



Purposeful Wanderings

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

©2018 Bradford L. Glass • www.RoadNotTaken.com

Vol. 17, No. 7 -- July 2018

Choosing “Home” – Part 4: Falling Down

“Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.” --- Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

Because of the insightful comments and questions I received on Parts [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#) of this series on “how a deep sense of *home* can offer you resilience and self-trust in a chaotic, uncertain world,” I’m adding, and concluding with, Part 4.

I’d summarize feedback from readers this way: OK, so I see how stress in my life has come even more from fighting what’s *natural and true in me* than from trying to control life and the world, as I used to think. And in doing the self-reflection to discover “what life wants from me” rather than “what I want from life,” I’ve felt my own inner power; it’s actually quite exciting. But I’m also scared – because the idea of being unique makes me feel alone and lonely. Plus, I’m afraid of what happens when I screw up, that there will be no one there to support me when I fail.

I so cherish and appreciate the perspective these ideas offer – the “real deal,” as they say. They also show the insight people experience with deep self-reflection and self-discovery. Here’s a retrospective on what I see as the two major themes these comments brought up, and a summary of how I responded to them as I received them.

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. When you live from the unique energy inside you, you realize there’s no one in the world just like you, nobody with exactly the same creative essence as you. If you think about this from your *old* mentality of “safety in numbers” and “going along with the crowd,” yes, loneliness can follow. But once you truly *participate* in the energy of your own truth, (and you will not feel this until you *do*,) you realize how deeply connected you are, not just to every other person, but to all of life. There is perhaps no greater feeling of oneness and peace than what comes from this experience. This approaches the level of consciousness the great masters have always sought.

Falling is not the same as failing. One of the worst lessons many of us learn growing up in this society is that mistakes are bad and being perfect is good. Not possible. Another is that others are watching and judging this. Not so. All of us fall down. With a *new* mentality, however, falling down shows up as the result of *courage* – to step into the unknown, without assurance or foreknowledge of how things will turn out. It’s also an opening to learning, not a reason to give up or shrivel into “not being good enough.” It doesn’t matter that you think you mess up. What matters is how you *get* up. Once you realize this, learning to get up takes far less energy than what it took to make sure you didn’t fall.

I read an article years ago that suggested, no matter whether we’re following our own truth or still stuck trying to live someone else’s, that we’re actually off course 95% of the time. Although this may seem like a scary thought, it leads to big possibility. If we *knew* we were mostly off course, we’d probably choose to learn the skills to get back on, not the ones to make sure we never fall (a futile pursuit, it would seem). Those skills are not the “doing” skills you may know so well, but instead: *awareness* – of where you are right now, and when and how you’re off track; *acceptance* – of what is true now, and what your *experience* is telling you in this moment; *patience* – to remember that falling is about learning, not failing; *trust* – that while you may not always “have it all handled,” you have what it takes to “handle it all.” “Life” is one mid-course correction after another. Your inner truth is the light that will show you your way.

Perspective: When you *think* about following your truth, things feel scary. But when you actually *follow* your truth, you find a deep sense of peace and home. When I embarked on the path of *my* truth 20 years ago, I couldn’t imagine ever being comfortable on my own. For over 35 years, I’d had the *perceived* safety of corporate America to both provide me with a stable structure and keep me invisible, protected from harm. That was then; this is now. Today I can’t imagine how I ever believed that nonsense. Do I fall? Yes, of course; perhaps even more than I did when I “felt safe.” (Maybe I simply notice it more.) But now, the trust I feel in myself and my love for *being my truth in the world* make it far easier to get back up. My critics can criticize if they like; but *their* perception doesn’t need to become *my* truth.

Exercise: Experiencing your true self. One big reason we tend *not* to rise to our greatest potential, *not* to honor the inner voice of our deepest longing, *not* to live authentically, is that we're more afraid of what happens if we mess up than we are excited about the possibility of being our true selves. It's the ultimate in personal sabotage, even if only unconsciously. Yet the underlying cause here is our thinking, not the experience. Two things can help: (1) distinguish between your thoughts and your feelings. (2) get curious about how your thinking impacts your behavior.

