

## Struck by Lightning

A few weeks ago, my partner and I went to see *Monsoon Wedding*, a beautiful movie about family connections. We were enchanted by the music and envious of the sensuality, joy and bonds between the people on screen. The movie ended with people laughing and dancing under a colorful tent, as rain poured from the sky. We laughed as we walked out of the theatre where we had just watched a torrential downpour, into the street where rain was pouring down from the sky and felt even more connected to what we had experienced in the movie.

The rain continued and about 10 minutes later, as we were driving home, a huge bolt of lightning struck somewhere ahead of us. The lightning was the kind you see in photos at art galleries and in weather calendars that have a number of bolts going out and down, sort of like tree roots. I noticed that the lightning was technically impressive, but was so focused on my driving that I didn't experience the wonder and awe of what I had seen. A few seconds later, the irony that I was so busy trying to get home that I missed the journey hit me like a bolt of lightning. And I realized that this was just a tiny example of how I had been putting so much energy into preparing for the future (going back to school to get a counseling license, working on query letters and manuscript proposals so that I can publish my book, etc) that I wasn't living my life now.

The irony that I was cutting myself off from the very aspects of the movie that I was most envious of: joy, sensuality and connecting with others didn't occur to me until later.

I am frustrated because I feel like I am just a puppet responding to the tugs and dips of some evil puppeteer who has chosen my destiny for me. Both of my parents were workaholics. My mother was a teacher and worked until 4:30 or 5:00 at school and always had a stack of papers to grade and/or art projects to prepare at night. When she wasn't doing school- work, she was making clothes for my brother and I, ironing, doing the laundry or something. My father basically lived at work and only came home to eat, sleep, shower and change. It seemed to me that they were so busy taking care of me that they didn't even notice that what I needed more than anything was their time. I hated my parents for that and promised that I would never fall into this trap.

Of course it's easy to make excuses. Most people that I know in my age group are living a similar experience. We laugh about not having time to get together and complain about feeling isolated and alienated. We live in a workaholic culture that expects us to work 40 to 60 hours a week, so what choice do we have?

Of course, we forget that while the range of options may be limited, we still have choices. One way to look at the impact of the choices you are making is to ask yourself, "If I found out that I had only 6 weeks to live, how would I want to live my life?" If you are not satisfied with the way you are living now given your

imminent death, make the changes that you need to feel complete. In reality, you probably don't know when your time will be up. When you cut through all the shoulds, oughts, and expectations, you'll see that now is all there is. The past is done and there are no guarantees about what tomorrow might bring. You might be able to achieve your plans, but you could also literally be struck by lightning tomorrow. Few of us have any way of knowing when our ticket is up. From this perspective, there is no moment that is more important than the moment you are living right now. The journey is just as important as the destination.

Originally appeared on [Suite101.com](http://Suite101.com)