



Wellbeing Insight

Perfect

“There is no perfect on this planet” Maria Sirois, *Happiness After Loss*.

If we really believed this statement, and objectively, who would disagree, then we would not have so much striving, falling short and shame. All of us, subject to the human condition, are imperfect. Semantically of course, to be perfect is to be divine and we are subject to the charge of egocentricity and even narcissism.

That is not to say that we should remain passive, taking the “Whatever...” attitude to life’s events and making no attempt to affect our lot actively and intentionally. It is however, being capable of drawing the line, of using our intelligence to govern our emotions that would have us continue to judge ourselves and our efforts as ‘not good enough’ when we have done our best. Knowing our values and living life intentionally guides us so that we are able to release ourselves from simply spinning our wheels in a never-ending attempt to be perfect.

Susan David, *Emotional Agility*, writes of “the prison of perfection”. Understanding this metaphor fully, invites us to see that many of us have set, laid, and walked into the trap of perfectionism and without challenge, will imprison ourselves there. Combining the wisdom of our two writers, we must see that there is no way to reach ‘perfect’ while we are on this *mortal coil*. Aspiring to greatness is laudable, but accepting our mortal limits is perspective.

To round off our discussion, let’s include Ryan Holiday in our thinking, “Think progress, not perfection”, *The Obstacle is the Way*. I, for one, feel great relief from this wisdom. Each day, each act, is another step of a work in progress. As coaches, we advocate a small step at a time towards reaching our goal. We counsel that to measure progress, we must look back from where we are to where we were and notice the gap rather than to look forward and notice the gap yawning ahead of us. That is because the first approach leads to celebration, an impetus to continue. The second leads to deficit thinking and acts as a disincentive. With knowledge of ourselves, applying just the amount of looking forward to see the goal, the hoped-for-outcome, is the aim. Beyond that we need to detach ourselves, to lower our eyes and work hard in the moment to live our best lives. This is progress. This is enough. This is all that is possible on this planet.

Thank you to the sages, Sirois, David and Holiday. Reading your wisdom informs and reassures. With your insights, the way is lighter, and imperfection is bearable.