



Hidden Value: Finding the Meaning in Everyday Life

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Rise in the morning. Climb into your gear. Step into the harness. Plod your way through daily routines. Head back to bed. Rest. Rise. Do it all over again the next day. Sound familiar?

Unless you climbed Mount Everest as a youngster with a million dollar book deal in your backpack, you might feel that your own day-to-day contributions don't amount to a hill of beans. That's just not so. The daily-ness of life's demands and a lack of awareness can numb us to the real value that lives just below the surface of our everyday activity.

Despite our culture's obsession with celebrity, youth, wealth, and daredevil extremes...significance and meaning are not always tied to *larger than life* events with worldwide media coverage. Value also lives and breathes in the uncelebrated un-televised moments of everyday life.

You do make a difference. Your commitment, spirit, productivity, and peace of mind depend on knowing that it is so. There is value in what you do. There is value in who you are. There is value in every moment.

Let's take a closer look.

What you do

Each and every contribution has a surface value and a deeper impact.

When you answer phone calls, solve problems, push paper, and plow through appointments, you are not just going through the motions. Depending on the arena in which you work, you may be helping people put roofs over their heads, finance their adventures, regain their health, or live their dreams.

When you transport youngsters to sports and arts programs, you are not just driving a taxi. You are opening the door to lifelong interests and passions that will help them lead vibrant, healthy lives.

When you toss the spuds in the pot for dinner, you are not just peeling potatoes. You are nourishing and sustaining the people you love.

Don't be like the captain of the Titanic. Pay attention to what lies below the surface. That's where the real story lives.

Think about it: What evidence shows you that what you do—your tangible contributions—make a real difference in the world?

Who you are

Sometimes it is simply your nature or your unique character that add value to the world.

The grocery clerk welcomes you with a genuine smile, chats with you about the issues of the day, and takes an

active interest in your life. He doesn't just mindlessly scan the bags and boxes, going through the motions. He adds value to what could otherwise be a weekly drudging chore.

When friends or colleagues hit tough times, it may not be the grand action you take to solve their problems that brings them the strength and courage to go forward. It may be your caring heart, listening ear, or whacky sense of humor that makes the difference.

We have all encountered genuine characters through our lives. These are people who don't necessarily conform to any preconceived notion of normal. They simply and naturally bring who they are to every exchange.

Maybe they whistle their way through the day. They may laugh long and loud at things that grab their fancy. They may enthusiastically light a spark wherever they go. At the very least, they are themselves and they are at ease in their own skins. You may find yourself relaxing in their presence. Inspired by their examples, you may find it easier to be yourself. We end up being better people because they are in our lives.

Think about it: Do the values you express and the ways you interact—who you are—make you a beneficial presence in the lives of others?

In the moment

In the busyness of life, it is all too easy to get wrapped up in planning for what comes next, or sifting through regrets about water under the bridge. In the meantime, the moment at hand passes us by.

Have you ever been so mentally tied up with plans, details, and what is around the bend that you had to check the photographs after an event to prove that you were there?

When you are driving those youngsters to their activities, are you in the car with them—available and listening—or are you making a mental list and planning your next few errands?



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When you are sitting in a meeting with colleagues, are you actually watching, listening, present to the item on the agenda and the people in the room? Or are you feigning attention while you tap out a blackberry message or checking to see who is calling on your vibrating cell phone?

When you are running on that treadmill or walking that path along the river, are you in your body, aware of your breath, feeling the strength in your legs? Are you noticing the world around you? Or, is your mind on automatic—a thousand miles away—planning, stewing, puzzling?

There is tremendous value in being where we are at any given time.

Think about it: Are you mindfully present to the needs and experiences of the moment as often as humanly possible?

Always remember that value lives in what we do, in who and how we are, and in every single moment of the day.

See it! Feel it! Live it!

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