

Welcome!

From our blog....

A note to my readers,

This compilation of ten (& ½) posts from my blog represents some of our community's favorites that I believe will give you a inside peek at the conversations here at Mackenzie Circle.

The first entry (the ½) included is the inaugural post of my The Art of Possibility blog from February 13, 2012. In it you will find insights into part of my personal journey and the philosophy of possibility thinking that I believe is what we must all adopt in order to thrive.

Enjoy your reading and make sure you come by for a visit!

Kathi





From the archives: February 13, 2012

Thank you for stopping by and joining the conversation.

I look forward to engaging with you as together we discover new pathways to success and significance.

The Art of Possibility

To really embrace possibility, you have to first be willing to let go of anything (or anyone) that up until now you have allowed to limit you.

You know what I'm talking about: Those silent (or not so silent!) "advisors" saying that you've never been able to do that before; or no one else has done that before; or any other beliefs that forecast anything less than the best possibility (and probability) of success.

Possibility thinking is not to be confused with positive thinking. It is not seeing everything through rose-colored glasses. **It is about not limiting your options and choices.** It also considers all risks so that you can guard against them. That's why it works.

Let me share with you a story. The photograph with this post is a great example of possibility thinking. It was taken by a young woman on a trip last year to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

While I love the image itself since it shows beauty growing in an unlikely place, the photographer is the real story. Today she turned 30. She is mother to a delightful 11-year-old daughter, wife to a wonderful and loving husband, a 4.0 GPA college graduate and just recently had to take a break from her dance classes (ballet) while she's expecting their second child.

What is remarkable about that? The probabilities for her were much different.

Born at just 27 weeks (that's nearly 3 months early!), she suffered hemorrhages in both eyes and her brain. The doctors were not hopeful about her quality of life - IF she survived. The picture they painted included significant learning disabilities and at best, only being able to walk with leg braces. Also a good chance she would be blind. Wow! What made the outcome so different? Love, prayer and perseverance? Absolutely! But what stimulated those? The belief that there was another possible outcome.

This is a personal quest for me. She's my daughter. For the last 30 years we have lived and grown in the land of possibility. And the rewards have been nothing less than miraculous.

What probabilities are you accepting without considering that something else is possible?



Predicting the future: The Secret to Getting it Right

I recently heard someone say that it is very easy to predict the future.

The tricky part is getting it right.

But there is one prediction we can make that will be spot on every time.

Look forward one year, two years, five years and you can count on one thing with certainty:

Something in your life will have changed.

The question is not what it will be.

The question is who will decide.

Many of us have found ourselves in a new place. A place that is unfamiliar and new. That can make it exciting - or scary - or both. The key to navigating those uncharted waters seems to be knowing how to remain steadfast where it matters while developing an agility in other areas that allows you to adapt to the ebb and flow of your next professional or personal phase in life.

Here's where I believe we have to start: *How do you define success?* When you hear the word - what image comes to mind? It may be time to deconstruct success and examine its parts and then bring it back in a better form, one that serves your purpose now as the beacon it needs to be to guide you through that maze.

What I have learned is this: **I can predict the future because I create the future.**

Whatever I believe I can do, I can. Whatever I believe I can achieve, I can.

How do you define success?



What word do you see?

One of my favorite quotes comes from the French novelist Marcel Proust:

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in making new landscapes but in having new eyes."

Wayne Dyer says it this way:

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

What I love about this truth is that it is both philosophical and practical.

From a philosophical point of view, it can compel us to see what binds us together rather than what drives us apart.

From a practical point of view, it drives us to see a new purpose for talents and resources.

For either we must be open to seeing things another way.

Success and failure are both there.

What I see is up to me. What I see is what will be.



How to turn "Once upon a time" into "Here and now"

When a story begins with the words "once upon a time", we expect to hear a fairy tale. One of those stories where everything is extraordinary and the ending has everyone living happily ever after. But those same stories were also used to teach us character lessons when we first heard them as children. They taught us courage, perseverance and doing the right thing. We also learned that happy endings often come at a price, that there is sacrifice as well.

Over the course of time, we stopped remembering the middle of the story. All we remembered was "once upon a time" and "happily ever after" and so we stopped believing in the fairy tale.

But what if once upon a time could be here and now? What if happily ever after was not just for children's stories? What if we could lay claim to that? I believe we can. But we have to put the middle of the story back in. We have to develop our story, we have to make the sacrifices, we have to slay our dragons. In other words, we have to do the work.

