



Nothing is wasted

If we accept where we are in life and recognise we have needed to learn from the choices we've made, we'll realise a profound truth: There are no mistakes. Review your experiences and see how each has prepared you in some way for the next, to learn, use, achieve, and grow.

By Noelle Sterne

Do you find yourself too often shaking your fist at God and asking, "When, oh when? When will I finally get published or called back? When will I have enough money to quit my day job and write or paint or design or dance full-time? When will I meet someone who will support me in the creating I must do?" The answer to all such questions may seem illogical at best and barely palatable at worst – but it's simple.

THE SQUIRMING TRUTH

Each of us, no matter how dire, sad, or frustrating our circumstances, is where we want to be, where we need to be.

This means that everything in our lives is connected. Every experience comes to teach us so we can make better choices. If we don't learn, we repeat the experience (as you may have noticed) in different guises. If we keep setting the toaster to extra dark, we'll keep burning most pieces. If we keep setting the alarm to sleep until the last possible moment, we'll continue that daily frenzied rush to get to work. If we keep going to auditions without continuous practice and study in acting, we'll keep getting more silent phones than callbacks.

You may chafe at this apparent unfairness. When I get too exasperated and feel tempted to rail again at God, I return to a poem discovered during one of those black periods. It's called "No Other Way":

- Could we but see the pattern of our days,
- ▶ We should discern how devious were the ways
 - ▶ By which we came to this, the present time ...
 - ▶ We should forget the hurts, the wanderings, the fears,
 - ▶ The wastelands of our life, and know
 - ▶ That we could come no other way or grow
 - ▶ Into our good without these steps our feet
 - ▶ Found hard to take, our faith found hard to meet.

Look hard at the last three lines. Whatever has cropped up in our lives, however hard it is to take, it's supposed to be here. We can stamp our feet, curse, and fling around doing our tasks with resentment – or make another decision.

This is to accept what's in front of us with grace and gratitude and give it our full attention. Only this way will we learn what we need to so we can get to the next step. And we can make the process easier by recognising another heartening law: none of what we're experiencing is wasted.

EVERY EXPERIENCE ADDS

When I was struggling to write regularly, I had an office job needed for survival, but I secretly felt it was beneath me. I scarcely talked to coworkers, grudgingly performed my work, and found it ever more difficult to show up each morning. Then a friend, more enlightened than I, suggested I approach my job in a new way. I'd never 'graduate', she said, until I began to put myself wholly into it. That's when I would learn as much from it as it had to teach.

A recalcitrant student, I nevertheless followed my friend's advice, and the job became more bearable. Looking back, I see how much of what I learned in that office I use today. My typing and computer skills became honed, making my editing and writing immeasurably more proficient. My ability to interact with people improved; so I could more easily talk about my writing and eventually attract new business. Seeing the boss put in long hours after 5 o'clock spurred my discipline to write after a day's work; so I became more motivated to write more. That disdainful office job taught me some of the most crucial things I had to learn to get closer to my dream.

I could cite many other examples, from famous to unfamous but highly successful people of all kinds. They've got one thing in common: their delays, mistakes, and apparent wrong turns turned out to be precisely the right preparation for what they later needed and wanted to do. Spiritual teacher Catherine Ponder wisely counsels:

"Everything moves in cycles, both in time and space. Regardless of the number of breaks that appear in the lines of your life, growth is taking place. Never fight the darkness because through it, growth takes place. The more light you turn on in your life, the quicker will be your growth."

YOUR TURN

Now it's your turn. Take a look at some of the distasteful things you've felt forced to do, situations you couldn't get out of, or 'mistakes' you've made. What have they given you that you've used or are using now, especially in your creative endeavours?

If you're resisting the idea of the overlap between a day job and an evening of following your bliss, open your mind. Wherever you work now – in a restaurant, hotel, office, retail store, school, hospital, or on a ship, plane, or train – look around. Everyone and all environments provide material for your creative work. Overheard conversations and arguments, melodies of hot-dog hawkers, the feeling of wind on your face, rhythmic undulations of standing bus passengers trying to keep their balance. A songwriter I know got the idea for what became a hit as he stared at an ad on the subway.

The great jazz musician Miles Davis said, "Do not fear mistakes. There are none." We rarely, if ever, see where the path is leading. Maybe that's why we fear, shudder, regret, and rage at its turns.

So, instead of resenting your abhorrent present, make friends with it. Instead of rejecting your shameful past, thank it. Recognise the necessity of your repugnant present or unforgiven past, its connection to where you are and yearn to be, and its invaluable lessons. Here's an exercise to help you.

YOUR 'NOTHING IS WASTED' LIST

1. Allocate 10 to 15 minutes before, after, or between the many activities that occupy you and the diversions that constantly beckon. Sit in a quiet spot with paper and pen.

