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"Walking The Labyrinth."

"Living With Purpose And Passion"
The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Winter 2012-2013

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about my work as a
Psychotherapist,
Speaker, and
Workshop Leader,
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Quotes for Inspiration And Reflection.

* * *

*"Presence is not
a skill set.
Presence
is what spills
from one at home
in their own skin.
Or at the very least,
one who has given up
the need to impress or
jump through hoops
for laurels."
(Terry Hershey)*

* * *

Dear Dan,

 How do we recognize moments of depth and presence in everyday life? How do we respond when they arise? And how do we see the journey all the way through to the end? These questions are at the heart of "Walking The Labyrinth," the story I tell in this edition's essay. You may also find a few such moments in the stunning video that's featured in "Resources," in my latest selections for "3 Good Poems" and "Quotes for Inspiration And Action," and in the other treasures that I hope you'll discover below. As for me...well this is one of my my favorite times of the year: though the calendar declares that winter's reign will last a few more weeks, spring training has begun, and baseball season will soon be underway. So I'll nudge you into the rest of this newsletter with these enigmatic words from baseball legend Yogi Berra: "If you come to a fork in the road, take it."

Enjoy,

~Dan

Reflections: "Walking The Labyrinth."

On the first Saturday of the New Year, some friends and I took a ferry over to Whidbey Island to spend a morning walking the labyrinth on the grounds of The Whidbey Institute. I'd called ahead and was told that the Institute's offices would be closed that day, but that we were more than welcome to make ourselves at home.

We pulled into an empty parking lot a little after 11 AM, but as we made our way up the path leading to the labyrinth, we could see two other people already walking there, so out of respect, we approached in silence, put our things down in the grass off to the side, and began our own journeys with this ancient form of meditation.

I've walked a variety of labyrinths over the years--inside churches, in city parks, on college campuses. The one at The Whidbey Institute is my favorite because it is nestled into a clearing in the midst of 70 acres of secluded forest, creating a container for depth and reflection whose natural silence is only enhanced by the occasional sounds of

*"Listening is perhaps
the oldest and most
powerful tool
of healing.
It is often through
the quality
of our listening
and not the wisdom
of our words
that we are able to
effect the most
profound changes
in people around us."
(Rachel Naomi Remen)*

* * *

*"Our failure
is to have traded
the experience
of the divine
for the fantasy
of control."
(James Hollis)*

* * *

*"If we meditate
on a dream
sufficiently long
and thoroughly,
if we carry it around
with us and
turn it over and over,
something almost
always comes of it."
(C.G. Jung)*

* * *

birdsong or the voice of the wind whispering through the trees.

Labyrinth, Whidbey Institute (by Dan Keusal)



Labyrinth at The Whidbey Institute (photo by Dan Keusal).

When I had journeyed about half way in toward the center of the labyrinth that day, I heard voices approaching in the distance, and soon three young women emerged from a hiking trail that passed nearby. I thought that once they caught sight of the five of us walking in silence, they would quiet their own voices until they passed...but as they walked through the clearing, they kept right on talking, as if they were on a crowded city street.

At first I felt a bit annoyed at this intrusion, but soon I realized that these three women and their noisy chatter...might be seen as a metaphor.

Like many people in today's world, I don't think these young women had intended to be disrespectful. They were simply uninitiated, untutored--they had never been taught (or had forgotten) how to recognize moments of depth and presence, and how to behave when such moments arise.

It is when we move through the world lacking this perceptual sense (and its accompanying code of conduct) that we begin to feel disconnected, out of sync, that we begin to experience the kind of "symptoms" that my clients present every day in therapy: anxiety, depression, relationship conflicts, dissatisfaction at work, even an overall lack of meaning and purpose.

Whatever drives us there, therapy is about learning (or remembering) how to pay attention, how to see deeply, and how to respond to what arises from those depths. Like walking a labyrinth, therapy is about the willingness to stay with, to stay true to, a journey that is almost never a straight line. In both, there are moments when we seem tantalizingly close to arriving, only to be flung back out to the farthest edges. And finally making it to the center is just the beginning.

