

## **This week is last weeks "*next week.*"**

I recently had a conversation with an individual about how her life is unfolding these days. Short answer: "It's terrible." I asked, "Going forward, if this week were typical of next week, and the next week, and the week after that, and the next six months, the next year and five years after that, would it be OK?" She instinctively reacted: "No!" - filled with resentment, frustration, and muted rage. When I asked what she's doing about her life, she sort of responded with a "Well, you play with the hand you're dealt" attitude being the victim intimating that's she too flooded by victimization consciousness to take time to stand back and gain a larger perspective or do anything constructive about changing.

Julia (not her real name), a successful professional woman, spouse and mother is basically unhappy - stressed out by her work, by her relationship, by her children, by the uncertainty of the economy, by the state of her physical health and her social life. Nothing seems to be "working" as she phrased it. When asked, "Why not?" she thought for a moment and said, I don't know; I just don't have time to get my life together." That's when I asked the "Well if this week is typical..." question.

So, what about you? How are you showing up in your life - not just life at work but life at home, life in relationship, and life at play?

## **Presenteeism**

"*Presenteeism*" is a term used most often to describe a form of "disengagement-with-life" type of fog with which folks show up in life. The reality is many folks are exhibiting presenteeism in just about every aspect of their life. They are physical, emotional and mental wrecks to some degree a larger, not smaller, degree. Many folks are not doing justice to their work, their spouse, their children, their friends, or their own self because they're suffering from presenteeism.

## **Being the victim**

Because many folks are acting as the victim, reactively and begrudgingly living with the "hand they are dealt," and choosing not to be proactive about changing their life or lifestyle, they are experiencing stress, overwhelm, confusion and unhappiness - played out in their self-destructive life habits lack of sleep, terrible diet, workaholism, sickness, disease, lack of exercise, estrangement from family members (even while living in the same house), being abusive, argumentative, resistant and resentful. Moreover, they have mostly concocted "stories" to justify why they can't move off the dime. And thus their "insanity" continues, you know, doing the same thing the same way, over and over again and expecting different results each time.

## **Reflect**

So, maybe this is a good time to explore your relationship with presenteeism, with your own "insane" way of dealing with your life, with change and with the stories you use to justify and rationalize why you are where you are. And in that vein here are some considerations that can support your journey forward so that the "next week" and the "next week etc. might not be carbon copies of this week or last week.

## **Work life:**

How is your relationship with your work? Why do you do what you do? What attitudes do you bring with you to your workplace? Do these attitudes support your well-being? Do you find meaning in your work - even in the mundane (hint: it's possible)? Are you engaged at work, passionate, challenged, unhappy or overwhelmed? Would you do this work even if you weren't paid? What do you like about your work (place)? How do you justify doing work you don't like?

### **Family life:**

What's your relationship with your family like? Is the value of family "being the most important thing in my life" borne out by the "reality" of how you relate to your family? Is there a disconnect? Are you satisfied with your relationship to your spouse or partner, to your children? What about real connection and intimacy? Is something missing? What about your relationship with your parents, sisters or brothers? How's that working? Is your relationship with your family "this week" exactly what you would like it to be in the weeks, months and years ahead? How do you rationalize and justify unhappy and unfulfilling relationships that you allow to continue? Do you allow your job to keep you from your family (that "most important thing in my life")?

### **Your health:**

How well do you take care of yourself? And what rationalizations, stories and justifications do you use for not taking care of yourself? How do you explain neglecting your health to your spouse/partner and children? If you became disabled tomorrow, how would that affect your family and others who care about you? Are you a good role model for others in the way you deal with your health? Do you urge your spouse/partner and children to follow your health patterns?

### **Social life:**

Are you a friend to your friends? Or are they more the friend and you the recipient of their friendship? Do you take more than you give? Are friends important to you? How do they know? Do you subjugate friendship to a low priority, even though friendship is important? What rationalizations, stories and justifications do you use for doing so? If you have no friends, what is that about? Are your friendships consistently superficial or are they continually ripening and deepening? Do you have true and real friends at work? Are most of your friends "Internet friends?"

### **Your happiness:**

Are you happy? Do you experience joy in your life? And never mind the "it's all relative" or "compared to whom/what" retort. You know if you are; you know if you aren't. It's about the truth. Are you settling? Are you resigned? Are you OK with your level of happiness? Do you know how to achieve true and real happiness? What justifications, stories and rationalizations do you use to explain your level of happiness? Is your level of happiness "this week" exactly what you would like it to be in the weeks, months and years ahead? Is happiness in the foreground or background for you? Why? What brings you joy?

So, this week is last weeks "next week." If you decided last week, or some earlier week, to make changes in your life "next week" (the euphemistic phrasing for this is "when it's the (so-called) right time"), how has this week been? Effected any changes yet? Waiting for another "right time?" Waiting until "next week?"

Remember, when nothing changes, nothing changes. Groundhog day...Groundhog week...each wrapped in presenteeism. Is that what you're choosing?

### **Some questions for self-reflection:**

- If last week or this week were typical of next week, the week after and the week after that, and every week for the next six months, every week for the next two years, would that be OK with you? If not, why not?
- What one or two baby steps can you take this week this present moment, now to move in the direction of having "next week" the unfolding now be truly better/different than "this week?"
- What has to happen, or not happen, for you to take a first step towards change?
- What conversation(s) do you need to have in order to move forward?
- Resistance to change is based on fear - always. What are you afraid of? Be honest and tell the truth. Who or what can help you move through your fear, your procrastination or your stuckness?
- How did you and your family deal with change when you were growing up?

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