

RightLivelihood.com

JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Three: "Know Who You Are and Make the Most Of It" and helps you with a basic understanding of the importance self-knowledge plays in following a clear path. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

Finding your path and right livelihood: 'Right livelihood' does not only include what kind of work you will do, but also the search, the journey in finding it. This chapter touches on those who have found that livelihood, and those who are still seeking it. My own struggles with contentment and commitment have come from over-seeking for the perfect work and the perfect place, from looking outside for greener pastures rather than looking much closer to home. These stories tell as much about destiny as destination. To some, this concerns the formation of the soul just as much as the career or lifestyle. Both the Hindu tradition of karma yoga and the Buddhist teaching of 'right livelihood' emphasize utilitarian work without self-centered motives, while providing a positive service to the world. At first glance, it appears finding such work in today's environment is impractical. The opposite is true, to many happiness depends on it.

Repeating the rags to riches cycle:

The search for my 'clear career path' and my *sadhana*, or spiritual path, usually follows a binge/purge cycle. I work hard, save money, gather possessions, buy a nice car and house, and spend freely. When I tire of that routine, I reverse it: give away my possessions, get an old truck, rent a cheap place, work sparingly, live naturally and simply and cut into my savings. When low ambition runs headlong into low funds, I get back on the ferris wheel and continue the cycle. I call it the BMW to F100 cycle, and I have repeated it many times. It is one thing to be without goal if you know who you are and do so with intent and mindfulness, it is quite another to wander aimlessly through life.

Full circle of this binge and purge process, I have been nothing if not consistently inconsistent. Why such a disruptive pattern? Why does anyone continue on a path that leads nowhere? I have searched far and wide for answers but haphazardly. Mindfulness means bringing full consciousness to whatever you do. Increased intention brings increased attention, which in turn, brings learning. I had not managed to be mindful, and as a result, had not managed to learn. *Doing* with full concentration brings appropriateness to our actions, and helps us stay in the present instead of pining for the past and pleading for the future.

Ken Keyes: "Most of us," said the cosmic humorist, "go through life not knowing what we want, but feel darned sure this *isn't* it."

The question behind my uprooting is always the same: “Is this as good as it gets?” The quintessential malcontent perpetually searching for greener pastures, what I had was a job in a place; what I did not have was contentment; what I wanted, what I searched endlessly for, was the perfect work in the perfect community. Unwilling to face both sides of reality (*ease and struggle*) I preferred to lead myself down a path strewn with primrose (a wide array of pretty, cheerful flowers), a course of action that idealistically was pleasant and painless and varied; but metaphorically being ‘led down the primrose path’ signifies to follow the path of least resistance; an easy way out of confronting ones lot in life as well as ones own nature. Somehow I needed to experience greed and despair in order to learn not to resist them, to love the real world not some imaginary vision of perfection.

In the booklet, Archetypal Flower Essences, Dirk Albrodt points out that at dusk the ‘evening primrose opens its bright yellow flowers to illuminate the night; so by consuming its flower essence one can shed light on the darkness within... that shadow aspect of our personality most of us choose to ignore. Could our failure to confront or face our inner promptings, our fears and our demons lead us so far astray that we fall into another dimension, one strewn with ugliness and cheerlessness and worse; madness? It didn’t happen to me but it easily could have and just as sure as it happened to the fictional character in the next story it could happen to anyone.

Willoughby: a train trip back to simpler times:

The introduction to Rod Serling’s *Twilight Zone* resounds: “You’re traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind. A journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. That’s a sign post up ahead, your next stop, The Twilight Zone!” Serling was a diminutive man with an abiding social conscience, who, when the system would allow, would write some of the greatest classics for television ever made. Serling lived his life paradoxically; he yearned for both the stardom of Hollywood and for the muted pleasures of home. Not the way home is now, but nostalgically, for the way it was.

My favorite episode portrays a depressed businessman riding the commuter train to his destination. That destination being a synthetic job he has no taste for, located in a concrete jungle he has no feeling for. As the train approaches the next stop, he reads an unfamiliar sign post ahead. The conductor says, *Willoughby*, next stop *Willoughby*. Mr. Gray Flannel Suit is surprised at the unscheduled stop, and peers out through the glass to view a carousel, and horse-drawn buggies in a downtown setting out of Currier and Ives back at the turn of the century. He smiles nostalgically for the first time in a long while, then tightens again as the train moves on.

As Mr. Suit returns home to unwind, a carping wife confronts him with status on her mind, spite in her eyes, and a martini glass in her hand. His social climbing spouse starts right in on nagging him about why did he not talk to his boss about that raise. Why is he not ambitious enough to be the vice president? Back in the office, his boss chides: “*push, push, push* Williams, you gotta be bright. If you’re on top you’re the target; you’ve gotta pay for the success you’ve achieved.” This day repeats itself for a period of time until one day the train pulls up to Willoughby and Williams picks up his brief case and steps out into the Twilight Zone; his debt to society having been paid in full.

The farmer and the diamonds:

As it turns out, what I was searching for was me. I wanted to find out who I am and how to be happy with that. Zen Buddhists believe that the subject and the object are the same; when you let go of negative thinking toward something (like my path) and wish *it* happiness, your quandary will disappear. When you do not feel at peace with your life, you cannot find the hidden treasure. “You can’t see the wood for the trees.” Russell H. Conwell tells of Ali Hafed, the old farmer who sold his beloved family farm in order to finance his scheme of *searching* for diamonds, only to find that the new owner, shortly after purchasing the property, discovered diamonds in the streambed at the back of the farm. The diamonds were so valuable that they were used as the crown jewels of England and Russia.

All along, my wife Chris has said “You won’t find *it* by changing jobs and moving all over the country, look closer to home, look inside, it’s always been right there in your own heart.” *It* was as obvious as the nose on my face (which is pretty obvious). Yes, I remembered, you do not search for the way; you do the way. The more time we spend seeking the less time we have being. Destiny is a funny thing; the more we fight it the less it cooperates.