For many years, any time I was asked to name my top five goals in life one thing on my list was always to write a book. It was my "once upon a time" story. And it was definitely staying in fairy tale land for me. Why? Because I wasn't doing the work. I had the desire but not the commitment. I wasn't willing to make the sacrifices I needed to make. And then I was.

I started to do the work. I signed up for some writer's workshops, participated in writer's retreats and looking for mentors that would be able to guide me down the path of my dream to become an author. I can't really tell you exactly when it shifted for me but the shift did happen. I went from talking about a book to becoming a published author.

But what really changed? It wasn't the desire. It wasn't even the skill although that is definitely being aggressively (and enthusiastically!) honed. What changed is that I started to work. I picked up that sword from the fairy tale and started slaying the dragons blocking my path. And I made the sacrifices. My schedule had to make room for this. That meant something had to go. The investments had to be made in time and money to make the "happily ever after" my "here and now".

What is it that you want for your life that has been in that secret place or not so secret place of your mind that is your fairy tale? What first step can you take to begin your work?

Here are four points to ask yourself to help get you from “once upon a time” to here and now”:

- 1) You must believe it is possible
- 2) You must believe it is possible for YOU
- 3) You must be willing to do the WORK
- 4) You must be willing to make the necessary SACRIFICES

I remember clearly one of the early lessons I learned from mentor Jim Rohn: *“When the promise is clear, the price becomes easy.”* What we have to remember is that the price remains.

To wrap this up, I’m going to borrow a quote from Sherri Shepard I will never forget as she was departing from the Dancing With The Stars competition about to start up a new season:

“And, I wanna say, to every person out there—that thing that scares you the most, that makes you say, ‘I don’t know if I can do it, I’m scared,’ run towards it because it’s so amazing on the other side.”

I agree. There is nothing like being on the other side of once upon a time... here and now is unbelievably wonderful!

I agree. There is nothing like being on the other side of once upon a time... make it here and now.



Shake it off... the problem is the solution

I came across this story several times recently. The first time I read it; I got wrapped up in the details and did not allow myself to just appreciate the message. That happens sometimes. We over-think something.

This is not a true story. No animals or people were really harmed in the making of this lesson. It's just a metaphor. We fall down; it appears that there is no recovery. But what initially looks like more trouble can actually hold the solution. It's another example of possibility thinking. It's actually quite clever. And what I love is that it makes the donkey the smartest guy in the room.

So I'm passing the story along...

One day a farmer's donkey fell into a well. The farmer frantically thought what to do as the stricken animal cried out to be rescued. With no obvious solution, the farmer regretfully concluded that as the donkey was old, and as the well needed to be filled in anyway, he should give up the idea of rescuing the beast, and simply fill in the well. Hopefully the poor animal would not suffer too much, he tried to persuade himself.

The farmer asked his neighbors help, and before long they all began to shovel earth quickly into the well. When the donkey realized what was happening he wailed and struggled, but then, to everyone's relief, the noise stopped. After a while the farmer looked down into the well and was astonished by what he saw.

The donkey was still alive, and progressing towards the top of the well. The donkey had discovered that by shaking off the dirt instead of letting it cover him, he could keep stepping on top of the earth as the level rose. Soon the donkey was able to step up over the edge of the well, and he happily trotted off.

Life tends to shovel dirt on top of each of us from time to time. The trick is to shake it off and take a step up.

What's in your life right now that you could re-visit and ask yourself – "Where is the solution in this?" Because it is there; I know it is. You know it, too.



Abracadabra: The power of words

Anyone who has watched a magician perform has heard the word abracadabra. It is indelibly linked to transformation. Magical change.

According to Wikipedia, its origins are in the Aramaic language. The original word has two parts: “ibra” which means “I have created” and “k’dibra” which means “through my speech”.

How fantastic that one of the most well known words associated with transformational magic means “I have created through my speech”.

As a writer, it is always my desire to illustrate, to instruct, to inspire, to entertain. As a reader, it is my desire to experience the same in return.

The telling of the story, even within non-fiction is like being the unseen tour guide that transports someone from where they are to another place. When reading fiction, that is essential. We want to be transported – to another place, another life, another world.

While reading non-fiction may be more akin to being transformed, it still transports us to a new place. In either case, what we read can be as powerful as an abracadabra experience.

Whether we are fully aware of it or not, the information we take in does influence the way we think, believe, speak and act. The words of others can help us see other points of view. And to see (and hear) new thoughts and new ways of expressing old thoughts.

New words, new phrases, new points of view. In every genre, that is the case.

What will you create through your speech? *Unleash your inner magician.*

Write. Speak. Create.



What's in your memory box?