The two people who were already walking when my friends and I arrived made it to the center of the labyrinth before us. They paused for a few minutes, began the reverse journey...then suddenly cut across the lanes of the labyrinth and walked away. They skipped the journey back out from the center, skipped the entire second half of the process, and here, too, I perceived a metaphor: once we feel

we've arrived, once we've gotten the answers or the outcome we were looking for, once we've gotten some relief from our symptoms, we often want to take a shortcut, to circumvent the rest of the journey so we can get back to business-as-usual.

But in my experience--in walking labyrinths, in therapy, and in life--the journey "back out" is a crucial part of the process. It is during this time that we learn the patience, integration, and follow-through that will sustain us for the long haul.

Think about it. We've all seen sporting events (including the recent Ravens/49ers Super Bowl) where one player or team jumps out to a seemingly insurmountable lead, at which point they relax, let up...only to have the other player or team come roaring back into contention. Perhaps you've had the experience of starting antibiotics to combat an infection, at which point you began to feel better, and so you stop taking the antibiotics...thereby allowing the infection to stage its own comeback.

Once I arrived in the center of the labyrinth that day, I stayed for a long time. I took a long time to make the journey back out. Afterward, I sat on a log bench at one end of the clearing and took a few notes so I could reflect further on the experience when I got home. I walked back down the trail and caught up with my friends. We drove into the nearby town of Langley, and shared and celebrated our experiences in the labyrinth over a delicious late brunch. I'm still savoring the taste of the "Okanogan Omelette" I had at "The Braeburn" that afternoon (Braeburn apples, pork sausage, and red onions with melted cheddar cheese), and I'm still digesting my experiences in the labyrinth that morning.

In your own labyrinthine journey through life, I wish you the capacity to recognize moments when the soul is calling...I wish you the grace to respond with a deep, inner, silence...and I wish you the support and the perseverance...to see the journey through to the end.

~Dan

NOTE: to find a labyrinth near you, see the "Resources" section below.

Resources for a richer life...

More than just "self-help," Resources For A Richer Life is meant to bring you music, movies, books, magazines, web sites, events, videos and more that will stir your soul, and awaken the deepest, most alive parts of you.

(video) "**Full Moon Silhouette**" (Mark Gee). A real-time video of the moon rising over the Mount Victoria lookout in Wellington, New Zealand. No tricks, no digital manipulation, just the latest episode of a breathtaking show that's been running since time out of mind.

(web site) "**The Labyrinth Locator**." A web site that allows you to search (by city, state, zip, country) a database of more than 4,200 labyrinths located all over the world. A sample search for labyrinths within 25 miles of my zip code...turned up 40 results. Each result/listing contains detailed information about that particular

labyrinth, including photos and maps.

3 Good Poems

*"Part of what makes poetry different from other kinds of writing is that you can't paraphrase a poem. It can only be said in that way."
~Elizabeth Austen*

Click on the titles below to read the poems online; you can also access them by going to the "**Writings**" page of my web site, finding the link for my "e-newsletters," and then clicking on the link for the Winter 2012-2013 edition:

1. "**New Year Resolve**" (May Sarton)
 2. "**The Real Work**" (Wendell Berry)
 3. "**Desire, A Hungry Lion**" (Dorothy Trogdon)
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Upcoming workshops & lectures by Dan Keusal

For news about my lectures and workshops, watch future editions of this e-newsletter.

If you would like me to come speak to your group, please call me at (206) 523-1340, or **email** me.

On my web site, you can view a list of the **organizations** that have invited me to speak, and a list of my **recent workshops**.

Psychotherapy for Individuals & Couples

*"The greatest and most important problems in life
can never be solved,
only outgrown."*

-C.G. Jung

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That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an **email** or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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