

Still Waiting For The Light To Change

Sometimes the greatest disappointments in life are when others let us down. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

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We should try to be the parents of our future rather than the offspring of our past.
- Miguel de Unamuno, writer and philosopher (1864-1936)

Sometimes all we can do is to roll with the punches, deal with the circumstances life throws at us, and look for the chance to enact change.

Many would call that powerlessness. After all, when your choices in life are outside your control, you can't be said to have control of your life.

Do others have control over your life? Many times it seems that way, that if only someone else would do what you want or what they promised to do, life would be better. It's hard to wait for someone else, especially when you know that the other person is giving your promised work low priority but its very important to you because you can't progress with several other things in the meantime.

I confess, I allow disappointment to creep into my life sometimes. It's always a disappointment with people. The vagaries of weather (no one's is stable now, likely never was), the ups and downs of politics (the few honest ones get shot down more often than the crooks), illness, even being the next person in line after the last item on a great sale was sold don't bother me.

That's life. If I expect to find great pleasure in the good things about life, I must be prepared to accept the things that really suck. Without one, I couldn't appreciate the other. The good looks good only by comparing it to the bad. "No pain, no gain" may not be true for athletics and exercise, but it's true for emotions. The more and worse you experience that bad, the greater your opportunity to appreciate the good when it comes.

People who promise something but don't deliver really get to me. The guy who delighted me when he said he could fix my tractor--he unstuck a valve and replaced a spring--has kept the parts at his place for weeks because he is too busy with his own projects to put my tractor back together. The computer expert friend who may have been able to help me avoid having a rootkit destroy my hard drive if he had given me the necessary advice in a timely fashion has kept my computer out of commission for weeks because he's too busy to help, even though he has promised to do so several times.

I bought a snow blower for my tractor. I asked if the man could deliver it because I had no way to get it home. He said "No problem" and I paid him. He phoned that evening to ask how I planned to get the 750 pound blower off the back of his pickup truck. I reminded him that I had told him ahead of time that I had no way to get the blower down from a truck. He forgot. Now he has my money and my snow blower, because he forgot he couldn't deliver what he said he could.

These people were not intending to lie when they made their promises to me. They simply didn't organize their thoughts and plans to the extent necessary to avoid conflicts. They didn't plan ahead. They got too busy to get all the work done they promised to others, but didn't extend the courtesy of telling the others when they might be able to get to their needs.

Sometimes just coping with the problems life throws your way--whatever their nature--is all you can do. It's called survival. When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. It's always painful at first. Eventually, if you keep looking, you will find a way to circumvent what may be severe consequences of a problem.

Some say God doesn't give us more than we can handle, though they wish God didn't trust them so much. Some call it courage or perseverance or strength of character that people can get through their lives with burdens far greater than the average. It's not really any of that.

Life is tough. Those who have it easy and don't appreciate what they have waste their lives because they don't accomplish much of real value. Those who slog their way through what seem to be incredible trials and tribulations, always looking to a brighter future find ways to enjoy life more because they appreciate the contrast between the bad and the good.

Moreover, the survivors act as role models for the rest of us. If it weren't for them, our species would never have survived the long process of natural selection.

We literally exist because those before us--at least many of them--survived rigors of life far worse than we can imagine. We don't owe them anything. We do owe it to ourselves and to those who will follow us to survive and to improve.

Those who don't struggle with life don't improve because they don't know how. They have never had to work their way out of problems and difficulties that might have destroyed them. The survivors know how. They learn as they struggle.

As individuals and as a species, we inherited much because of those who struggled and survived before us. It's our job to struggle and survive so that future generations will know it can be done.

Bill Allin is the author of ***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a guidebook for teachers and parents who want to teach their children the skills of coping, of surviving and of thriving in a struggling world.

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