In my family, we have memory boxes. They can be for a specific person, place or event but in those memory boxes are those tangible reminders of that moment in time. Going back to the memory box allows us to recapture the magic of those moments. Because if they got a box – they were indeed magical.

I thought about my memory boxes as I went through my day today. It has been nostalgic for many people and was particularly so for me. Some people become icons; symbols that over time rise above any dispute as to their value and even goodness. They have transcended success and risen to significance.

Today the sheriff of Mayberry, Opie's Dad left us. Or perhaps you remember him as the wily and wonderful lawyer Ben Matlock. Or maybe from early films. One thing is certain, if you are from my generation or even that of my children, Andy Griffith's work touched your life at some point. The memory box we all share of that work remains available to us now because of technology. We can re-watch and re-live his work. And even though we cannot re-live that time, we can remember and be grateful it was part of our life experience.

Andy Griffith himself showed us that no matter how much success you've attained, the best part of living always remains ahead of us. It's even wonderful to know that some of his transition work was not perfect. But he kept showing up and giving. He kept knocking until the right door was opened. He has now moved on again. It's a great reminder for all of us that as long as we continue on earth, so does our purpose and work. Most important is this: Even after we are no longer physically present on earth, the value of our life remains. My granddaughter will now experience Mayberry and laugh with me at the antics of Opie and company. She will giggle and roll her eyes with me at the hysteria that was Barney. And she will recognize as we all did the steady, loving wise man who guided them all. Andy Griffith - another one for the memory box.

"But strew his ashes to the wind whose sword or voice has served mankind,- And is he dead, whose glorious mind lifts thine on high?- To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." (Thomas Campbell, Hallowed Ground)



From here to there to where?

Some of my favorite memories from my children in northern Ohio come from the cycle of seasons and how we lived within them. The freedom of riding my bike was one of the joys of spring that stayed with me well into fall. Watching the snow fall and building snow forts and sledding with my brothers created some memorable times from the winter season. Our lives held a place for certain activities based on the season. It gave us something to look forward to and trained our minds to not just expect change but to embrace it. It seems a bit of a mystery then why if that is the case change still seems to be a bit of a struggle. Why does going from “here” to “there” seem so frightening? After all, I couldn’t wait for the next season as a child.

I believe the answer lies within the fact that what we experienced as children with seasons and school schedules and all that goes with those transitions held at least some element of familiarity. Summer came around and around but it was always summer. We welcomed the seasonal changes because we knew what the next one looked like, smelled like and would feel like.

Today however with the rapid rate of change everywhere that is not always the case. Sometimes we have no idea what is next and we feel a bit like the tightrope walker going from place to place with no net below.

I have experienced significant (and multiple) changes over the past few years. This is an intimate topic for me and one that I believe is at the center of how we as human beings learn not only to live our best lives but to also help those around us do the same.

Here are three principles I have adopted for my own life that allow transition to go beyond a change a place (or other condition) to a time of growth and even joy:

1. I take full responsibility for my life. No excuses. My choices. My responsibility.
2. My vision of the future is my touchstone for today’s decisions.
3. I do not seek the right answer. I seek the right question.

There is abundant freedom in these principles. I share them with you with the hope that they speak to you as they have spoken to me. The art of possibility is alive and well.



I changed my mind! It's more than your prerogative!

Personal development expert and author Brian Tracy teaches the value of zero based thinking. This practice invites you to re-examine choices based on the principal of evolving possibilities.

While it may seem obvious, we often need to be reminded that for choices to be unlimited, one of our choices has to be to change direction, to adjust and shift, even stop and re-start.

Emily Dickinson once said that we must “*Dwell in possibility*”. That is the secret. It is not something you occasionally do. It is where you live. The land of the winners is a citadel built on the art of possibility.

Possibilities are a personal business because we are each unique. We all have our own philosophy of life and point of view that is constantly evolving. Hence the need for re-examining our choices. At any given time, we can see different possibilities. That is what makes this so incredibly powerful. There is truly no limit to what we can accomplish because we can grow into our evolving opportunities.

My favorite success stories involve learning how to apply something already known to a new situation. In these stories someone embraced the idea of a new application of knowledge as a new opportunity for success. Each had to learn something new as well. That is part of the growth process. Each layer builds on the other.

We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading to new paths. ~ Walt Disney

If you want to be an accomplished musician, you start with the scale and go from there. You progressively add to your expertise by layering your knowledge.

If you want your business to be successful, you need some basic understanding of how businesses work to see how all elements of your company work together to serve your customer.

Every discipline has its own version of the musical scale. What is yours? How well do you know it? How are you layering new knowledge to increase your understanding and expertise? To drive positive change?

