

Business as Usual?

I almost missed it. Dialogue on the *Today Show* is hard to hear when it's on in the bedroom and you're brushing your teeth in the bathroom, but I think I caught the important part. "Do you wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night?"

Somewhere, around age 40, I gave up my quest for right answers and turned to collecting meaningful questions. This almost missed, buried-in-the-middle-of-an-interview question stopped me in mid brush. Prior to September 11th I would have paused, thought for a moment, and kept on brushing. Not now. I put down my toothbrush, found paper and pen and wrote it down. To remember. To think about. To write about. To share with you.

Do you wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night? This is a central question – no one would have disputed its importance before. We would have nodded together at its significance and then gone back to our daily routine. Relegating this question, like so many questions, as *things to think about some day when I have time*. Now we know – in our bones we know – that there may not be time someday. If we are to think about any of these questions it needs to be now.

Do you wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night? is a very good place to start. From the President to Mayor Guiliani, Airline executives to Money Managers, preachers in pulpits to pundits on TV, everyone it seems wants us to go back to business as usual. And most of us are resisting. Oh sure, we're doing our jobs, our laundry, and our civic duty. We're paying our bills, coaching our kid's teams, and going to church. (In fact, we may even be making love more often. Experts are predicting a baby boomlet in nine months. They're calling it disaster sex – the ultimate need to remain connected in time of crisis.) It's just that it doesn't feel right. We just don't know what business as usual is anymore.

Do you wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night? Can this question give us a hint of what business as usual needs to be? Is this the question that needs to be answered before our days can feel right? Is this the time in our evolution that we finally understand that there are millions of ways people get to answer a resounding yes to this question? Do we acknowledge that you can't say yes to this question if you're following someone else's dream or no dream at all? Can we accept that our work life and our personal life are not separate entities but halves bound together to create a whole that is **our life**? Are we brave enough to ask ourselves these questions? Are we courageous enough to make the changes that the answers to these questions might demand?

Get back to business as usual they keep saying. Okay, here's a plan. Block out 2 hours. Say you're coming in late or have to leave early for an appointment. Find a quiet place where no one will find you on a Saturday or Sunday. Take nothing but a pencil – one with a big eraser – and paper. On the top of the page write the question, *Do I wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night?* Answer it.

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Yes or No. Not most of the time, some days, or nobody does every day. Just Yes or No. If your answer is yes, you should be grinning and don't need me to tell you what to do next.

If, however your answer was no, write the second question *Do I want to wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night?* Answer that one Yes or No. If your answer to this one is no I can't imagine you'd still be reading this article, so I'm assuming you'll be going on to the next question.

What do I need to do so I wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night? Answer this one. It won't be as easy as yes or no. It will probably be a list of things – big and small. Some people will immediately think of changing their jobs. Moving closer to or further away from family. I can see people deciding to go back to school, writing that novel, or booking a vacation of a lifetime. But it's not usually about doing something big. You may come to the realization that most of your life fits. It's just the little things that have gotten out of focus. Saying thank you more, really listening to your spouse, kissing goodbye knowing it could be goodbye. Volunteering more, reading more, or grumbling less. There are no right answers, just answers that will be right for you. Be willing to do the work to find them and then act.

Will the terrorists strike again, will someone you care about die unexpectedly, will accidents and disease strike people who don't seem to deserve it? Yes. We cannot, no matter what we'd like to believe, control these things. *Do you wake up energized in the morning and go to bed fulfilled at night?* You can control this. Not easily and only by creating a new business as usual!

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