

Sporks in the Road

Thirty years ago, the phrase, “The Road Less Traveled,” became popular as the title of Scott Peck’s best selling self-help book. Now it’s sort of a catch phrase used to describe the journey into the body/mind/soul that happens in counseling. Ultimately, counseling can help folks connect deeply with joy and all those other happy feel good vibes people often access through vodka, cocaine, bungee jumping, and sex. Unfortunately, before most travelers get to those non-chemical and non-adrenaline based good vibrations, they usually have to travel through the fear, anger, grief and shame that has kept them stuck.

As you might imagine, a route through fear, anger, grief and shame isn’t always a load of laughs. In fact, it can really suck. There’s a reason that most people put a lot of energy into pushing away, stuffing down, and ignoring feelings and memories. Being in that place on the journey where feelings start coming up can feel like being pelted by golf ball sized hail on a ledge of a mountain while being blown around by 90 mile an hour wind gusts. The fact that most people metaphorically spend the night before this section of the trail camping in a cave to avoid the rough weather just makes matters worse because caves are usually filled with sand and sand has a diabolical way of everything and I do mean everything, including places where grit is just not appreciated, if you catch my drift. This is the part of the journey where most people wish they could just quit the damned adventure and get their money back. But it doesn’t work that way. Sand is almost impossible to get rid of and the wind and hail just won’t stop until the storm is done.

At this point, it can be tempting to head into a tried and true diversion, so it’s not uncommon for storm weary travelers to trade railing against the storm for beating themselves up for signing up for the trip in the first place: "What the hell were you thinking, dumb ass? You spent good money for this? You could have gone to Hawaii, or paid off your bills or.....? Hell, you could have fed the starving children in Africa or Harlem or wherever children are starving right now."

And it’s somewhere around this stage that people hit a low point. Even though their brain tells them that there are other people on the trail who are suffering in this very moment just like they are, their mental fog renders those fellow travelers invisible. They begin to feel utterly and completely alone, like they are the only person who has ever felt like this. These are the moments where many people check out. They magically find that emergency joint or bottle of scotch they put aside, mysteriously end up at their coke or meth dealer’s house, sneak out on an emergency junk food run or booty call, even if it’s with a stranger, or obsessively shop for that new HD radio or pair of shoes that they “have to have.”

And after metaphorically crouching on the edge of a mountain in the middle of a hail storm, the first dip into that old pattern can feel like heaven in a box. And it feels great until it doesn’t; until the hangover hits, or the guilt and shame lurking at the bottom of the pint of Häagen-Dazs you polished off pops out and trounces you, or you find out that that night of fun and frolic was captured on film and is now playing on the internet, or you come across the receipt from your shopping frenzy and realize that you have to pay for it some day, or... (The list of potential consequences is endless. Finish this one with ones you are well acquainted with.) The point is that the consequences of “taking the easy way out” suck too. So you get to make a choice: hell or torture.

I also know that if you stick to the road less traveled, as lonely and painful and difficult as it is, you will find moments of pure bliss. You will have moments when the sun comes out, the wind and hail

stop, and the beauty you see and feel as you look out over the horizon takes your breath away. In this clear space, you can see the power of love and creation and feel it in the depth of your core. And when you stop to eat some of the smoked Gouda cheese you packed for the journey, it tastes like smoked nirvana because for the first time in a long time (possibly ever) you can really taste what you are eating. And when you eat a few squares of the Green and Black's organic chocolate bar you packed for dessert, you will melt into a state of unadulterated bliss because, well, it is premium organic chocolate and you can fully experience its magic because you're really there. And when you sleep, you'll sleep like a baby wrapped in its mother's arms, feeling the love of the universe flow through because you are present to feeling that love as well.

I also know that if you stick with the road and make your way through the fear, anger, grief and shame that you spent so many years running away from, you will begin to interact with the world and that those you come in contact with will respond to you accordingly. You will file down those defenses you have traditionally relied on to push away the very people you want close to you. You will be able to understand that most of their shit really is their shit, and that even if it's targeted towards you inappropriately, it's not about you and you will be able to take responsibility without beating yourself up for the things you do that turn out to be hurtful. And from this place, there will be moments, perhaps even hours, when you are able to connect with others at a heart to heart level, and as painful and difficult as it is, you'll know -- you'll feel it in the beating of your heart -- that you are not alone and that you are worthy of love simply because you exist.

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