

“A Glossary of Terms Helpful in the Pursuit of Life Lived Fully and Well”

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The title offered above is mostly self-explanatory. This month we will look at concepts, ideas - notions, I suppose - that are important elements in finding and keeping fulfillment, purpose and peacefulness in one's life. These terms are not meant to be an all inclusive list, but rather a beginning point for discussion or practice toward contentment and self satisfaction. To begin:

ACCEPTANCE - granting permission for undesirable situations, circumstances or people to be as they are, if it is beyond our ability to control or change them. Quite different from approval, this kind of acceptance simply relieves us of the stress and frustration of beating our heads against walls, and allows us to channel precious energy toward possible responses within the scope of our personal power.

BOUNDARIES - similar to more familiar connotations related to property lines, these personal lines are natural or developed limits set by every individual on one's own and others' personal space, interactions, behaviors and relationships to identify and communicate what is appropriate, or not, for her/him. When crossed - either by encroachment from others or one's own wandering, there is usually a telltale sense of discomfort, anxiety or fear. With practice one can learn to sense a boundary violation and, after assessing the level of "threat", choose to allow it (e.g. one's first kiss), or deny it (e.g. invitation to participate in an ethically questionable practice at work.)

COMPASSION - the ability and willingness (both are essential) to allow another's difficult circumstances to impact one emotionally, affecting a level of inner change that leads to some active response intended to alleviate suffering. Compassionate thoughts and feelings with no response constitute sympathy, which is something. However, sympathy alone leaves little, if anything, changed - within the self or the cosmos.

DISCRETION - utilizing one's personal power to choose a words or course of action based on a quick, but always careful, analysis of the situation at hand. Very simply, this is what we do when we count to 10 before speaking. A measured response will almost always be better for one's blood pressure than a knee-jerk reaction.

EMPATHY - the ability to put oneself in another's place - for a moment at least. It involves willingness to search for some level of understanding of possible factors motivating people to speak or act as they do, refusing to pass judgment until all evidence is in (which, of course, means almost never). It need not lead to approval or capitulation, necessarily, but rather a broader perspective possible only by stepping back to take in a more inclusive view.

FORGIVENESS - In the context of peacefulness this has far more to do with one's own behavior than with that of an offender. To forgive is to consciously choose to let go of one's own anger, hurt or resentment. Sometimes our affection for the other person, or perhaps his or her goodness, simply outweighs the bad behavior. At other times the emotional pain and stress of holding on to negativity suggests letting go as the more peaceful option for all concerned.

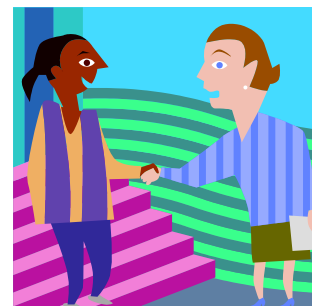
GRATITUDE - an emergency brake handle to slow and stop a runaway train of stinkin' thinkin' and bad feelings. For some reason many peoples' default thinking patterns seem to promote fret and

worry far more than joy and celebration. Upon first recognizing the signs of a frantic ride on a negative thought train, one can quickly and effectively stop and change course by simply taking two minutes to consider and identify ten “gratitudes” - things in life for which one is grateful, however significant or trivial they may be. The mere act of choosing to think about positive things changes one’s entire thinking pattern to include more balance and reason. Fortunately for us, our emotions must follow in line and, while not making problems go away, usually lighten our mood along the way.

HONESTY - (a.k.a. refusing to lie - to oneself or others.) While certainly easier said than done as we consider the many complexities of daily interactions, the sincere pursuit of honesty is 95% of the battle. Dishonesty is based solely on fear, shame or greed, none of which ever served anyone well in the long run. Becoming more honest clears away emotional and spiritual debris, allowing for higher self esteem, new courage and strength to be oneself.

INTEGRITY - living in such a way that one’s words and actions fall in line with her/his values on a consistent basis. This quality follows quite naturally once one begins to pursue deep honesty in all things.

JOY - ranging from a quiet smile to unfettered tickling glee, a specific response to an event or circumstance in one’s life, such as a grandchild, walk in the woods or hearing great news. A time-sensitive portion of the broader demeanor that is happiness, in this context one might say that there needs to be some level of overall happiness in order to sense joy from the good things in life.



KINDNESS - aside from the obvious connotation of simply being nice to people, in terms of living fully and well, this involves an inner sense of abundance from which self-giving overflows as water from a tumbling fountain to others around us.

