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MY SWAN SONG AND WINGING IT

This is my last article for the North Port Sun Herald. First of all, I want to extend my sincere thanks to my Editor, Nicole Noles, for the opportunity of expressing my views on mental health issues. Upon finishing my professional education, I was determined to write and talk about mental health in a manner which would not threaten people. I wanted to help them understand that mental health is akin to seeking alternative ways to gain happiness. I trust that, in part, I have been able to accomplish that in the series of weekly articles that began last November.

Secondly, I want to thank the readers of my columns. I hope that they have brought some enjoyment as well as cast some light on issues that we deal with on a daily basis. I trust that the articles have been instructional to the extent that readers have been able to incorporate some of the principles and suggestions into their daily routines.

Now, I want to talk about “winging it” or “going by the seat of your pants” ... phrases commonly associated with being able to function without a plan. For some people who tend to make intricate plans to live their daily routine, winging it is quite a foreign concept. I know of some people who live with every portion of their day being rigidly planned. Should anything interrupt that plan, they suffer a great deal of anxiety and some go into a panic state.

For these people, spontaneity is not something that they can look to. They may enjoy an activity which they have planned but should something else arise, problems arise as well. To someone who is used to more spontaneity, their lives appear boring and lacking in excitement. Their rigid pattern of living life could become so well planned that they might move into a very compulsive behavioral pattern from which they cannot vary. This pattern involves certain “rituals” that they need to go through in order to accomplish something. I would consider this pattern as being a final stage of compulsive behavior. They seem incapable of “thinking out of the box”.

Now, something needs to be said about making and having a plan in dealing with life. Doing so brings a sense of order and reliability into life’s routine. However, as with

everything else, too much of a good thing is not good for us. Balance is the key to living a healthy, productive lifestyle. And so, a mixture of reasonable planning and spontaneity is the more viable alternative for living life to the fullest. Life is also about taking risks in order to grow.

When people live their lives in a safe, predictable manner they may find comfort but there is no sense of growth or experiencing life as it comes. This method usually has a good deal of fear associated with it which predisposes any growth. By “growth” I am referring to a need to learn more about ourselves and our physical and emotional environments. We can only accomplish that by experiencing new things. Yes, there is some anxiety and stress associated with doing so but the payoff is being able to move from one level of growth to another, etc. Instead of being afraid of the unknown, people who want to grow look at taking risks as an adventure instead of fearing them.

Let me pose some questions that you might ponder for yourself in your life to help you decide how you might want to live.

- How much do you need to be “safe” vs. needing to grow in your life?
- Would you be willing to introduce a sense of spontaneity in combination with your planned life pattern?
- How does it feel to experience a balanced lifestyle?

Answer these questions for yourself and then decide to bring some greater balance into your life by your choice. Those decisions do not need to be excessive or threatening but little parts of your life that can be entered into a greater sense of balance will bring great satisfaction, a sense of growth and control.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a “mind game”, he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.