2. Jot down the events in your life that you consider major. These may include, for example, a childhood move to a new town, the birth of your sister, your parents' divorce or remarriage, your departure for college, getting a certain job, winning something, losing something, going to a certain event, meeting a certain person, missing a great opportunity, making what you've always thought of as a giant 'mistake'.

What you put down doesn't have to be momentous or meaningful to anyone else. Sometimes the most trivial moment can be a stupendous turning point. When I did this exercise with a friend, she wrote, "Craving a chocolate bar." Why? As she ran to a local newsstand to buy a quick pick-up, she literally bumped into the man who propelled her into journalism, a career she'd craved since early adolescence. After the apologies, she discovered he was the editor of a city newspaper, and his encouragement led her to go to journalism school. When she graduated, she looked

him up, and he promptly gave her a freelance assignment. She later became the feature editor on his paper.

3. When you've got a good list down, look at it. It doesn't have to chronicle everything. Now that you've opened the door, you'll very likely think of more things later.

4. Take a deep breath and really look at your list. Ask your mind to reveal the connections. Sometimes they'll be prompted by thinking of a relatively recent event or outcome and asking yourself, 'How did I get there?'

5. Free associate. As you quietly listen to yourself, you'll start to see things: 'If I hadn't done this, I wouldn't have encountered that. If I hadn't missed the train, I wouldn't have met Ann. If I'd taken that job, I wouldn't have had to develop my letter-writing skills, and I wouldn't be writing a novel-in-letter-form now.'

6. Start numbering the items in their connective sequences. For some, the connections will be instantly obvious, like my office job to computer skills. For others, you may not immediately see the line, but as you keep looking at your list, your mind will give you more links. You'll also begin to see obvious groupings of events – the windshield sticker with the name of a college that led to your finding the perfect course that led to your professional certificate that led to a great job that led to meeting the person you married.

7. Put your list away in a private place. No one else has to see it to question, deride, laugh, or pull it apart.

8. In a day or two, revisit the list. Many more insights will come, and you'll uncover more relationships.

9. Acknowledge these. They'll help you see, again, that no experience is wasted. Each experience prepares us for the next and is absolutely necessary for our growth.

10. Finally, with your new knowledge and recognition, forgive yourself for all those past 'wastelands'. Even if you think you're not ready to stop blaming yourself, just try it: 'I forgive myself. No mistakes. Nothing is wasted.' Repeat and repeat.

Sooner or later, as you keep saying these words, slivers of self-absolution will peek through. You'll feel lighter and more energised. You may even feel jolts of inexplicable happiness.

Now you'll look at your past anew and truly thank it. You'll discover its blessings and use its richness in your creative works. You'll feel more buoyant about your present, even embrace it. And you'll know beyond all self-recrimination or doubt that nothing is wasted.



© 2010 Noelle Sterne Writer, editor, writing coach, and consultant. Noelle Sterne writes for mainstream and writers' publications. She is currently completing her handbook of practical spirituality, *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams*.

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4 SEPTEMBER 2010

Dear Fellow Travellers



Soul – is that a scary word for you? I know lots of people are freaked out by the Big G (both the word and the concept of God) – just because of previous associations with the church, which they'd rather not make. I sense that soul is tarred with the same feathers for many until they learn that the word 'soul' is a

convenient way to picture a part of you which does not die but which carries on in some form after death (the 'people' to whom psychics might be relating) and then reincarnates and carries on its merry way.

In case you're having difficulty with the notion of life after death, whether the vehicle be named 'soul' or otherwise, I'll point you in the direction of a new column we are commencing this issue, called 'Two of a kind'. Two vibrant healers, Carmel Bell and Melissa Hocking, are interviewing each other. We couldn't stop them talking of course ;-), and as the column is new, we've indulged them – I think you'll enjoy what they have to say, despite its length. Now the reason I'm suggesting you read that column is that you'll read how Carmel was dead for 47 minutes (not during the interview). She (one of her non-physical bodies, and likely her soul or at least orchestrated by her soul) was able to contact her husband lying in the bed next to her now dead body. Had she had no soul, nothing other than a physical body, she wouldn't be here today. Heaps of people do accept this notion, especially amongst our readers, but there are some who have bad associations, as I said, and sometimes they need a bit more proof. It is hard for logic to work when emotions cloud our reason, isn't it?

Trust and fear – two biggies for us when we do get caught up with life's dramas. They are explored in the reader round-table experience. I hope you too are enjoying the reader round-table experience. Do drop us a line about that and also consider contributing.

Sadly this issue we are missing Jost's article on the three treasures. His clinic is too busy for him to be able to provide an article a month it seems – so we might have to wait two months between them from now. We're also missing Raym's column, 'Urban shaman', and also mine on 'Navigating two worlds' – they will also be back next issue. (Oh, that is, as long you do your part and send me a question to answer.) Indeed all our columns go better with contributors!

