

Fresh starts

Part of *Highlights*, selected posts from Jamie Treadwell's blog

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**Take a moment to stop before each phase of the day.
Orientate heart and mind to engage.**

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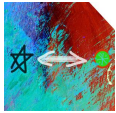
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08:48 Monday 17 October

/Start of the day

How can I best start each day?

I was reminded this weekend of how tentative life can be. On Friday I took my close friend into the hospital emergency room. The receptionist told me we'd have at least a 1 hour wait, until she saw my friend in the wheel chair, desperately ill. He was brought immediately into emergency care. He's now recovering from pneumonia. I reflected on what a gift life is, and therefore how best to start each day.

Preparation lays the foundations for any creative pursuit. It does the same for day to day life. I use a simple 4 step process in my morning prayer. I adapted these from the writings of Francis De Sales. Sometimes I take just a few minutes, sometimes a bit longer. Perhaps you may find this useful.

1) Give thanks for the gift of life: I give thanks to God for preserving me through the night, for my circumstances this morning, for the people I am with. I recall to mind all that I have is a gift from God. I go into detail with whatever comes to mind.

2) Eternal perspective: I consider that the present day is a step in the context of eternity, and I make a firm purpose to use it well. Today is my time to live, act, and love in word and action. This day is a preparation for eternal life, so I consider it from heaven's perspective. I place today in context of what is truly important.

3) Dream into your day: I use my imagination and what I know of my plans to anticipate what I will be about, where I will be, who I will be with. I prepare to make the best use of my day to honour God and bring blessing to others.

4) Recognise that you are not alone: This done, I humble myself in the presence of God. I ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower me through the day. I offer myself and my good designs to the Lord.

I have found this exercise transformative. I start the day prepared with a mental and spiritual framework open to awareness and purpose. The cup of coffee certainly helps as well. It's all part of good preparation. Have a great day.



11:03 Thursday 27 October

/Take the plunge

What do you know you need to do today? Let's face it, far too often we know what we need to do, but we just don't get around to doing it. Big things. Small things. We procrastinate. Find excuses. The water is too cold.

I was working with a team leader recently. He knew he had to get out on the floor and make daily contact with his team. But he wasn't doing it. Each day an excuse appeared. A stopper.

We talked. More precisely, I asked him a few questions and he articulated vision. He realised what exactly he wanted to do, and how he would do it. Then he committed to action. He started the next day.

I'm in Egypt at the moment. I'm staying with a friend, his apartment has a swimming pool in the back garden. My first day here I wandered out to take a swim. I tested the water first. Big mistake. It was freezing. A stopper. The excuses rolled in... I don't need to do this. I could go downstairs to the heated pool. Eventually I slid in. I did it, but the hesitation was just too typical.

Each day since I've decided to simply take the plunge. I make the decision inside, early in the morning. Then I just get ready and go, each step of the way without hesitation, keep the momentum going.

Each day take the plunge. Decide what that key thing is today that needs to get done. Commit to a start time. Then dive in. It's so refreshing when you're done. And somehow so freeing to get on with whatever else is left to do today.

10:01 Monday 31 October

/Transitions

How can I prepare for a crazy variety of responsibilities today? It's now early morning. A few hours ago I got a text from a friend at 2am asking for prayers for a significant personal situation. I need to talk to him today. But each hour is claimed through the day, and the changes in cloths throughout the day are an indication of the variety of responsibilities I'll need to take on.

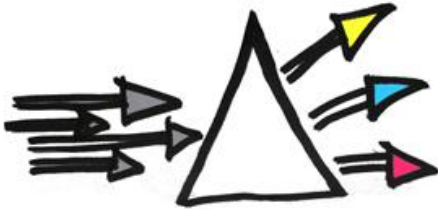
During morning prayer I imagine each situation coming up. I got a marketing strategy meeting with Amin, an induction session with a new coaching client, a design session for an upcoming training event, then over to my art studio to lead a community project working with teenagers.

A simple phrase I picked up from Dr. Maria Nemeth helps me take each one in stride. I will approach each session with clarity, focus ease and grace. Take a moment to stop before each phase of the day. Orientate heart and mind to engage. And then I'll set myself to be totally present. I'll see how it goes, and enjoy the journey.



09:41 Tuesday 29 November

/Instant Creative Space



How can you get an instant creative moment in the midst of a busy day? I'm living in London, spinning a lot of plates, and noticing how difficult it is to get time for strategic reflection. I need more than a bit of time, I also need a way to shift perspective and open up perception to take in the big picture. I've been using music in a particular way to create that space.

Twice a month my business partner Amin chooses a short piece of music for us to listen to. He's pulled up everything from Rock and Roll to a Christmas Carol. Before we listen to it we identify a Catalyst Question - a key question at the heart of an issue we're working on at the moment. Last week it was 'how can we launch a new product this coming month?'

Then he puts on the music, and we let our imagination explore connections.

The music lasts about 4 minutes, yet the ideas flowed as we listened to the music as a metaphor for the issue of interest.

It's no surprise, but it's still fascinating how the music acts as a prism opening up new ways of seeing the problem and possible solutions. In the recent example, the simple repetition of the music with subtle variations, the building tension and sense of anticipation, the harmonic crescendo opened up ideas around a marketing campaign that captures these dynamics. In just those few minutes our meeting was energised and focused.



15:50 Friday 20 January

/Growing Self Confidence

What is a key for growing healthy self-confidence? I'm thinking here about a self confidence that enables extraordinary contribution within a team. Yesterday I gave a training seminar in Belfast on transformational youth work, drawing from the wisdom of Baden Powell and Kurt Hahn, each a founder of transformational youth movements. I unpacked how their ideas influenced the development of Youth Initiatives. The following quote from Kurt Hahn is one of my favourites.

Without self-discovery, a person may still have self confidence, but it is a self confidence built on ignorance and it melts in the face of heavy burdens. Self discovery is the end product of a great challenge mastered, when the mind commands the body to do the seemingly impossible, when courage and strength are summoned to extraordinary limits for the sake of something outside the self--a principle, an onerous task, another human life.

One of the goals in Youth Initiatives is to create experiences that present a great challenge. Formative challenges that engage the whole person; body, mind and spirit. These experiences direct the person outside the self by means of a compelling goal. Through these experiences they learn self confidence in the context of contribution.

In its fullest expression, this is what the mission trips to Romanian orphanages were all about. Even in a different, but foundational level, the crazy large scale 'Hot Pursuits' game we did in Belfast City centre and the yearly original dramas we performed in public theatres captured this dynamic of a 'great challenge'. In pulling them off, individuals experienced the significance of contribution within a team. And there were some good times along the way.

A question comes to mind today – what's the application of Hahn's principle in the context of organisational learning? Next Thursday I'm speaking at the Learning Technologies conference in London. My business partner Ben Hines and I are addressing the topic of 'Creativity and Emotion in Learning'. What can stir the body, mind, and spirit towards a compelling goal in the context of organisational performance? An interesting question...