

Written by Allan Besselink
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[Life](https://www.flickr.com/photos/abesselink/51790223644)  The long and winding road of life presents many forks to us. Some we can see emerging in the distance with clear road signs well in advance. Others appear unexpectedly or perhaps even inadvertently, their importance and relevance only presenting themselves fully after the fact. The challenge is to be present in the moment and pay attention to those road signs as they may provide us with more than just a momentary diversion.

A couple of vivid examples come to mind.

In 2003, I was in Kailua-Kona for Ironman Hawaii. In previous years, I had coached several triathletes that competed in Hawaii, but this was the first year that I had coached a pro triathlete that was competing at the world championships. On the eve of this impending mayhem, I sat in a restaurant on Ali'i Drive overlooking the finish line - in awe of the moment - while quietly wondering ♦How did I ever get here?♦.

I'd never envisioned coaching triathletes - until I did. Is this the direction that I had planned when I started my career? Clearly not. However, it was truly a game-changer in my life.

In 2014, I stood in an anatomy lab and realized that after 10 years of teaching anatomy to PT and PTA students, I was now in the presence of 2 Ph.D. anatomists with over 30 years of experience each (one of which was an internationally-acclaimed author) as well as the foremost medical illustrator in the world. Again, another moment of awe - while quietly wondering, ♦How did I ever get here?♦.

I'd never envisioned teaching, let alone teaching anatomy - until I did. Is this the direction that I had planned when I started my career? Clearly not, once again. However, it was also truly a game-changer in my life.

These are just two such examples. I can think of many more throughout my career.

Each of these moments of reflection began as a moment of gratitude that became an epiphany of epic proportions. Each was a natural progression of life's journey, utilizing my knowledge and skills, and passions instead of just fulfilling a professional role based on my education and training. Each was something I would have missed if I'd stuck to the original plan or my preconceived notions of what life as a physiotherapist should look like.

However, we may struggle with whether or not those paths make sense, why we've arrived there, or even how they happened in the first place. They might not fit our internal narrative, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves. They might not fit the external narrative, the story the world tells us we should be and we far too often take for granted the rules of engagement for life.

Life brings us many challenging forks in the road. It provides us with the opportunity to take us down some roads that perhaps we'd not ever thought we would ever see, let alone explore. Sometimes, we read the road signs. We are present in the moment and pay attention to them. We put aside our preconceived notions about what we expect in life. We choose to examine the opportunity based on how we define life or success, not how we are told to define it, and we act upon them with courage.

And when we do, when we embrace what is right there in front of us, life can take us down some amazing paths. Our careers and lives evolve in ways we'd never imagined, and ways that become even more fulfilling than we could have ever envisioned. These forks in the road of life become true game-changers.

We aren't waiting for life to find us. We aren't putting in time waiting for the perfect moment. We aren't letting life come to us in due time. Why? Because it already has.

Welcome the forks in the road of life. Read the road signs. They might be right there in front of you, repeatedly, waiting for you to embrace them, breathe, and act with courage. Grab them, and do it now!

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