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Sparrow or Peacock?: Understanding Your Relationship with Your Stuff

By Maya Talisman Frost

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Maybe it's just a weird week. Three times in the past three days, I've bumped into someone I know and started a conversation with, "Hey, how ARE you?"

Nothing unusual about that. But the responses were all discussions of problems with STUFF. Cars. Computers. Sprinkling systems. Lawnmowers. Burglar alarms. Phones. Everybody's stuff was causing headaches. Okay, so I guess the short answer to the question would have been, "I have a headache."

It's not that I didn't want to hear the story behind the headache—it's that the headache wouldn't have existed without all that stuff.

Is your stuff causing you headaches? Do you spend more time and energy and money on maintaining your things than on improving yourself? It's easy to get caught up in it, isn't it?

I don't want to complain about stuff. I'd rather not have it.

Okay, so we have to have a home, some form of transportation, and some way to interact with the world. But maybe we don't need the biggest, fastest, hippest version of all three.

Take a look at your stuff, and think about what it takes to maintain it. Now, think about the time and energy you spend investing in yourself and your own development as an Excellent Human.

Who's the winner....you or your STUFF?

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Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, philosopher, painter, songwriter, composer and Nobel laureate, said this:

"The sparrow is sorry for the peacock at the burden of his tail."

Which one are you...the sparrow or the peacock?

Now, be honest. A minute ago, if I had asked you that question, you may have thought that the peacock was the "right" answer. After all, we like to think of ourselves as beautiful, colorful, and proud—someone to be admired.

A sparrow? That little brown job? Boring.

So...how do you feel about sparrows and peacocks now?

The cool thing about Excellence is that it doesn't require stuff. It's available to everyone, whether you are the sparrow or the peacock. All you need is your mind and the time to use it.

Take note of how much time you spend worrying about your things. If it turns out that your stuff is taking over your mindspace, realize you have a choice. You can CHOOSE to worry less about it, or you can CHOOSE to pare it down.

Guess what? It's easier to pare down than to stop worrying.

Albert Einstein is one of my favorite thinkers. One of his Three Rules of Work is this: "Out of clutter, find simplicity."

Use your mind—and maybe your muscles—to take control of your stuff. Clean off your desk. Clear out a closet. Tackle your garage. Be ruthless, and then be generous—donate those unneeded items. Don't you feel better just thinking about it?

Fill that newly available mindspace with thoughts worthy of that beautiful mind of yours. You'll have fewer headaches, and more time for Excellence.

And maybe you'll have something more inspiring to talk about when someone asks how you are.

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse. As a teacher, facilitator and mediator, she has been helping others engage their formidable frontal lobes since 1983. Her popular course, "Massage Your Mind!: Defining Your Life Philosophy", has inspired thinkers in over 60 countries around the world. Her free weekly e-zine, the Friday Mind Massage, is designed to ease you into a thoughtful weekend. To subscribe, visit <http://www.massageyourmind.com> today!

Little Big Bird

By Jean Woods

A few years ago while sitting on a bench outside my workplace I noticed two birds running around making all kinds of noise. One was much larger than the other was so I assumed that she was the mother trying to feed her young. I couldn't believe that the small bird, a lovely little sparrow, was jumping up and down trying to put food in the mouth of this ungrateful screeching little big bird who did nothing but keep his mouth open and run around as if he wasn't getting enough to eat. The mother was exhausted from all this jumping about. I thought I'd give the mother a break and throw some breadcrumbs out there for them to share. Do you think the 'Baby' bird would feed itself – NO! It still waited for Mom to jump up and put the morsels in its mouth. If this were the real mother of this monster bird, then I would hate to see the father! I've heard of birds laying their eggs in 'foreign' nests but the least they could do is pick a surrogate mother their own size!

Since then I've been reading up on 'brood parasites' – that's what they call these deadbeat mothers who leave it up to other birds to raise their babies. The one most popular in the Americas seems to be the Brown-headed Cowbird which is a pretty big bird in comparison to the sparrow. To help out the sparrow I decided to go into real estate – wild bird real estate that is: bird houses and feeders, plus baths and fountains. This way the sparrow can move in a small holed birdhouse and not worry about a bigger bird coming in and laying its eggs for her to raise. She can bring up her own little sparrows the way nature intended.

After working for over 20 years in an office, (the place I witnessed the above) I decided to work at home and sell something I really like. To me there is nothing like the sound of birds chirping in the morning. So after lots of pondering I chose to help them out and provide them with their own home at



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