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Memories, Meanings, and Lessons for Life

By Eileen McDargh, CSP, CPAE

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Some places just feel like home even if you've never lived there. I can feel calm settle over me as I turn from the highway and see St. Joseph Convent perched in its solid position above the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside. Its three-story arms spread across the hill as if embracing the furrowed farmland below. The manure-covered fields puff pungent perfume into the April morning air. The dense pine trees planted by my grandfather are almost as tall as the bell tower. I don't remember the pink and white dogwoods that blush next to the retreat center but then again, I have never been here in spring. An emergency calls me here now.

Could it have been 45 years ago I watched my beautiful aunt walk down the aisle and become a "Bride of Christ", a term that kept my eight year-old Catholic mind in puzzlement? I remember the coolness of the chapel and the stained glass colors dancing across the pews. Could it have been so long ago and after successive summer visits, that my twin brother and sister and I found the cows kept by Sister Phillip, the grotto walkway, the Lady of Lourdes statue and chicken coops? Could it have been so long ago that countless arms swaddled in black gauze reached to hug us against ample bosoms?

How strange it seemed that we had to meet her--Auntie Pep now-called Sister Mary Clare--in a small parlor with uncomfortable velvet chairs. Stranger too was hearing Nana and Pappaw call their daughter, "Sister Clare".

There was mystery behind all those doors marked "private" just as surely there must have been some secret hidden behind the starched headpiece and cowl and beneath the long black skirt and veil. Yet for all the mystery, my overwhelming sense was always one of contentment when I walked up the steep marble stairs to the entry hall and candlelit chapel.

The black habits are gone and I am staying in one of the rooms behind the private doors .I wear my bathrobe and stand shoulder to shoulder with nuns of all ages at a sink to spit toothpaste and water. I carry my tray into the dining room and laugh at jokes around a table. I know the security code to open the backdoor and where the yogurt is hidden in the big refrigerator. It is now a different kind of mystery.

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What are the odds that my 86 year–old Florida–based mother would fall while visiting her baby sister? What are the odds that there would be room down the hill in St. Anne's Home for the Aged where mother could recover from a multi–fractured hip? What are the odds that each one of her children could arrange schedules to fly across country and take turns caring for her and that the convent would find room for us? Mystery beyond mystery.

Psychologist Carl Jung would have called my mystery, "synchronicity". This fortuitous set of circumstances– "synchronicity"– is fraught with meaning and it is my task to figure the lessons.

Spending days between a health care setting where many will never leave due to infirmity and another home where women stay because of faith, I find these initial lessons the most universal:

Lesson One: From breakdown comes build up. Mom is getting stronger in the weaker places of her body. She still has more life to live. We all have broken places to rebuild.

Lesson Two: Caring for the ending of life is as precious as caring for the beginning. May we learn to see its beauty.

Lesson Three: Respectful listening is the greatest gift we give each other. No other species can verbalize its experience and feelings and have it held in sacred trust.

Lesson Four: Shared memories create a bond as potent as fire. A memory can either burnish or destroy. It's our choice.

I've retraced my route and crossed the Susquehanna River. I am flying home to California from Baltimore with these lessons packed in my heart. Perhaps you might find them in a corner of yours.

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Eileen McDargh, CSP, CPAE, is an international speaker, author and seminar leader. Her book 'Work for A Living and Still Be Free to Live' is also the title of one of her most popular and upbeat programs on Work/Life Balance. For more information on Eileen and her presentations, please call 949–496–8640 or visit her web site at <http://www.eileenmcdargh.com>.

Motivation, Your Core Resource

By Ke o agile

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Your motivation is one of the core resources you have to accomplish all the things you want to achieve. Let us get one thing clear though before we handle this resource called motivation.

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You may have listened to people who refer to themselves as 'motivational speakers'. And you may have attended a motivational training workshop. You got motivated there. Good!

I want you though to start of thinking of 'motivation' in a new way. And this way, which is an old fact is that 'success is not a product of motivation'.

Yes, I know I have just said it.

Contrary to some popular wishful thinking, success is not a product of motivation. Rather, it is the other way round.

High Motivation Is A Result of Success and low motivation is a result of prior failure.

What this means is that repeated success in a particular activity leads [motivates] one to want to do that activity often. While repeated failure at a particular activity leads [demotivates] one to want to avoid that activity.

Now that you understand that success creates motivation, and failure destroys it, what's the use?

Motivation is made up of four elements that are essential to know and apply in your quest for success and abundance. Those elements are: memories, meanings, meta–programs, and metaphors. Let us take a look at each one of them.

Memories

The memories you have about your past are influencers on your motivation. If memories of success are many and strong in your life, then it stands to reason that you will be positively inclined, and well motivated. Plentiful memories of failure on the other hand will predispose you to strong hesitations. It is important therefore to choose with care the memories that make up your success package.

Meta–programs

Meta–programs are patterns of acting/re–acting which an individual prefers in given situations. They may change across context and time. Two of the meta–programs you may want to think of are: internal/external: relying on your own opinions versus relying on the opinions of others. towards/away from: moving towards some desired objective versus moving away from an undesirable situation.

The meta–programs identify what motivates an individual and are helpful in defining 'success' and what makes it happen.

What this means for you is that you will find it helpful if you know which meta–programs you use to attain success. And use them!

Meanings

The meaning an event/experience has for an individual will determine how motivated they will/not be to engage in it.

Meaning is made up of expectations and criteria.

How much you expect something to occur goes hand in hand with what that particular something means to you. If it is something you are not really attached to, it does not matter whether it occurs or not. It is meaningless to you. You attach a particular criterion to something in order for that thing to

have a personal meaning to you.

Criterion says: "What makes this meaningful to me", while expectation says: "How possible is this for me?".

What an event, activity or experience means to you will determine how successful you will want to be in relation to that activity. And, your perceived success will in turn influence how motivated you will be to engage in (similar) activities.

Metaphors

Metaphors are language tools we use to try to understand vague or abstract concepts and experiences. When we use them, they become frames that help us focus our attention on some aspect of a concept, situation or experience while ignoring other aspects.

Metaphors have an impact on our perceptions and the behaviours that result from these perceptions. The metaphors that you apply to yourself, others and your situations contain within them your beliefs about reality. They make experience coherent for you. And because they contain beliefs about reality, they tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. In order to understand the influence of metaphors on your experience do the following:

identify your metaphors

which beliefs are inherent in these metaphors?

what reality (or even lies) do they create?

is this the kind of reality that you need to?

Now you know that prior successes motivates you. How can you use this knowledge?

What you can do is to recall any and/or all the successes you have had in the recent past. Fill your brain with memories of success.

Secondly, make sure you know the meta-programs that are operational in your life.

Thirdly, take a look at how you use 'meanings'. How do you balance your criteria with your expectations?

And, fourthly, make sure that your metaphors are congruent with who you want to be or with what you want to happen in your life. Contradictory metaphors are disabling.

You now can see how motivation is a core resource you can use in positioning yourself for success and abundance.

Make sure you understand it very well, and apply it wisely!

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