Hidden Wholeness*. Eric Klein says *You Are The Leader You've Been Waiting For*. Jacob Needleman, in *The American Soul: The Vision of Our Founding Fathers*, connects the idea of being grounded in our core to the origins of our country,

The original and deeper meanings of these ideals may be astonishingly different from what we now understand them. For example, the ideas of human equality and independence in these communities are rooted in the notion that God, or "the inner light", exists in every human being, and that the aim of life revolves around the endeavor and the necessity for every man or woman to make conscious contact with this inner divine force, ---- which is the source of true happiness, intelligence and moral capacity, and is meant to be the guide to ultimate authority in conduct and assessment of our lives and obligations.

He (Jefferson) meant there's no happiness without virtue. You can't have happiness until there's virtue. And so for Jefferson, it didn't mean having whatever - just whatever you want. It meant well-being in the traditions that they studied. They were very highly educated in classical thought. Happiness - a better translation of the word is "well-being," and well-being doesn't mean continual or lots of pleasure. It doesn't mean egoistic satisfaction. It means being what you are supposed to be as a human being. So happiness implies a relationship to a truer self within yourself, and I think Jefferson meant that. And I think if you look in the nature of the great spiritual traditions, how they look at and understand human nature, it's part of the essence of a human being to love, to feel care for others. And we have a very impoverished set of ideas about the human self, being just a complicated animal with a complicated brain who evolved out of the slime. That is not a vision that is very profound of what a human being is, nor is it very logical.

Lunch Meet

O'Brien p. 21

1) The Possessions/Comfort Model

In this model, life is viewed as a box. The object of life is to fill that box with material possessions, comfort, and pleasure.

2) The Achievement Model

This model also presents life as a box to be filled, but here the object of life is to amass security, respect, power, and prestige.

3) The Journey to Fulfill Potential

This third model views life not as a box to be filled but as a process, a journey toward fulfillment. The object of this journey is to become all we are capable of becoming.

Our own mental models of happiness are often more complex and seldom as clear-cut as these models. However, the model of life as a journey to fulfill our potential can do more than either of the other two models to bring us deep and lasting happiness. Embarking on this journey can also spare us that greatest of all tragedies—the realization, as we come to the end of our lives, that we have not become all we were capable of becoming.

I would like to make it very clear that I am not opposed to pleasure, comfort, or material success. On the contrary, these are actually good things. In fact, I spent most of my life in a business designed to insure people against the loss of material things through disaster or as a result of liability. But filling the boxes of material goods and security offers nowhere near the potential for happiness as seeing life as a journey to fulfill potential. And, ironically enough, those who commit to the journey to fulfill potential often find that along the way they obtain many of the tangible rewards which so often elude those who make such things their primary goal.

Looking for those deli-tofu-l-unch questions to chew on? This time we ask you use the lunch meet above instead and build your own to share.

1.

2.

Some Thoughts for March 14th Meeting

What did you learn from this article that can apply in your life and in the life of Winona?

Is it important for us to find the "power to become a sage- a compassionate, fully mature human being"?

Could this become a community wide journey?