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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 Four: “A Worthy Path is Filled with Passion and Obstacles” and relates to the value of not-seeking and not forcing an outcome. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

Finding your path and right livelihood: Connecting what you believe in to how you support yourself is a challenge but not an insurmountable one. Everyone would prefer to earn a living doing what he or she believes in and loves. This chapter investigates the: qualities that help people to express their lives and work in a meaningful way; limitations and inner conflicts that prevent us from following our passion; cultivating a state of mind that is conducive to accomplishing a worthy goal; and making choices that lead down a path with heart.

Water does not insist on control yet accomplishes its goal:

Water has many of the qualities of a great martial artist or activist. Of the natural elements, water impresses the Taoists more than any other. It has many unobtrusive and adaptive qualities; it assumes the shape of its containers, and seeks out the lowest places. Despite its accommodations, water subdues hard and brittle objects. Its currents carve canyons from granite and chisels mountains into hills. Water is supple but strong. These virtues precisely embody those of ‘Wu Wei’. The person who embodies Wu Wei “works without working, acts without strain, persuades without argument, is eloquent without flourish and gets results without coercing.” Taoists admire the way water supports objects and carries them effortlessly on its tide. To float motionlessly is not a Wu Wei teaching, and neither is flailing frantically. Skilled swimmers take their strokes with intent, knowing that the water will support them if they do not fight it.

Martha’s Vineyard: No one on earth knew my whereabouts. One cool, windy April morning in Oaks Bluff of Martha’s Vineyard, a strong swimmer outfitted with an air of invulnerability, I was the only one on the Island crazy enough to be in the water. In my naive attempt to master the elements, my daily constitutional involved venturing out a few hundred yards, and then swimming back in with the tide. On my last ocean lap of the day, I flip turned as usual at the end of the jetty and headed back toward shore. After several minutes I was startled to peak over my left shoulder and notice that I had lost ground and drifted further from the jetty’s fading terminus. I redoubled my efforts and swam harder and faster than I would have thought possible a few minutes before.

Twenty minutes later, my exhausted and numb body had lost considerable ground to the riptide; I was drifting out to sea. No frantic endeavor or battle of wills, no swim stroke or angle, seemed to work. I was at this point beyond the site of the shoreline, beyond civilization, almost beyond hope. Not yet resigned to the fate of sleeping with the fishes, I calmly decided on one final tack. Steady as she goes I would live or die with my

beloved backstroke. I took a sideways angle slightly inward, and prayed that the currents and gods that conspired against me would change course, and carry me home.

The Taoists teach that insisting on control from the outset, as I had done, ensures only loss. If you fight, as I had fought, you may drown. 'If you trust that the water wants to hold you up, it may. The universe functions the same way: it does not *want* to pull you down; it does not *want* anything.' Floating alone as an insignificant speck in the mighty sea this was my moment in time to ponder mortality and inventory authority. I recalled from a distant past that 'grace' was my integral companion not to be taken for granted. A humbling experience to say the least. As I washed ashore like so much driftwood, I had only god and my guardian angels to thank for this wonderful life.

Author Masaru Emoto writes, "Understanding that we are essentially water is the key to uncovering the mysteries of the universe." The experience in water changed me. I no longer felt invulnerable. "Like water, Tao lets things be as they are and at the same time transforms them." Humans are made up of almost 80% water, unfortunately it reduces to about 60% by middle age. Perhaps the loss of water makes us less adaptable while our connection to water makes us more fluid. While saying my prayers later that night I asked for no cramps if I swam the next day and wondered about my body and the elements, about braving the sea again. Tom Hank's departing words in the movie, "Castaway" (about being lost at sea) echo my thoughts that night: "Tomorrow the sun will rise; who knows what the tide will bring."

Taoist Master: To know the outcome, look to the root. Study the past to know the future. When the road goes straight I romp ahead; when it twists and turns, I make the best of it I can. The ancients regarded death as going back, life as having to leave home. The sage keeps company with those who think of life and death just as one thinks of waking and sleeping, not with those who have forgotten the meaning of *return*.

Not seeking and being without goals:

The universe is without goal, as is nature. When you follow the way of the universe and the way of nature you do not err; you follow a worthy path. To be without goal is not to wander aimlessly through life like a person lost in the forest who cannot use the sun and the stars as guides, it is to welcome each morning anew, without expectations of the future or disappointments about the past; it is to act spontaneously without motive or thought of the outcome, it is to go through life unimpeded like a stone goes through water.