LEISURE - what humans do when not doing any of the dozens of “required” tasks i.e. working, sleeping, eating or bathing (and some would add exercising, meditating, parenting, etc. that others consider “optional” activities). Unfortunately, because leisure falls within the huge list of “important, but not urgent” activities of daily life it is too often considered “discretionary”. In fact, we all must do something when not engaged in a “required” activity. What is discretionary is whether that something is enjoyable and renewing (a.k.a. leisurely) or not.

MARVEL - swept up and filled with wonder, unbridled, child-like fascination, awestruck in the presence of something or someone far beyond the scope of what one would normally expect to experience. Such open, unedited thoughts and feelings open the mind and refresh the spirit.

NOBLE - of the highest moral quality, honest and balanced, pure and above reproach. No selfishness, shortcuts or cutting of corners in one’s actions or private intentions.

OFFING - that part of the sea visible from shore but beyond anchorage. In terms of living fully and well the expression “in the offing” refers to something that is nearly ready, or soon to happen. Taking note of optimism in even small things often generates positive energy that can be re-invested once recognized.

PASSION - (No, not that kind...!) the ability to feel strongly about an issue, an activity or a cause, such that one’s deep convictions become crystal clear and one is moved to be actively engaged - intellectually, physically, spiritually - in its pursuit. Most useful when applied positively with due respect for others’ rights and perspectives as well.

QUIET - no need to try to expand on Funk and Wagnall’s many references to peacefulness and well being. “1. Making little or no noise. 2. Having little or no motion; still; calm. 3. Characterized by silence; retired or secluded: a *quiet* nook. 4. Free from excessive activity, turmoil or vexation. (Can

you imagine dawn's bird songs or distant surf rolling right about now?) 5. Gentle, mild. 6. Restful to the eye; reposeful. 7. Not showy or pretentious; modest. 8 Not loud or brash; reserved.”

(Funk & Wagnall's Standard Desk Dictionary, Lippincott & Crowell 1980)

Not that we could, or should, always be quiet, but understanding the demeanor and being able to pursue it when appropriate can de-escalate rising internal stress and even dissipate potential conflict situations.

REVERIE - abstract musing, daydreaming - all too often considered in the context of wasted time or energy. Actually, quite the opposite is true. As a brief stretch or coffee break in the work day actually improves productivity, moments of time (within reasonable limits) spent in open-ended pondering frees up one's mind, excites the spirit and awakens the thinking process.

SLEEP - no special nuance or connotation here, but simply a requirement for health, wellness and happiness. So far as we know there are no legitimate, long term ways to cheat or shortchange our need for an adequate quality and quantity of sleep. Deprivation here has been linked to problems ranging from blood pressure to body weight, depression to dementia. Getting enough can elevate moods, improve cognitive functioning and even help with weight management.

TACT - an intuitive sense (often innate, but can be learned) of words, actions or approaches that are likely to be received well by others, especially in interpersonally sensitive situations. An ability to avoid social or verbal mistakes that might otherwise offend or disturb another is most often respected by others, as long as it is accompanied by integrity.

UNDAUNTED - to be undeterred or disarmed by external obstacles or adversity, or by internal fear and uncertainty when facing personal, professional or interpersonal challenges. Not easily intimidated or discouraged from reaching high levels of achievement.

VERACIOUS - (not to be confused with voracious: ravenous eating or reading) one who is habitually honest, as if unable to be otherwise. Seemingly hard wired for truthfulness in all words and actions. Short of that which is known as “brutal honesty” without filters or tact, veracity is a quality few seem to possess or even pursue today. Still, most individuals who do at least pursue this level of truthfulness tend to live most fully and well as a result.

WAITING - a neutral task in nearly everyone's daily schedule, providing ample opportunities for reflection, meditation, passive multi-tasking or curious observation of frantic acts of futility by other individuals for whom the same task is perceived as being tortuous, highly personalized, tedious, intolerable, unfair and discriminatory harassment by the cosmos

XEROPHILOUS - along with every other word beginning with x this has nothing whatsoever to do with our topic. Still, at social gatherings one who knows what to call plants well adapted to hot, dry climates will surely be perceived as bright, knowledgeable and a wonderful conversationalist.

YUK - the kind of boisterous “belly” laugh capable of stimulating the release of serotonin and dopamine in the brain to create a sense of pleasure, wellness and satisfaction. Research has linked such laughter to both psychological and physical wellness, including more rapid healing and increased strength in the immune system.

ZANY - literally a buffoon, comical and silly. However, in our contemporary common usage, it refers to a comical, spirited demeanor in a friend or associate, generally appreciated and respected for his/her wit and humorous nature.

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