

ESTÉE L'ÉLÈME

EMBRACING SUCCESS

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day dream (dā/drēm'), 1. dreamy thought about pleasant things. 2. think dreamily about pleasant things. 3. pleasant plan or fancy, unlikely to come true.

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M A R G A R E T
W H E A T L E Y

FIND YOUR WAY

By Adria Trowhill



“...the greatest challenge for young entrepreneurs is realizing that things take time—that you can’t expect to be an overnight success.”

global leader. Meg focuses on learning as fast as she can from where she is now. She consistently tries to avoid dwelling on past regrets, but rather emphasizes reflection and learning from experience. Here are a few of the messages she has for our readers.

YOU CAN’T EXPECT TO BE AN OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

I believe that the greatest challenge for young entrepreneurs is realizing that things take time—that you can’t expect to be an overnight success. If you don’t accept that, you end up using yourself up, making mistakes and not having time to learn. This patience, which is so hard to achieve, is also the key to real success, to really doing right work in the world. This approach leads to a better life, and also a more intelligent one.

IN FAILURE THERE ARE GIFTS

The greatest gift of failure is in staying long enough to learn from the richness of the experience, before going on. We live in a culture that does not reward mistakes, yet the research shows that the 75 or so percent of new entrepreneurs that fail but keep on trying make it in the end. To me, the real work of entrepreneurship is to get out there, try,

MEG WHEATLEY IS the co-founder and President Emeritus of *The Berkana Institute*, a global charitable foundation begun in 1992, and dedicated to serving life-affirming leaders. She is an influential and innovative thinker who spoke recently in Toronto about her new book, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*. Afterwards, she spoke with Adria Trowhill. The following excerpts are from that conversation.

Margaret Wheatley is a ‘forward’ thinker and has become a

learn as fast as you can, and try again, until you actually create a successful business.

YOU CANNOT PLEASE EVERYONE

My biggest challenge was getting over trying to please everyone, taking criticism to heart and worrying about what other people thought. It took me quite a while to realize that ‘being out on the edge’ puts a target on you and that’s just part of the journey. The important thing is to develop the inner confidence that what you are doing has value. In my own journey, I was scared at times and it wasn’t always easy. However, I always relied on my intuition in the sense of what was right for me to do. In college for example, I went through the extremely painful process of changing my major and disappointing all the people who had wanted me to be a scientist.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL SAID TO “FOLLOW YOUR BLISS”

Looking back I realize that I really did what Joseph Campbell suggested. What it meant for me was to follow my interests. I did that consistently throughout my life. I believe that young people today feel much more constrained than I did. I felt free to explore and be out in the world.

“...patience, which is so hard to achieve, is also the key to real success...”

I WOULD TELL YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES

It is important to pay attention to the quality of your life as you try to create your business, what’s happening to you—your relationships, your ethics, your world! It is easy to get caught up in the game of entrepreneurship and, a few years down the road, find yourself in a life that has been devastated by your focus, your competitiveness and your self-centredness. You can end up unintentionally having destroyed all the other aspects of your life that are important to you. These include the relationship with your partner, your children, your own body, and finally your health. Entrepreneurship can be a very compelling, compulsive game and the way the social system asks you to be, and its huge demands, can lead you to become something you would not choose at the start of the journey.

IN TERMS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COURAGE

The opportunities for courage are so abundant that it can be overwhelming. It’s the courage to take a stand for the things you know do not lead our society to where we need to go. It can be as simple as refusing to do something in an unrealistic time frame because it will create a lot of nasty energetic consequences. Also, standing up for those who are being mistreated or bad mouthed or misjudged in some way. What constrains our courage is our fear that we are going to look bad or foolish. Nothing is going to change for the good until more and more of us stand up and say, “These behaviours are unacceptable. I don’t want to work for an organization that has these values.” This is really a time for personal courage as we are not getting the moral leadership in our society that I believe we need.

ASK YOURSELF IF YOU ARE BECOMING A LEADER YOU CAN REALLY RESPECT

We are not getting the kind of moral leadership we need in the world right now. Our society is eroding and the reason it is eroding is because we are letting it happen. If you don’t focus on who you are trying to be, the pressures of this world will take you someplace very different. At the end of your life, you want to like and respect the person that you have become. If you respect people who make other people feel good about themselves and their potential, if you respect people who give back something to society and don’t just take, then you have to get serious about the decisions you make. Ask yourself if you are becoming a leader you can really respect. This is not something you can put off. This is something you need to be focused on now. We really do know what makes for good leadership. The challenge is to become that person ourselves!

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