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Imitation of Life (and How to Get Real)

By Susan Dunn

**Imitation of Life (and How to Get Real) by Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach
and Consultant**

"Almost all absurdity of conduct arises from the imitation of those whom we cannot resemble," wrote Samuel Johnson. I would amend this to: "Almost all human misery and wasted living comes from the imitation of those whom we cannot resemble."

As a coach, I see it daily. I work with people in transitions, some of whom are well beyond burnout and driven to coaching in their healthy desire for relief from the stress and misery of imitating that which they can't resemble.

The realization that they can no longer tolerate doing something they weren't meant to be doing, no matter what the salary, comes in various forms - physical aches and pains, migraines, depression, fatigue, irritability, flash anger, or numbness, the ability to feel nothing at all. Emotions out-of-control is the general theme - at one extreme, shutting down and feeling no pleasure because all the energy goes to managing the pain; or over-reacting, living in anger, hostility and mood swings which drive away loved ones, compromise work, and bring exhaustion in another way. Sometimes the physical symptoms are the driving point. Other times an external crisis precipitates the epiphany - the death of a parent, or getting fired. Other times its depression and imploding relationships.

Depression is epidemic and immune deficiency conditions are proliferating. Stress and anger are known to compromise the immune system, which is our health. Chronic stress and chronic depression are associated with changes in the hippocampus (an area of the brain), and problems with learning and memory.

The effects are long-reaching, including putting you at risk for Alzheimer's Disease. According to a recent report in the journal Neurology on Alzheimer's Disease, subjects classified as highly prone to stress were shown to have twice the risk of developing Alzheimer's as those in the lower stress category. Furthermore, there was a greater than tenfold increase in episodic memory decline (remembering events, not facts). The study found that chronic psychological distress is a risk factor for

Alzheimer's Disease."

One of the greatest stresses we can put ourselves under is pretending to be what we're not, of asking ourselves to do things that are foreign to us. Buckingham and Clifton, authors of "Now, Discover Your Strengths," based on research on over 2,000,000 subjects, concluded that working within areas of your innate talents not only allows you to achieve near-excellence most of the time, but to do this without draining yourself. If this sounds like a dream to you, why not make it a reality? To work with yourself instead of against yourself allows you to be productive and also generate energy, not deplete it.

The StrengthsFinder® profile, from the Gallup organization, shows you what your 5 top innate talents are, in descending order, using both familiar and unique terms, such as Deliberativeness, Focus, Analytical, WOO (Winning Others Over), Harmony, Connectedness and Strategic. There are 34 strengths, and the chances of any two people having the same 5 in the same order are millions to one.

Yes, you are unique. Yes, you may not be taking advantage of this.

As an example, people with Strategic are natural-born strategists, a talent which the authors say cannot be learned. Considering the need in organizations these days for long-term strategy, you would think this profile would be routinely administered, wouldn't you, in employee selection? Why force someone without this talent to attempt the impossible, when there are people who do this as naturally as they draw a breath?

In another example, people with Deliberativeness are naturals for due diligence, research, coaching and law. They are naturally cautious, keen on ferreting out loopholes, and prone to deliberate carefully before making decisions or taking action. If you have Deliberativeness and are working in a field requiring fast action and forcing you to make shoot-from-the-hip decisions, you're a sea creature trying to live on the land.

To live a good life, you must develop and use emotional intelligence. The cornerstone of Emotional Intelligence is self-awareness. The StrengthsFinder® profile can show you what your innate talents are, which, combined with education, training and expertise, become strengths.

At the same time, you must understand and be able to manage your own emotions and those of others. To know yourself, you must know how you feel, a point which has been ignored in Western society for too long. We are our emotions. Our emotions are there to guide us - toward things that feel good and are therefore good for us, and away from things that feel bad and are therefore bad for us.

One of the Emotional Intelligence competencies is Integrated Self. In my EQ teleclasses, I start each session by asking each participant to tell how they are feeling - emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. These four components add up to self-knowledge and to balance in life.

Typically each participant will start in, name three and "forget" the 4th. . This "forgotten" one is usually the problem area.

