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The Alchemy of Choice

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Everything in your life is a reflection of a choice you made. If you want different results, start making different choices. — Dr. Wayne Dyer

I have had the great blessing of sharing final conversations with loved ones as they left this world. At the end of their lives they no longer spoke of frustrations, squabbles with relatives, our religious belief systems or old stories and sins. It was as if they were going from maligned to wise in real time. I was profoundly struck with the clarity to which they all shared some variation of “none of this matters” mindset as they reviewed their mistakes, their ego and their beliefs. They all asked me to get out of my head, into my heart and find my own way — my devout grandfather going so far as to referring to the religious leaders of my youth as “just men.”

I did not take their advice to heart right away. It was not until I became the mother to a very bright and inquisitive little girl that all of their wishes and concerns came flooding back to me. Having had my teachings and beliefs tossed on their heads, I began to view my choices from the end of my life, wondering if my future self (and my grandparents) would approve. It was through this practice that I truly decided to unmake, reprogram and get clear with this new woman who was to build another human being from the ground up. Any new mom will tell you that

at first, we are just thrilled that we can keep them alive, but to build their beliefs after ours have been debunked? Well, that is an undertaking.

Self-exploration is a tricky business. With it comes a lot of forgiveness (of self and others) and deep self-awareness. You understand more clearly the messaging of your past, why you respond to certain situations as you do and who did what and why. Sometimes boundaries are enacted, relationships ended or made stronger, but unfortunately this seems to be where a lot of people stop. They do not then create a relationship with choice in order to build their new life on a stronger foundation than the one they have just unearthed, uprooted and leveled. You must move from a place of story to a place of action. Do you still find yourself using blaming sentences? Do you have unrealistic expectations of others or find yourself disappointed by someone else's behavior, yet remain locked in a pattern? Are you operating from a place of passivity and awaiting the answers, a savior, a sign, or have you moved to one of action? Your personal power can be wielded only by you, but you have to choose it and the alchemy it offers.

My executive coach refers to this as the right to harm versus the right to choose. He suggests that we have the ability to move from a place of reaction, an ego-based orientation, to one of creation where all is pos-



sible. Oprah Winfrey calls the right to choose your own path “a sacred privilege.” The question then becomes, do you own your power? Do you choose to choose?

We make choices every day. Some are automatic — ingrained, easy. We shop at the same grocery store, buy the same roasted coffee, mindlessly wrap presents for our children’s teachers every year because that is expected; it is the right thing to do.

Other choices require thought, fortitude and conviction. These choices determine where we go to school, our professions and how we choose our relationships.

dhārtha from his path to enlightenment by acting as his serpent of sorts. Again and again he offered him distractions — lust, greed, anger and doubt. Siddhartha remained firm and became enlightened. Mara persisted, but instead of driving him away or ignoring him, the Buddha would calmly acknowledge him. “I see you, Mara.” He then invited him for tea as an honored guest and offered him comfort and hospitality.

Invite your fear and pain for tea. Learn to see them. Granted, at times, it is hard to figure out how you feel about something — just that it is off, uncomfortable. You go into a static mindset or what feels more

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Yes, we choose our relationships in all their glory and gunk. The magic is in allowing our choices to be active as opposed to passive or story-based, and that requires significant self-awareness.

Learning to tap into our inner dialogue and achieving self-awareness is the first step in shifting our orientation. We have to consciously notice when we are triggered, become our own observer and study that soft spot. We can choose to react, of course. We all have people who know exactly what buttons to push. When they do, and we suddenly want to scream, cry or throw things, we should take a moment, pause and ask ourselves what they have triggered in us.

We must choose to take notice and study ourselves. We have to learn to move from the vulnerable place of feeling the feeling and its external emotional response to the place of noticing it. *What is this right here? Yes, I see you. You smell like fear, abandonment issues, unworthiness. Hi, friend.*

My executive coach once told me the story of Siddhartha Gautama, who became Buddha, and the demon, Mara. Mara continually tried to pull Sid-

like mind-rest and allow things to swirl and happen around you without moving to active orientation. You process and feel things you cannot quite name. You begin making passive choices with your inaction.

You should lean into those moments. Notice the inaction — the passive stance. Start by recognizing there is a feeling swirling around your subconscious and ask yourself what it is there to teach you. As you become consciously aware of your own hesitance, pain, fear and inner workings, smile at it and say, “I see you, Mara. Come have tea.” After dining with your demon, you will find a more direct path to action. The act of noticing and accepting creates a path toward active-choice orientation.

Some questions to ask yourself as you consider your shift from passive to active choice orientation:

- It is your last day on this earth and you are making peace with it.
- What would you wish you had accomplished?
- What experiences do you wish you had not missed?
- What is your biggest regret? Whom do you wish

you would have shown more love to?

- Is there anything that seems onerous, expensive or time consuming that you would regret not doing during your lifetime?
- When you look at the foot of your bed, at your loved ones, imagine their eyes.
- Is there anything that should be forgiven now?
- What choices have you made recently that could be unwound or reconfigured to move you closer to the future self you imagine?
- Knowing that this day would come, what different choices would you start making tomorrow?
- Write them down. Today.
- Start with the fundamentals.
- Who surrounds you?
- Who influences you?
- Who is in your ear and taking up space in your head?
- Who do you spend your time with? Do they cheer for you when you achieve?
- How are you showing up in life?
- Do you believe in your value and worthiness?
- What choices are you making to better yourself?
- Who are your role models?
- Who are your influencers?

Choice is powerful and alchemical. You have the power to build your life, your team and your relationships. Do not wait until you are looking wistfully or regretfully back at your life. Start with the most important person first — you.

Welcome to your power. €



Author Jeanette Schneider can be found at www.JeanetteSchneider.com.

Thank You Spirit

*Thank you, Spirit for
the gift of life
the blessing of family
a constant cocoon of faith
the sanctuary of home
whispers of intuition
unexpected grace
the tenderness of a guiding hand
the soothing energy of mother earth
innate trust to remain open
the glorious feeling of creativity
love that knows no limits
connection with all, to all
the treasure of days strung like pearls
on a strand bequeathed to me.*

– Carolyn Chilton Casas



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