To be without goal is a difficult concept for most people to embrace as it goes against the principals we have been taught and appears contrary to many of the manifestation principals put forth in this book. After all how can you achieve success if there is not a goal, how can you become wealthy if you do not seek wealth, how can you cross the river if you do not have a plan? On the other hand if you have no compulsion to succeed you will have no need to change people or nature or circumstances to suit your desires.

The non-seeker, non goal-setter is not after success, not after happiness or fulfillment or anything really; yet success, happiness and fulfillment will come if that is their nature and their destiny. The same with goal setters, when you are setting long-term

goals, planning the daily activity list or striving to make something happen in your life remember what makes you happy in the first place and proceed from there.

The problem with plans and goals comes when you obsess over the outcome and do not stay open to the possibilities the universe has in store for you. If you have to force the issue at every turn and things do not unfold smoothly and begin to unravel perhaps you are fighting your own destiny. A goal should be a moving picture not a static freeze frame. Remember that you must remain grateful and thankful for everything in your life that's going on while your seeking, this way you are able to see not only the thing you seek but the other wonders that help balance your life as well.

Take my writing this book for instance. I yearned to write a book for so long that a decade ago I started planning and writing one, an awful thing that didn't inspire me at all. Years later when the real estate business was slow because of my lack of sales gumption I started journaling about how much I had learned dealing with sales yet how much the process baffled me still. With no plan and no goal I wrote non-stop for three solid days and had the rudiments of this book; but only when it was mostly completed, two years later, did I think of it as a book per se.

Will the books success be measured in copies sold, richness of content or impact on those who read it; will I steer it toward a specific genre and finish it by a specific date or shall I allow it to run it's own course; is my goal be to make it the best that it can be, to market it like crazy, and to affirm that it will be a best seller or will I write it for my pleasure and market it under my terms not those set forth by the established literary world? To me if our little book creates a buzz then that is it's destiny, if not there is no disappointment, only the satisfaction of having worked on something that expresses who I am.

The world is never one sided; being without goal is just *one* of the *many* manifestation principles weaved throughout the tapestry of this book, setting goals is another, that is what makes philosophy colorful and interesting to me. There is the positive and the negative. The negative side is that one who is obsessed by his goal may be full of longing, full of insatiable desire, full of suffering to attain that goal and once reached to be succeeded by another, more ambitious one.

Marcus Aurelius (from Meditations): To desire is to be permanently disappointed and disturbed, since everything we desire in this world is empty and corrupt and paltry.

And what of the tribulations of those who have not yet found wisdom but are without goal, those who are stuck somewhere between complacency and contempt for the world? The lament of those who yearn and those who are idle, the laughter of the wise and of the foolish, all belong to each other, are all interwoven into the tapestry; all of them together are the tapestry, are the world.

When we detach ourselves from the results, the fruits of our labor will come of their own accord. Few people in our unnatural, fast paced, capitalistic society have achieved the elite status of being 'without goal.' Most want to have and achieve a worthwhile goal. How many times have you sat at work thinking, "This is bull. What am I doing?" or, "Who am I kidding? This job doesn't make any sense." You can wrack your brains out trying to figure out what your own unique contribution to the world *should* be, or what your true predisposition is, and never come up with an answer that

works. The better solution is to just do it. The job of ferryman is apt for one who is without goal yet completely fulfilled.

The Ferryman: In the days before technology spanned rivers with bridges, every journey across a river required ferryboats and ferrymen. I have often thought the job of a ferryman would have been *perfect* for me. According to author Huston Smith, a Buddhist analogy would go like this: The River itself is life. The shore one departs from is *maya*, (illusion or common sense). The shore on the other side is enlightenment. Buddhism or one's faith is the voyage across life's river. The midway point is as poignant as the beginning and end; it is the point where the previous shore begins to fade from our memory, yet the approaching shore is still shrouded in mist.

Before the travelers crossed the river, the two shores--one human and the other divine--seem so different. As did the River itself, which was first seen as separating the two banks, and during the period of transition, is seen as connecting them. Once the traveler reaches the other side he sees the truth. The ferryman, who is without seeking, gets to take part in this drama every day, listening to the river and assisting the travelers who are all on *The Way*. He then goes back to his hut and enjoys a simple meal and a restful sleep.

Quotes and Works Cited: Chapter Four: “works without working, acts without strain, persuades without argument, is eloquent without flourish and gets results without coercing.” (Boldt: The Tao of Abundance); ‘If you trust that the water wants to hold you up, it may. The universe functions the same way: it does not *want* to pull you down; it does not *want* anything.’ ‘The River itself is life. The shore one departs from is *maya*, (illusion or common sense). The shore on the other side is enlightenment. Buddhism or one's faith is the voyage across life's river..... The midway point is as poignant as the beginning and end (Smith, Huston. The Illustrated World's Religions