

PRIORITIZE

“You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically, to say “no” to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger “yes” burning inside.” Stephen R. Covey

It would seem that right now I am being presented with the opportunity to learn about priorities and prioritizing. I will let you in on a secret and tell you I did not think I had to learn these, I am good at prioritizing and managing my time. Yet it kept coming to me, so I decided perhaps I should stop sloughing it off and take a deeper look.

No matter where I turned for advice, it all seemed to be the same “focus on your highest priority.” I had no clue what that was and actually felt it was best just to be present in each moment. Thereby, I thought, my highest priority would show up and I would affirm I was focusing upon it. So why then did “prioritize” keep showing up? Probably because I was not really focused on anything, it was an illusion I was deluding myself with, I was just bobbing along on the tides of life.

A great quote was presented to me “Everything flows out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum-swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right, is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates”--The Kybalion. Which reminded me that for everything there is an equal and exact opposite. To truly know what my priority was, I needed to know what it was not. Coming to that conclusion my friends was the easiest part of the whole equation.

I needed to take some time and ask myself “what truly matters to me?” Where to start? And even in knowing that I must take this time, I procrastinated by filling my life with distractions to avoid doing the work necessary. That is part of being human, we don't fully engage in what matters. We are distracted by our fears, ego-obsessions, drama (in our own life and in the world around us), our ambitions, survival instincts and emotional reactions. We clutter up our lives with these distractions for the simple reason that it is actually scary to focus on what truly matters. It is easier to disengage and merely react to what's going on around us. Somehow the clutter allows us to feel important in a world where we are trying to keep up with the Joneses.

To know what matters to us with certainty amongst all the conflicting beliefs, agendas, and ideas of the current day, is not easy. If we get it figured out, living in alignment with our values can take courage, commitment and thick skin.

It is sad, but for each new ambition, relationship, or experience we find ourselves in, something must be eliminated. This might hold a key as to why priorities take a back seat, even if they would make us over the moon happy in life. Often our energy is invested in holding something together because of the backlash we will receive from society, our family or our peers if we stepped away from it.

I decided that instead of investing in outside influences, it was time to invest in me. Take a deep breath and hunker down. First I needed to discover what was important to me. I find that keeping things

simple works the best, no need to make a thesis out of it, who has time for that anyway? Oh wait, perhaps if I turfed the distractions I would have time! Nah, simple is best.

First, I made a list of the most important aspects in my life right now. Second, I made a list of how I spent my time during the past month. Third, I compared the two lists.

Through assessing exactly what was going on in my life, it was easier to understand priorities and why it kept coming up for me. It gave me the gift of awareness and the perspective of where things needed to shift. It did not mean that I had to fix or correct this in a single day. Typically that is my motto, reach the root – fix, fertilize – move onto the next root. If you find yourself drifting through life, take the time to assess what is going on. Drifting is akin to not caring enough about yourself first or making a difference in your quality of life. If your life seems cluttered, busy, stressed, or you have become dissatisfied, it might be time to look at your priorities.

- 1) Make a list of the most important aspects of your life right now. These aspects can and do change over time, so a check-in once and awhile is advised. If you wish, rank these aspects in order of importance.
- 2) Take inventory of how you spend your time. Go back a week, two weeks a month and include everything. Be honest with yourself and don't edit out the activities you are not proud of. Ensure you include thoughts as well, what you spend your time thinking of takes your focus and time. Rank this list in the manner of where you spent the most time.
- 3) Compare the two lists. They will probably differ, no judgement, and don't be hard on yourself, this is meant to point out the differences. Often the aspects we say are important to us receive the least amount of our time, energy and thought. Spend some time inquiring why this is the case. Ask yourself how you can create more alignment with the two lists.

What would your life look like without some of your major distractions? Prioritizing means that you are fully conscious of what matters to you, and you place your focus upon those aspects. "Focus on your highest priority" should mean to each of us – focus on what truly matters and distraction clutter will fade away.

Namaste

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