Soul plays quite a part in this September issue. Paul Perment shows so many deep and wonderful means by which we can aid the healing process for our soul in his article about caring for the undefended soul. Derek Ellard

gives us a lovely visualisation of water for meditating, and at the same time amuses and delights us with his wordsmith skills. Chip Richards, another wordsmith extraordinaire, opens our soul's desires for us, to bring concepts from head to heart and beyond, transporting us into deeper levels of experience in life. Dr Darren Weissman explains his method to help our soul awakens to its authentic expression of its truest self. I tried it the other day and it is really good – deceptively so – and very quick and easy. Sounds like a recipe. Actually I summarised it in point form so that you can follow the method easily, after you've read it fully in the body of the article first to get the nuances, of course. So, yes, there is a recipe there for you, but the effect will be much more long-lived than a soufflé, though hopefully as light and breathtaking as the best chefs.

Do you agree that everything happens for a reason? Have a look at the article called, 'Nothing is wasted' by Noelle Sterne. Give her exercise a go, and I think you might be convinced. Sometimes we get our heads too far into the recipe or even the soufflé mix itself, and we cannot see what we're creating. I know. I do it all the time. I've just been as 'sick as a dog' while creating this magazine and wonder why I created that hard job getting my dish into the oven. In 21 years I've never had 'flu like it, and definitely not coinciding with the production week. I can see that I should have given up and gone to bed for one day early but did not, and as a result I just got sicker and sicker. I've had some ahas already, but I'm confident that they will keep coming for a while yet.

Carmel Bell, now alive and well, mentioned to me that she discovered while she was dead that we're meant to be happy and carefree here in this life, but we get caught up in the drama of it and forget to be happy. Going back to my soufflé analogy, it's perhaps that we panic that the soufflé doesn't rise like it should, or one side seems to have a dent in it, and we focus on that. If, instead of worrying about the appearances or the mechanics of the dish, we'd have stopped and eaten it when hot from the oven, we'd have all been delighted with its flavour and would have felt quite content. The lesson? Remember to keep life in perspective and have a laugh at the dents.

With love

Elizabeth Jewell



LIVING & LEARNING

06 Water - your partner in peace

Derek Ellard

Surveys reveal over 80% of us are suffering stress. The braver souls among us will have assessed the global situation and found fear. Yet there is always a beacon on the horizon - ever a light in our souls. Where can we go to re-ignite hope?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

08 Care of the undefended soul - create your new world

Paul Perfrement

Being in the ego has enabled Western society to forge its affluence - and we have experienced a loss of soul and empty self. To co-create a new way of life and world we now need to be maturely aware of, and yet undefended from, the guiding life of the soul.



LIVING WITH SPIRIT

10 Your authentic nature - your soul awakens to its authentic expression of your truest self

Darren Weissman

Often, the hustle and bustle of life and our busy 'to do' list cause us to feel distracted, disconnected, or even neglect our connection to life's wonder. A single moment of observation, contemplation, or reflection holds the power to transform a mundane experience into one of deep meaning and purpose.

LIVING & LEARNING

12 The power of story

Chip Richards

In our quest to find ways to embody more truth, to bring concepts from head to heart and beyond, there is a wellspring of indescribable power, which transports us into deeper levels of experience in life in ways that enable us to share that energy with others. That wellspring is the power of story.



REGULARS

14 Two of a kind - the pioneering passage of healing

Carmel Bell and Melissa Hocking

In July LivingNow had the privilege of attending the annual conference of the National Federation of Healers. We heard two women speak who were individually impressive in their total immersion in other-worldly healing and yet they have acceptance by many medical practitioners. We invited them to interview each other.

LIVING & LEARNING

16 Nothing is wasted

Noelle Sterne

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REGULAR

17 Reader round-table

Trust and fear

A cache of wisdom here for us, summed up for me by Margie Ulbrick's statement, "Trust is the direct opposite of fear, trust that even though we cannot see, know or understand all things, they can still be brought to good, that good can come from the most dire of circumstances if we make space for miracles."

REGULAR

20 Advertising feature

Health and healing

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Trust and fear

Care of the undefended soul

Your authentic nature

Nothing is wasted - there are no mistakes

Your personal wellspring of indescribable power

**New feature: Two of a kind
- the pioneering passage of healing**



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Pause

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LivingNow, or Living Now, is both a print magazine and this website. The print magazine is distributed in the Australian states of NSW, QLD, VIC and WA monthly (11 times a year).

Alternatively, if you want to read the articles in html format, they are to be found under the 'Articles' tab above.

As the print magazine we were established in 1989. In both the print and on-line editions we provide a vehicle for the interchange of ideas and experience to inspire, nurture, inform and empower.

We do this in a non-doctrinal way and therefore accept submissions and advertising from a broad spectrum of people. We offer options for growth in areas such as personal growth, complementary health and well-being, relationships, spiritual living, metaphysics, environment and social issues.

Our new magazine, Ripple News, has been established to nurture heart-to-heart connection between people in this same niche of holistic thinkers.

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