Participants report feeling centered and "better" just having gone through the exercise. How often, after

all, do we ask one another this, or ourselves? And how less often do we honestly answer it. Routinely we ask, "How are you?" and answer with "Fine."

Midlife is the time when the chickens come home to roost. So well put by the poet Dante, in "The Divine Comedy," "Midway upon the journey of my life I found myself in a dark wood, where the right way was lost."

When in a dark wood, when the right way has been lost, the least Emotionally Intelligent thing to do is to redouble our efforts at what we've already discovered doesn't work, hoping that more of the same, only harder and longer, will bring different results. This is the proverbial "beating a dead horse." As someone wrote, "I'm busy all the time - working, sewing, crafts classes, promotions, organizations, networking, activities, teleclasses ...won't somebody please stop me?"

Difficult as it may be, the best thing to do is to stop. Take the time to pause and reflect. Turn inward to find the answers you haven't been able to find by turning outward. Learn more about yourself and who are you are and then become more of that. Coaching can help you sort through the sources of chaos and stress, to get back in touch with who you really are, perhaps for the first time. From there you can begin to rebuild your life in a balanced and healthy manner, going with the grain, not against it.

All growth requires some discomfort. To turn and face what's going on takes some courage, but the rewards are commensurate with your willingness to do this. Rather than continuing to sweep the dirt under the rug, go after it.

Work with an Emotional Intelligence coach to get in touch with, yes, your feelings, because we are our emotions, and they are there to guide us. Develop your Emotional Intelligence as the foundation for changes you need to make. Discover what your strengths are. Then be willing to try some new things, and to get rid of or stop doing the things that are making you miserable.

If not now, when?

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Cheap Engagement Rings

By Roy Dietelzieg

As long as weddings and engagements have been around, people have associated engagement rings with large sums of money. Often times, it is hard to find cheap engagement rings and this fact puts a damper on what should be a happy and exciting occasion. Something that you may not know is that there is a solution, cheap engagement rings. These cheap engagement rings can be just as spectacular and lovely as an expensive engagement ring. If you look in the right place, you can easily

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find a cheap engagement ring without compromising quality or beauty.

You see, generally, when we think of cheap engagement rings, we think green fingers, poor quality and lack of beauty. But it simply does not have to be that way. Some jewelers, both on and offline, take great pride in offering their customers high quality engagement rings at a fraction of the cost. Popping the question with a beautiful engagement ring does not have to cost you thousands of dollars.

Cheap engagement rings are not hard to find either, there are a multitude of online and offline jewelers that offer very affordable engagement rings. It is important that you look for a reputable jeweler who stands behind all of their engagement rings and offer a money back guarantee.

When it is time to begin your search for a cheap engagement ring, there are a few things you should keep in mind. The first thing you should do is determine what price would fit your budget. It is important that, once you create a budget for your cheap engagement ring, that you keep it. This will ensure that you do not strain yourself financially. You should then determine the type of metal you want. You should be aware that platinum is the most expensive of the metals, yellow or white gold is much cheaper. In fact yellow or white gold is about half the cost of a platinum engagement ring and looks just as beautiful.

When you are determining a diamond for your engagement ring, choose a small karat diamond. This is less expensive and works well with a budget. It is important that you know that cheap engagement rings do not generally come with a lot of designs, etchings or patterns. You should also keep in mind that the more work done on the creation of the engagement ring, the more money it will cost to purchase. You could also opt to purchase an imitation or synthetic diamond. While these are not real, good quality ones will generally look real. Your future bride may not be the type that relies on the diamond to represent your love for her, so an imitation or synthetic diamond may be perfectly acceptable.

No matter if you choose a cheap engagement ring with a real diamond or a "fake" diamond, the true spirit of the occasion should be remembered. Choose a cheap engagement ring that will reflect the beauty of your true love and your love for her.

Roy Dietelzieg worked in the jewelry industry for 10 years and has been writing about his reflections on jewelry philosophy. Roy currently writes articles with tips for buying Engagement Rings at



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