We must remember though that because change can and will bring with it some fear, we should expect to experience resistance. What we must embrace is the fact that growth transforms and creates new vistas for us.

It is a good practice to pay homage to what we enjoyed about what we are leaving behind as long as we understand that growth requires a willingness to change. The key is to be committed to intentional growth.

***“The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor. He takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.” ~
George Bernard Shaw***

Take on the role of creator in your life’s design and plan. Take Emily’s advice and dwell in possibility!

Live today like you want tomorrow to be. Live well.



It's only impossible until someone does it. Where will you be first?

There is a story that has held my attention for many years. When I first heard it I was too young to understand the true value of the lesson it held. Still, somehow I recognized it as a story that mattered and it has stayed with me.

A certain world record was broken in 1954.

The record itself is not the reason the story captured my attention. What captured my attention was the fact that once the record was broken, within 46 days it would be broken again.

A feat that alluded so many for so long suddenly became the standard instead of just an aspiration.

The four-minute mile. Two men in 1954 ran a race that changed the possibilities for every runner thereafter because of the barrier that was broken. Many in fact have since achieved even better, faster times.

What I have learned from my own personal experience is that it can be hard being the first person to break a barrier. You fight against unbelievable odds and quite often have far more naysayers than champions on your path.

But when you win; ah when you win you are forever the first. It is something that stands the test of time, even when others improve upon your work. The achievement is remembered as the next and new benchmark.

We are surrounded by many such heroes today. We are privileged to live in a time when many have achieved new firsts, set new standards in nearly every area and discipline.

Those heroes embody more than purpose. They also represent hope. When you combine them, purpose and hope go well beyond what we can imagine. You are in miracle territory. That is where I believe we are today.

It is the culmination of effort and progressive moments that have brought us to where we now find ourselves. Many more great moments lie ahead because of what we will choose, even aspire to

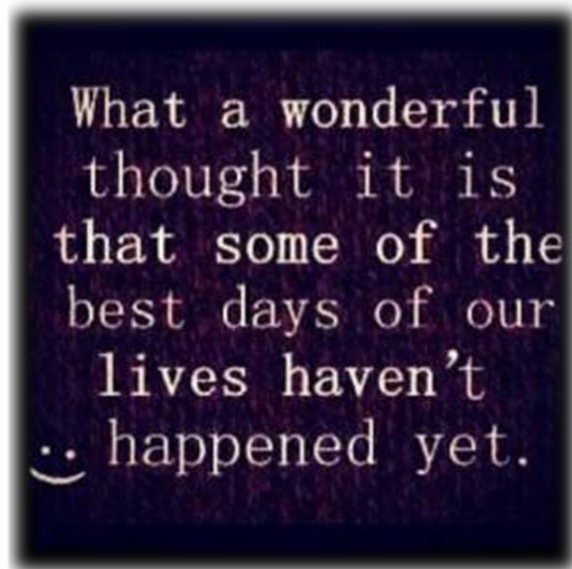
continue to build. The compounding effect of what is good and purposeful remains within and among us.

Each time a runner entered a race after that day in 1954 they knew that it was possible to do better. And so they did. The barrier could not go back in place. It was forever banished. A new possibility was born.

C. S. Lewis talks about the fact that while it might be hard for an egg to turn into a bird, it would be much harder for it to learn to fly if it remained an egg. I would take it a step further and say that once hatched, what is now impossible is for that bird to go back to just being an ordinary egg. No, once the barrier is broken there is only one thing left for the bird to do: Fly!

Where will you be first? It's only impossible until someone dares to believe differently and do it.

Live today like you want tomorrow to be. Live well.



Keep going.. the ending isn't written yet...

In my office, I have a piece of canvas art by Bonnie Mohr that includes a wonderful image of a tree. It is a mature tree with wide full branches. You just know that it is the keeper of many secrets and dreams.

When I see a tree, what comes to mind are roots and growth. We begin and then we grow. And how we handle our environment and all of the elements thrown at us, has a great deal to do with how we grow: Our shape, size and even character. The tree in my picture has a strong character.

The work also includes a statement:

*"Nobody can go back and start a new BEGINNING,
but ANYONE can start today and make a new ENDING."*

So many things change throughout our lives. How those things impact our story is up to us.

We cannot begin again. We've already started.

I would not even want to. If I started again, I would lose all of the lessons I have learned.

But I can start today on a new chapter and the ending can be whatever I choose for it to be. And the most marvelous part – it doesn't really ever end. We just keep living. We just keep growing and discovering new horizons. What a marvelous life we have been given.

Live today like you want tomorrow to be. Live well.