

KEEPING YOUR CHIN UP

This blog is a little sidebar issue. In these many blogs about my medical events I've had a chance to hear about some of yours as well. It's clear that we are in the same boat. In fact, ultimately everyone is. In a conversation I had years ago with famed economist Kenneth Boulding, he said to me "Michael, we have to learn to fail successfully." He was so right about that. Fail we all will, but it does not have to be a "failure." We have many mini-lives yet to live in this life and the great masters tell us many rebirths beyond this one. So, as the rinpoches say: "Kale, Kale (slowly, slowly).

Some things are up to us and one of them is our attitude. There is nothing wrong with chimping our attitude, checking on it to make sure we are not spiraling down the tubes and don't realize it. I probably take my attitude-temperature more often than I need to or than most do.

I try to keep myself stable and humming along in as balanced a way as I can manage. Easier said than done. However, when reality throws a monkey-wrench into the works (and for me it does this often enough) and puts my whole system out of whack, guess who goes around with a long face on? That would be me and what I don't like is that pulling long faces are just adding insult to injury. It's bad enough that the going gets tough for us and worse if we give into it and feel sorry for ourselves. I can tell one brief story.

As a computer programmer for 47 years I have a lot of time invested into coding solutions to problems. A long time ago I would on rare occasions encounter the most feared accident in programming, the dreaded "User Error." I would, without meaning to, manage to press a key and mistakenly delete something like a week's work or two weeks work. And in these special cases there was no backup or the backup was corrupted. It was an

awful moment and it did not just happen once, but too often for my comfort. LOL.

When this happened, I used to jump up and down and yell, throw myself around and do all manner of decrying my fate. But, when all was said and done, I would eventually get over it, sit myself back down and start coding the lost program all over again. And the point of the story is that after some years of doing this repeatedly, despite all precautions, I calmed down. Finally, after many years I reached a point that when this happened, I would perhaps just sigh and immediately start over again with the first letter of the code. I no longer wasted valuable energy demonstrating to whom? I would not waste energy on what I could do nothing about, but just start over again. For me, that was a life-lesson learned.

But as I see from my recent medical events, there are ever new and ingenious ways for life to get my goat. And when that happens, there I am again walking around with a long face again. LOL. And it does not take much to throw me out of whack and suddenly there I am again beside myself without a center.

Looking around this life I live, I see I am not the Lone Ranger in this. Many people, including some of you reading this, seem to do the very same thing. In other words, aside from my own long face, there are also a lot of other long faces out there. IMO, and I am talking to myself here too, this is just a big waste of time. I've been working on remedying this.

If things don't always go well or as I expect or wish, I try not to throw good money after bad, meaning: if I'm having a bad day, I don't just sit there and watch it fester. If I feel out of whack, I am learning to just get busy trying to restore order and balance. For me it's like a high-wire act and I don't like heights.

Perhaps one of my the worst days is when I get into an argument with someone and we both see that our conversation is spiraling down, going from bad to worse. And it seems that everything I say only makes things still more touchy. It's hard to end such conversations without one of us holding the short end of the stick. And yet every statement by either of us seems like we are trying to have the last word, and we both like to have the last word. That's what I mean by spiraling down. Sound familiar? LOL.

I guess what I am saying here is that I try not to let fate immobilize me so that I become like a deer in the headlights. Just because reality deals me a hard blow, I try NOT to stop moving and just stand there waiting for another blow. At least, that is my philosophy. If nothing else, I'd rather be a moving target. LOL.

If I let my whole frame-of-mind go south just because life becomes difficult, whose fault is that? If I could get somewhere by complaining I would try that, but who's listening? No one I know or have ever found. And so, I watch the signs reflected in the mirror of my daily life and when they start to show that my attitude is drifting downhill, I take note and do my best to walk on.

One of the most valuable dharma teachings I have learned says:

“DON'T FOLLOW AFTER WILD THOUGHTS.”

That advice is not just an aside; it is a KEY piece of advice. I always tell my kids, just keep walking, one foot in front of the other. And as I mentioned above, don't look down. LOL.

[Photo by me yesterday.]

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[http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links to Michael Erlewine-V2.pdf](http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf)

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish.”