Why Think About Death, for Heaven's Sake!

Metaphorical Meandering Through the Valley of the Shadow

Every human being can make a choice between death denial or acceptance of finality. One can *attempt* to escape the gnawing reality that life will come to an end. However, probably for the majority of mortals, awareness of it as a threatening dark cloud is there all the time, buried, yet festering, within the recesses of one's mind. When evidence of human mortality rears its ugly head in everyday life, the internal uneasiness it triggers is disruptive. Silent but deadly anxiety erodes equanimity, while diluting the fullness of life.

It's possible, probable, and even common to stay in attitudinal darkness for an entire lifetime rather than opening one's mind to bask in the light of acknowledgment. By adopting an evasive stance, an opportunity is missed.

Maybe a choice to take action for an attitudinal sea change is like responding to the boogeyman… that monster hiding in the closet in the imagination of a child. Boldly confronting it by opening the door to survey the interior of the closet causes the perceived threat to vanish. Likewise, by actively and intentionally incorporating the terminal phase as part of one's purview of chronological life passages, the dread and fear factors can be nullified. By using a paradigm whereby one's body is only a transient container for one's enduring spirit, a wider view of life may be grasped. By conceptualizing the possibility of essence existence beyond a physical existence, one's tolerance threshold can be raised. By embracing personal religious philosophies of spiritual eternity and rebirth, one's belief system can be fortified.

Contrary to a prevailing superstition, thinking about death and planning for it will not cause the end of life to occur any sooner. It

will simply preclude the urge to flee while invoking stationary composure.

Life is apt to be examined more carefully, appreciated more completely, and lived more fully. When one no longer has to hide guardedly from an encroaching beast in the forest, with one's senses preoccupied by toxic and paralyzing panic, one can observe the rays of sunshine penetrating through the trees. Once that ominous phantom of death has been subjugated, one's comfort zone is expanded, allowing more positive, productive thoughts to replace the negative, erosive ones. One's energy can be redirected.

Conceptualization of your own death can become just another metaphorical companion with whom you'll interact and have an ongoing relationship throughout the course of your remaining time on earth. Instead of being followed everywhere and haunted by that perpetually tormenting threat, the "shadow of death," you can bring it forward to a place in front of you where you are able to look directly into its eyes and speak to it periodically. When engaging in conversations with other people, try using straightforward words like "death," "died," and "dead" rather than euphemistic weasel words like "passed on," "expired," or "went to heaven." As a figurative vaccine, such a simple, yet powerful measure can boost immunity… in this case, to evasive tactics.

Once you are truly able to consciously coax to the surface of your thoughts a conviction that death definitely IS going to occur and that it could happen at any time, life can be richer. Perceived present-day hardships and conflicts may become less important. You're apt to adjust your responses to everyday matters… because every day matters! More so than ever, you'll want to capture the full bounty of the life that you have been allotted, the bounty within the context of your particular resources. You'll want to relish the moments that are yours by sucking up every drop of

nectar until the straw makes those telltale sounds indicating that the bottom of your glass is dry. When we contemplate death, we economize life by spending it more attentively and more deliberately.

Rather than deferring to visions of untenable and platitudinous “heavenly peace” beyond physical actuality, addressing death anxiety and reality is a way to heighten one’s quality of life while on earth. Releasing end-of-life thoughts from the chasm of disquieting disavowal can confer emotional equilibrium and peace of mind in the present moment.

You may be surprised by the enrichment that awaits a posture of acceptance.

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