

## This May Not Be the Best Time



*It's quixotic how we get to a place where the past becomes idealized, romanticized, little more than a dreamt up fairy-tale.*

Not for me.

I know who I was—a mess throughout my twenties and too much into my thirties with phases that were regrettable. I was terrible. My actions were egregious. I felt misguided and out of place.

I thought of my twenties as being the best season of my life, and there *is* so much to be grateful for. The greatest friends, the bonds we shared, the times themselves. I admit to the divergent harmony of it all, even when I was tilting at windmills.

***Those were roaring days, and idealistic as I was, I had no stay in me.***

Maybe that was part of living with undiagnosed ADHD. Maybe ADHD has disrupted my world too often. Maybe the hyper sexuality in ADHD is more trauma response than

infidelity. Maybe having ADHD is to have an adversarial experience in the world. And dragging those I loved most into the disarray.

It is not what I did that makes me who I am. I endured without hype, without recognition, without blowing my own horn. But with the doggedness only human beings like me understand.

Because of this, I forgave myself and accepted myself, and then did life *"better late than never"*.

I am not who I was 30 or 40 years ago. How could I be? In the fullness of time, though I fail, I get back up again even when I can't. So, no, this may not be the best time to accuse myself of shining up the turd of my life experiences.

Fears and expectations fascinate me. The negativity that some of us automatically associate with them are the function of introjection.

We unconsciously incorporate attitudes, values, and qualities of other persons into ourselves. To live with these ghosts is just a fraction of what it is to be human.

The truth about fear is that it serves as a normal human response to situations that threaten our wellbeing. Fear is why we survive.

As my beloved Sherlock Holmes once put it, *'Fear is wisdom in the face of danger, it is nothing to be ashamed of.'*

However, when fear is no longer serving our wellbeing it becomes an obstacle to thriving and moving beyond.

By facing fear, you overrule and weaken it. When you face it you can see that beyond the perceived threat, there lies possibility and the wellbeing you're already made of.

**Expectations for many of us, because of what's been introjected, can carry a connotation of demandingness. What people expect, or we expect of ourselves, can often be a demand on our performance, conduct and habits.**

Expectations can get the better of us when we demand more than what is possible in the moment, given a situation as it presents itself now. Our expectations can create significant stress when they don't match up authentically.

So we reframe what an expectation is. It's no longer about demands and judgement, external standards and conventions, or about projecting and assuming. *We assign the definition of an expectation as anticipation and the eagerness of hope. Hope as a verb and not the passivity of the dubious virtue of wishful thinking.*

*"To hope is to give yourself to the future – and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable."* — Rebecca Solnit

Anticipation is an essential feature of human action. Some think when we anticipate something we're inviting anxiety. We're not. We're inviting clarity and broadening our perspective.

What I am clearly anticipating through the actions I'm taking is expansiveness, growth, inspiration, and willingness. These are my reframed expectations.

Facing fear and reframing what an expectation is will thwart and frustrate them, not frustrate me.

Am I fearless? Probably not. But I fear less.

Joseph Campbell proposed that...*'We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.'*

**I can prefer all I want. We all can prefer. That's great, but in a bigger way, what has happened in our lives, beyond all the noise in our heads, is what has arisen.**

As Dr. Amy Johnson puts it, a mind can work in overdrive to figure out a path, to concretize anything it can, to conceptualize any pieces of *this* that it can.

Makes me wonder how important a path is, and my mind goes back to the Frost poem *The Road Not Taken* and my unpopular opinion that what he's saying is that there is no such goddamn thing.



*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference is meant ironically if not disparagingly.*

*Frost knows what post hoc rationalization is and even says in the poem that the two roads were not any different.*

What if there is no path, no road?

What if we had been encouraged instead to build resilience and reflect on what is plausible for us? Instead, we're handed a preoccupation with taking the right path and we work our anxiety over the wrong path.

Feelings that don't feel expansive and free look to be wrong. It's even more jarring when what seems incorrect comes off as *apparently* right. Either way, it can all feel and look like something has gone wrong. Life's got it wrong, I got it wrong, I should have taken another path—that nice linear path upon which the mind sets out...

Are there paths and roads, or instead, are there just waves of life and feeling with no rhyme or reason?

*'Life is a garden, not a road. We enter and exit through the same gate. Wandering, where we go matters less than what we notice.'* —Kurt Vonnegut

There is no linear trend that life is supposed to follow. But our mind doesn't know that and it throws a fit. Or maybe it's more subtle, and the mind tells stories, mostly about how you've done something wrong.



Remember sheltering in place? One of the things that happened then that I'm grateful for now was Ben & Jerry's *Cherry Garcia*™. This pint of ice cream impressed upon me the notion that a lot of what I've been taught is essentially *mind junk food*.

In essence—right or wrong—all roads appear to have led to ice cream on a hot summer's day.

It's all ice cream. Seems great and the truth is that it's not "all good", though I will give you this: It starts off well or at least so we think.

In practical terms, it's too sweet, it hurts your teeth, healthy ice cream sucks, and it all melts anyway. It's a mess.

The ice cream I can enjoy for weeks and months at a time is in substance an awesome serving of ice cream productivity, containers of awesome ice cream efficacy, and ice cream effectiveness. These are full-bowled periods of clarity, creativity, and connection.

Yummy...

Then the heat radiating off of social conventions and conformity starts melting the ice cream of adherence and undue obedience. And you know what? Those aren't even flavors I like. At all. This mind junk food has too long displaced nutritious choices in my life and has increased chronic conditions that have impacted my health, mental well-being, and my ability to engage.

There is so much out there and within me that is of higher quality. So what I'm going to do is enjoy my life as it arises for me, on my terms.

I want to leave this with one last thing from Walter Russell:  
"Thought, while powerful, is not limitless. *Thought is a process, an orderly, evolutionary, periodic process of absolute limitations.*"

I wish you happy roadless travel,  
my friend.

*Peter Koufos*

