

The Spider at the Gate of Happiness

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*Feel the rain on your skin
 No one else can feel it for you
 Only you can let it in
 No one else, no one else
 Can speak the words on your lips
 Drench yourself in words unspoken
 Live your life with arms wide open
 Today is where your book begins
 The rest is still unwritten
 Staring at the blank page before you
 Open up the dirty window
 Let the sun illuminate the words that you could not
 find*

— "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield

It was on an ordinary day in the beginning of May when I stepped onto the Number 1 Subway in New York. A friend of mine and I were on our way to Penn Station, where we would be taking the train to Princeton. I had picked up one of those free Metro newspapers, so I would have something to read during our trip. Now I don't normally read the newspaper for news, but I love to read the columns. You see, I am generally more interested in people and their experiences than I am in facts and figures. So I skipped everything and went straight to the column...not

realising that I was only seconds away from staring into a mirror.

The title of that day’ s column read “A Father’ s Lesson About Life, Learning” by Naomi Wolf. It took less than a second for me to be completely sucked into this story about the life lesson of a father to his daughter, and by extension, the world. It also took me less than a second to want to meet this man, this “wild old visionary poet” as she calls him. The column is an excerpt of the book *The Treehouse—Eccentric Wisdom from My Father on How to Love, Live and See*, written by Naomi Wolf. She writes about Leonard, her father, and his belief that every person is an artist in their own unique way, and that personal creativity is the secret of happiness. What an intriguing and beautiful message he is sharing with the world!

What really touched me is that he believes everyone has their own medium, it can be anything. For some it might be words, or music or paint. For other it could be the guiding of an organisation, gardening, raising children. He urges to let go of its value in the marketplace, and to make sure it’ s really yours.

Assuming that it is true and every person is an artist in his/her own right, then what is your creative impulse? Where does your heart lead you? I firmly believe we know in our heart what our creative medium is. We just need to be still and listen. To speak to the artist within ourselves. Only then can we put that passion central, say yes to our passion—whether it is recognised by others or not. Our hearts know- it infuses us with joy and creates joy for the people around us. Just because we are living our passions.

If we are not living our heart’ s calling, stress will enter into our life. That stress is a direct result of the inherent conflict between what we are doing in our life and what our passion is in life. Incongruence stems from the desire to have something or be someone and not having it in the here and now. As Naomi Wolf describes it, those who are in a “box” (whether it be a job or a social role), and know they are not supposed to be in that box, will feel it. They will *know*. And perhaps, if you are one of those people reading this article right now, you will feel it, too. It is like an itch, somewhere deep inside of you, and you just *know*. And perhaps, even if your first reaction is to contradict what I am saying, you will still feel that itch, however faint it might be. Of course, it is up to you to decide whether you want to listen to the message that your heart has for you.



So, what’ s holding so many of us back? It sounds so easy, doesn’ t it? Just listen to that silence in your heart, and

there you go...yet if it was that easy, why isn' t everyone living their dream? The answer: thought viruses. Thoughts that have turned into strong convictions. So strong, in fact, that they feel like the ultimate truth. Let me illustrate this with an example of my own.

For as long as I can remember I have been afraid of spiders. In fact, if I as much as visualise a spider, my body decides to go into panic mode. This makes me think that it' s not the spider that creates my fear, but it must be something that I do all by myself. Some of my friends have been amazed that I haven' t confronted this phobia yet, since I have access to the tools to help me overcome this fear. My answer has been very clear: Can you imagine what would happen if I am not afraid anymore? I might even be able to get close to a spider, or even worse, hold one in my hand. Do you think I am going to expose myself to that kind of threat? I think not.

Looking at it from this perspective, change is scary and can even feel daunting and unsafe. Yet what if I were to step back and look at it from the perspective of a future me, with a healthy relationship towards spiders, what would happen then? ***Perhaps the freedom to choose will enter my life.*** Freedom to visit the rainforest, for example. So far that just hasn' t been an option from where I was standing.

