



Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

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Teach Your Children Well

“You ..., of tender years ..., can’t know the fears ..., that your elders grew by.”
--- from *Teach Your Children* by Crosby, Stills & Nash

We’re born into this world fully aware, completely open to life’s (and our own) limitless possibility. Curiosity, wonder and potential frame our worldview, an inner *knowing* that anything is possible. *Then we learn it’s not.* In the process of being “acculturated” into an adult world, we’re taught to forget or deny the awareness and possibility thinking of our birthright. We’re taught instead to go along, to comply, to avoid mistakes, to compare, to achieve, to fear. Each lesson steals a piece of our authentic selves, until, by the time we become adults, we’re very well practiced at being someone we’re not – a false self adopted in order to “make it” in life. We had it all, but unknowingly let the world take it away.

If we look more deeply at our presence in the world, we can see how these lessons have failed us. Struggle, stress and strife permeate our lives at every level: individual, family, business, political, religious, planet. But because we don’t stop to examine these old lessons, we never see that adopted thought forms hold us back, not any lack of potential.

Let’s do a bit of that inquiry right here. What were we taught that hasn’t served us well? How do we perpetuate this problem by teaching the same things to our children? Notice where your own thinking leads as you consider these reflections from my life experience. We’ve learned to favor ... compliance over creativity, knowledge over experience, answers over questions, busyness over reflection, judgment over discernment, expedience over completeness, what “should be” over what “is,” social acceptance over personal responsibility ... and therefore, our limitations over our potential. We say we seek truth, yet our lessons preclude both the thought and the dialogue on which such a search depends. If we were to learn from our own struggles instead of perpetuating them, however, how could we prepare our children to navigate the paradox, complexity and uncertainty of the world that will await them, a world that desperately needs their creative genius and not their compliance? My vote here is to teach *capacities* rather than a bunch of facts, capacities crucial to thriving in a world we cannot even envision today. You might think about how your life would be different today had you been “acculturated” into this world instead.

- Critical thinking – the courage and tenacity to ponder the nature of truth, to ask life’s tough questions, and to tap the innate creative genius needed to solve real-world problems; and along with it, the will to stand strong in the aloneness that truth often creates.
- Constructive Conversation – the willingness and openness to listen, speak and relate with others from a place of mutual respect and learning, a place of dialogue – where no one is excluded and where everyone learns and grows.
- Reverence and Compassion – to relate to and connect with others (and self) with acceptance, oneness and community; to *be with* the emotional reality of others, so as to hold the polarities of an uncertain world.
- Environmental Sensitivity – the perspective and commitment to be a full participant in the unfolding mystery life is; to live within, and make decisions from, the broader context of our planet and its long-term sustainability.
- Resilience – to see life’s inevitable challenges and setbacks as teachers, not as signs of failure; to devote life’s energy to expressing personal passion and truth instead of attaching to its results; join the natural flow of creation.
- Self-reliance, Trust and Personal Responsibility – perhaps these are natural by-products of the above, our children need to know that the world they *experience* is the one they *create* – with their hearts, minds and potential.

Exercise: Re-learning. In personal quiet periods this month, reflect back on your life: (1) What lessons that you may have unknowingly adopted as truth do you now see as having limited you and your life’s potential? (No judgment here, just learning.) (2) Had you learned differently, name the lessons that would have left you encouraged and self-reliant instead. (3) Imagine a new future into being. How would you design/envision your path forward, given that you can now embrace your limitless potential? (4) If you’re a parent, ponder shifts you might make in your way of being that could positively impact the future of your children. (5) If you’re a manager of others at work, ponder shifts you might make in your way of being that could positively impact the performance (and the futures) of your employees.

A River Runs Through It [Life lessons offered by nature]

There's a website out there called www.YourTrueNature.com. You may have seen some of their products (bookmarks, cards, posters, etc.). I love them. Collectively or individually, they offer a way to see how nature focuses on *capacities*, not *facts & information*. Here are some examples: see where your "listening" leads you.

- *Advice from a Tree*: Stand tall and proud. Sink your roots into the earth. Be content with your natural beauty. Drink plenty of water. Enjoy the view!
- *Advice from a Bobcat*: Walk softly in nature. Spot opportunities. Pounce on possibilities. Take some time alone. Be at home in the woods. Enjoy the nightlife!
- *Advice from a Canyon*: Carve out a place for yourself. Aspire to new plateaus. Stand the test of time. Don't get boxed in. Listen to the voice of the wind. It's OK to be a little off the wall. Reach deep!
- *Advice from an Eagle*: Let your spirit soar. See the big picture. Cherish freedom. Honor the earth and sky. Keep your goals in sight. Bald is beautiful. Fly high!
- *Advice from a Lake*: Be clear. Make positive ripples. Look beneath the surface. Stay calm. Shore up friendships. Take time to reflect. Be full of life!
- *Advice from the Moon*: Live life to the fullest. Be someone to look up to. Don't be phased by difficulties. Enjoy a little space. Honor the cycles of nature. Light up the night!
- *Advice from a Raven*: Be curious. Use your wits. Don't be a picky eater. Take time to play. Be adaptable. Make your voice heard. Don't let life ruffle your feathers!
- *Advice from the Earth*: Be well rounded. Keep a positive atmosphere. Have a magnetic personality. Celebrate diversity. Think globally. Be good to your mother. There's no place like home!

There are many ways to say the same thing. I know I tend to favor language/words/concepts, etc. So as an adjunct to that approach, these create mental images that evoke. I so appreciate that.

Openings to New Possibility

Available for you:

- *The Road Not Taken Community*, a no-cost subscription that offers you connection, interaction, challenge, and learning. Articles, newsletters and blogs [here](#). I welcome conversation; dialogue is how we all learn together.
- "*In Nature's Image*," 100 of my nature images, each with a simple message to help experience life's meaning.
- *The Road Not Taken* newsletters (13 years, 156 issues of *Purposeful Wanderings*) available [here](#) as a pdf file.
- Photo images from my travels available [here](#) on fun products – note cards, coffee mugs – great gift ideas.

An invitation to possibility: This (or any) newsletter could be the basis of a focused program of personal coaching. So if you read something that evokes the yearning inside you ... and have the courage and determination to challenge conventional thinking so you can live instead with authenticity and freedom, contact me for a conversation that can energize your dream. I will help you reach a level of *clarity and perspective* – about yourself, others, your life, your work, and the world – that will allow you to live your truth, every day. Trade the way it *is* for the way it *could be*.

Book of the month – Bad for You, by Kevin Pyle & Scott Cunningham. A very different look at worldview and change. In an "artistic" (often comic book) style, the authors survey all the "bad lessons" that have been foisted upon us over the years. They start with Plato, who, in 360 B.C., was worried his students would fail to remember the spoken word once "writing" came to be. "Plato's complaint may be the first historical record of the Fear of the New. Of course, the reason people know this is because someone *wrote* about it. Which probably makes this the first example of hypocrisy, too." They go on to de-bunk, with reason, humor and artistry, the "inventions" of comic books, computers, internet, cell phones, texting, Harry Potter and many others – all having been reputed to be the end of reason and personal responsibility. Every now and then, twisted humor helps get a point across. ... And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons – 508-539-6985.