

life purpose

"Your Life's Purpose - Reflections on Sept 11"

-by David Copeland and Roan Louis (Reprinted with permission from the authors)

After last Tuesday's tragedy, we think it's important to stop to think about what's most important. For this week, we feel we all can respect the victims of this tragedy by taking another step towards living lives that are worth living.

This exercise can make a real difference--it has for us. And it doesn't have to take a lot of time. If you just put 3-5 minutes in to each one of the following four questions, and pay attention to the answers you write down, you may find your life will change.

You may want to print this out, or copy it into a word processor so you can write your answers to the questions we are going to ask. For some reason, writing down your answers helps clarify them in your mind. What you write doesn't have to be long, but writing seems to help. You also may want to read over the entire exercise first.

First, imagine this:

A day will come when you have seven years to live. In fact, you don't know that that day has not already arrived. But for the sake of this exercise, imagine that day is today. Furthermore, we will say that you will be in fine health to the end, and that you don't want to evade your responsibilities.

Really let yourself imagine how it would feel to know that you had seven years, and no more. Here's the question: If you knew, for a fact, that you only had seven years to live, what would you do? What would you change? Who would you talk to? What would you say?

Spend 3-5 minutes writing a bit about what you would change in your life and what you would do.

Next, imagine this:

A day will come when you have seven MONTHS to live. In fact, you don't know that that day has not already arrived. But for the sake of this exercise, we will imagine that day is today. Once again, we will say that you will be in fine health to the end, and that you don't want to evade your responsibilities.

Really let yourself imagine how it would feel to know that you had seven months, and no more. If you knew, for a fact, that you only had seven months to live, what would you do? What would you change? Who would you talk to? What would you say?

Spend 3-5 minutes writing a bit about what you would change in your life, and what you would do.

Then, imagine this:

A day will come when you have seven DAYS to live. For the sake of this exercise, we will imagine that day is today. Once again, we will say that you will be in fine health to the end, and that you don't want to evade your responsibilities.

Really let yourself imagine how it would feel to know that you had seven days, and no more. If you knew, for a fact, that you only had seven days to live, what would you do? What would you change? Who would you talk to? What would you say?

Spend 3-5 minutes writing a bit about what you would do in those days.

And finally, imagine this:

A moment will come when you have seven HOURS to live. For the sake of this exercise, imagine that moment is now. This time, we will say that you are where you want to be, and with the people you want to be with.

How would you spend those seven final hours?

We have done this exercise several times a year for the last five years. At first, our lives didn't resemble our lists very much. However, each time we did this exercise, we noticed that our lives approximated our lists more closely. Simply doing this exercise a few times a year changed our focus towards what was most important, and changing our focus changed our lives. So we pass this exercise along to you.

Someone once asked St. Augustine, "If you knew you were to die tonight, what would you do differently today?" His answer was, "Nothing." We certainly haven't reached that point, but getting closer to it seems like a task worth undertaking...especially in the face of last week's most potent reminder that life is not permanent.

David Copeland and Ron Louis are the best-selling authors of "How To Succeed With Women" (Prentice Hall Press, 1998) and "How To Succeed With Men" (Prentice Hall Press, 2000). They can be reached at www.howtosucceedwithwomen.com or www.howtosucceedwithmen.com .