What does it take for us to embrace change, ***to drop whatever is holding us back from our real creative destiny and shift course, be happier.*** Most likely, the answer won' t be found from the position in which you feel stuck. Inside the box, consisting of our most deeply felt limiting beliefs, you won' t be able to dream. From the inside, it is impossible to dream, let alone to come up with solutions for the path which leads you to your dream. You need to step out of the box to be able to see it, and then "destroy" it. It takes "going meta" to see the way we are fooling ourselves and to look beyond into the future where, as Natasha Bedingfield sings so beautifully, ***the rest is still unwritten.***

As an experiment, I' d like to invite you to think of something that you' ve always wanted or dreamed about, but somehow you have never taken any action towards it. What' s your initial response when you think of following that path? Where does your mind wander off to? Are you telling yourself that it will never be possible? That it' s just naive to even want it? Or perhaps it' s just not realistic? Do you feel other people will judge you for it? Not accept you, even get angry and disown you? And how do you then feel about that? Does the thought of adversity take hold of you or do you create worst case scenarios in your mind? If so, I can imagine you' ll be left feeling hopeless, powerless, deflated, disillusioned. You might even decide that it' s just not worth all the pain and hassle, because things will never change anyway.

And now that you' ve become aware of all the thoughts that are

holding you back, what's your first reaction to that? Do you tell yourself that this is the truth? That there's no other way of looking at it? That it will never change? And taking it a step beyond that, how do you then reflect back upon that? Isn't that just the perfect recipe for creating status quo?



When I started writing this article, I got especially curious as to what the solution might be to this phenomenon that holds us back from living our passion, be it in a love relationship, a job or whatever else our heart is calling us for. And at just the right time Wassili Zafiridis, who is an excellent and innovative trainer in the field of NLP and Neurosemantics as well as a wonderful friend of mine, sent me an article he wrote on resilience. Resilience, *the physical property of a material that can return to its original shape after deformation that does not exceed its elastic limit.*

What if we were all resilient? What if we were all made of that “stuff” that can return to its original shape (to our creative dna) after setbacks and adversity, through facing our limiting beliefs, so that we have the freedom to follow the our heart's passionate calling? I can already hear the excuses for not going there. Oh, but that's not possible. That's just not me and it won't be real if I do that. Again—thought viruses. Because, resilience, as Michael L. Hall discovered in 1992, is something that can be learned.

As a matter of fact, resilience is something that can be re-learned. We were all born resilient. I mean, how else did we learn how to walk, talk or ride a bicycle? We didn't just give up after one failed attempt, did we? No, we stuck with it, we were determined to get it right, to see it through even in the face of adversity and disappointments and sometimes a little bruise here or there. So who is to say our dreams cannot come true? In any case, we won't know until we try...and, well, try again...until we succeed.

To all of you who believe true love is only a myth and doesn't work in real life, work isn't supposed to be fun, and life is just plain hard? Ask yourself whether these thoughts are facilitating you in finding and living your true passion? Are these the thoughts you want to determine the choices you have in your life? If not, you can decide right now to be resilient in being resilient in becoming the true artist in you that is waiting to be unleashed.

It is my belief I was brought into this world to bring back magic, possibility and the purity of love to the people surrounding me. I hope I have sparkled your imagination. Should you feel any discomfort from reading this article, don't worry. That's just your innate creativity running restless

through your veins. It urges you to be still and listen.

Femke Stuut is an internationally certified NLP trainer and meta-coach (neuro-semantic). She has an extensive background in international business and specializes in organizational change as well as personal and professional leadership. She is founder of "Completely You - The human quality headquarters" in the Netherlands. Her vision is to facilitate in connecting people with their core so they can live the purpose of their existence. She can be reached at fem_ke@yahoo.com. Ms. Stuut wishes to acknowledge the vision and ideas of Wassili Zafiris (www.wassilizafiris.nl) which inspired this article.

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