



Discovering Values, My Personal Story

Description



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Growing up I was bombarded with ideologies about not finding happiness in worldly measures of success. Things like, making a lot of money, getting promotions – all external measures of generally doing well in life, so to speak. The intent of these ideologies was noble – they were meant to reinforce the idea that external prosperity is not equivalent to internal prosperity – things like genuine joy and fulfillment. I took these ideas so literally that I stood proudly in my Resume and Career class (one of those annoying required university courses that no one wants to take) and announced in a speech that I wanted to take a humanitarian job that didn't pay anything except room and board.

That's not all. I became so convinced of these ideas that I was actually uncomfortable having money. Money would sort of naturally pile up from various jobs because *knowing* that material possessions didn't bring joy, I wasn't into buying many things. So after a chunk of cash would pile up, I'd invariably spend it on something I really would use like a bicycle or a fun experience like a winding road trip through Europe. My bank account would blissfully return to its comfortable state of near zero.

After many years of this, when I decided to start my own business, my understanding of worldly prosperity hit me squarely in the head. It was clear. There was to be no moving forward in business without going through some mental rewiring. It's hard to make money if you are uncomfortable making money and being successful. I invested quite heavily in the rewiring process. I read books, I listened to speakers, I even hired a coach who gracefully and magically planted the seeds of new ideas. The next year, I made more money than I ever had before and exceeded my original income goal by almost double.

To my dismay, I discovered that it actually is really gratifying to earn a good income! It's gratifying to work hard and to grow and prosper, in a very worldly way.

A few years ago a new building was built near where I live. For the first 12 or so months, I became more and more convinced they put different colors of roofing material on each side of the building. Driving one way it looked dark brown. Driving the other way it looked golden tan. In passing one time I mentioned it to my sister. She laughed. "Sarah, that's just the way the light is shining on it!" I tried my best to convince her it was more than just the sunlight, but her logic eventually won me over and I felt silly. We spent the remainder of the drive discussing what color the roof actually was, and more importantly, how to determine the truest shade of any one color.



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The roof color was an optical illusion, one that my sister, and you, can laugh at me for. Illusions have partial truth – enough to trick you. Just like roof colors, apparently, some roofs more than others, the idea that external prosperity won't bring joy is an illusion. It does bring joy. But surprisingly, in achieving some levels of external prosperity, I discovered that it too is an illusion.

The days I hear a soft whisper, “take a nap instead,” and then I put down my work and go to spend quiet time with the deeper things in life, spend time with the Author of life, those are still the sweetest days. The times I hear a gentle nudge, “take time to heal your emotions. Everything will be okay left alone for a little while.” Those still feed my soul unlike anything else. The whole truth is that external and internal prosperity both have value. But if you are sacrificing your mental health or true inner joy for the sake of success, it may not be worth it. It's okay to take a step back and realign your priorities. It's okay to stop for awhile and seek deep soul rest. Don't sacrifice your internal prosperity on the altar of the external.

While I don't plan to go back to a place where my bank account is consistently depleting to zero, I do have a new appreciation for the values of my youth. There really is nothing like feeling satisfied on the inside.

What are some ways you have found to balance your attention between worldly success and internal joy?

CATEGORY

1. COMMUNITY
2. WELLNESS

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