



All it takes is a quick look in the rear view mirror of life to get as much hindsight and perspective as you can handle. I've found that what I see there is oftentimes crystal clear - in retrospect.

When I gaze back at the year 2014, I find myself looking at 365 days in which I was face-to-face with love and loss, frustration and friendship, challenge and consternation. It was the Year of the Dichotomy. I swear it's on the Chinese calendar.

With great adversity and challenge comes great awareness. That's my story, and I am sticking with it. In no particular order, here are a few things I learned along the way.

When times are tough, we may feel the need to focus on survival, plain and simple. We can only draw upon our resources so much before we feel a little (or a lot) drained. We feel like we are only making withdrawals, and the deposits are few and far between.

Sometimes, the best we can do is to live day-to-day. When life gets really tough, when the hurts seem to mount or the mountains to climb seem Everest-like, we might find that living moment-to-moment is an epic accomplishment because that's all we have in the tank that day.

Take care of today - tomorrow will take care of itself.

Our basic survival mechanisms, however, somehow remain intact. Eat. Work. Sleep. Lather. Rinse. Repeat. But how much "living" do we do? How much do we challenge our thinking? How much do we push the envelope of our beliefs? How much do we allow ourselves to face the raw emotion and vulnerability of a life lived on the edge? How engaged are we in being "the best me I can be"?

One moment at a time.

Does time pass us by unbeknown to us? Do we live in the moment, losing ourselves in the purity of it, appreciating it, embracing it, sucking every last ounce of feeling out of it?

Be present.

It doesn't have to be going to exotic places, or experiencing life at the edges of our planet. It could be simply facing life, alone or in partnership, and taking the moment and wrapping our arms around it.

Fully. Completely.

As we head down the road less traveled, hopefully we don't become cynical or jaded. We can gain insight and levity from every twist and turn on that road - if we let it happen. If we are open to reflection and to learning, if we can keep our heart open to what could be, we have the potential to make great strides, to fill up our tank when the day gets dark.

Keep an open heart.

Some days, that is an easier task than others. Some days, it is so easy to lose sight of that - as many of us will do.

Now.

That's all we have. Sadly we have to be slapped in the face by life repeatedly to realize it. There is no guarantee that tomorrow exists. Now is all I can ask for, or so I've learned.

For all the complexities of life, it gives us some pretty simple lessons. There is a beauty in each and every day. There is a peace to be found within. Dig down deep and find it. Share it. Live it.

No worries, my friends. We are just learning how to live.

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