Two distinctions: *Alone vs. Lonely*. Being *alone* is a "state." It carries no emotion or judgment. Being *lonely* is a feeling. The feeling comes from a *thought* – the judgment that being alone is *the same as* being lonely, and therefore is not ok. *Falling vs. Failing*. Falling is also a "state." No judgment. Things didn't go as you planned. Failing evokes a feeling. The feeling comes from a *thought* – the judgment that falling is *the same as* failing, and therefore is not ok.

A perspective on our thinking: When we encounter discomfort yet are not consciously aware of our thinking, we tend to retreat from that discomfort as soon as we feel fear (before the thought that created it becomes conscious). But what if you could *notice* you were at the edge of your comfort zone ... as you arrived? You could choose to *stop*, before retreat, just for long enough to examine the edge and get to know it. What you **do** next is still a choice, even retreat, but through this process you will come to **know** your edges. The edges soften, naturally; you expand to fill the space.

Try these ideas out for yourself, your *true* self – a conscious experiment – with an intention of truly listening to the feedback you get from life's experience – a way to build *awareness, acceptance, patience* and *trust*. Sit quietly, alone in nature, for an hour or so, a few times each week. Make sure it's a place free of interruptions, except, perhaps, the sound of the birds or the breeze in the trees. Be silent. As Ram Dass said, "The quieter you become, the more you can hear." By now, your practice has probably taken you beyond the place of hearing only the yammering of the voices in your head, and more toward hearing the longing of your heart. As you get in touch with this silent source of your own wisdom, ask yourself these questions. What do I feel connected to, right here, right now? How is my experience of life in this moment part of my "home?" What was this place like just before I arrived today? What was it like before humans arrived? What does my experience here teach me about who I am? As you adopt a genuine *curiosity* about your thoughts and feelings, your experience will teach you all you need to know. The information flow inherent in life's experience is called *feedback*, and it's a powerful source of energy that will light your way and guide your next steps.

Life lessons from nature: Nature plays hard, sometimes rough. We may label the aftermath of her play as beautiful, ugly, even unfair. Violent winds and waves can render a coastline unrecognizable in hours. Fires can ravage an entire forest. Predators and prey create a complex web of life. Tropical breezes and lapping waves embrace Pacific islands in tranquility. Flowers blossom each spring in the ritual of sustaining life. Volcanic eruptions both create and destroy ... at the same time.



Underneath it all is nature's game, **her** authentic truth – *the process of creative expression*. Nature has become quite expert at creativity, and plays the game very well. She never stops. As masterful as she is, nature nevertheless still wins some and loses some. The landscape and creatures we see today, anywhere on Earth, represent her "win column." (Not a bad record, I'd suggest). We see her losses temporarily, for they're quickly absorbed back into the process, fodder for improving the next round of play. In the 1800s, Charles Darwin uncovered some of the key secrets of nature's winning game strategy. He called her win/loss record "natural selection." The loss column simply became the "coach" for how to play next time. There is no judgment, only learning and growth. No energy wasted on "why."

Challenge: By winning some and losing some, nature continues to perfect the process of creation. Over four billion years, she's created a sustainable system of remarkable beauty and wonder. You are part of that creation. Can you take the game to the next level of play, and not sit on the sidelines, wondering when someone will invite you onto the field, or lamenting the idea that you're not good enough to be on the team? In nature, those are candidates for natural selection. "Survival of the fittest" is not some macho display of competitive arrogance. It's the courage to step in and play your best game to the best of your ability, every day. When you play a game you love, life becomes fun. Can you release the judgment of your biggest "loss," and allow it to become your biggest teacher?

Book of the month: *Daring Greatly*, by Brené Brown. Each of us experiences being vulnerable; what separates us is *how we respond* to the experience. Learn to embrace vulnerability as an *opening to courage and to your potential*. An extremely powerful book. If your life falls even one step below amazing (whose doesn't?) this is so worth reading. ... And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons; 508-539-6985.