THE CATALYST

Finding joy in the ordinary

Hustle culture left me burnt out and empty. Therapy and self-awareness taught me to fill my cup first.

By: Nicole Chevrier | Posted: July 28, 2022

Do more. Be more. Get more. Be successful. Strive. Hustle. Achieve. Be a winner. Don't waste time. Sound familiar? Time flies. Yes, it does. All the more reason to slow down. 'Stop and smell the roses' is a cliché for a reason. You deserve the quiet moments to nourish your well-being.

As a motivated and ambitious person, I was fully subscribed to the achiever mentality, perpetually running on the hamster wheel. I wanted the success, the accolades, the big career, and everything that I thought went with that level of achievement. What I didn't know was that I was missing out on a lot of important things. Balance. Wellness. Spiritual growth. The journey of becoming a fully self-actualized human being.

Running on empty

I think we can all relate to the fatigue that can descend when we get lost in the hustle and bustle of life. Each one of us has made a difference to someone else, as the go-to friend, the superhero mom, the devoted partner, or the supportive leader. But if we don't protect our own well of energy and vitality, we can end up on empty pretty quickly.

My self-care always hovered near the bottom of my list despite my best efforts. I should do some yoga. I should get a massage. I should go to bed earlier. I should, I should, I should. The self-care somehow always got shuffled to the bottom of the endless list. Going to bed exhausted and feeling guilty because I didn't get to my self-care to-dos is pretty dysfunctional.

As hard as I tried nothing changed. But it's not a matter of trying harder and harder. It's about looking at things differently. You eventually learn the lesson: you cannot give to others before you give to yourself. Sometimes you learn the lesson the hard way, like I did. One burnout and years of therapy later, things have changed for me.

I have honed my self-awareness after many years of not paying enough attention to the level in my gas tank. I don't wait until it's empty to act. Now, when I hear myself complaining, and getting bothered by trivial things, I know that it's time to fill my cup.

The power of gratitude

When I first learnt about the gratitude thing, I thought it was silly new-age bunk. I had a bad attitude, so I was being judgmental, and I wasn't really open to it. Why? Let's just say I was going through a tough time, and I was too focused on my unhappiness.

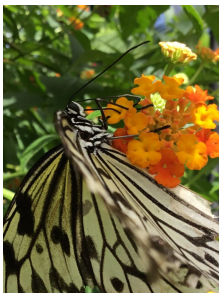
"Now let me hear what you're grateful for" my therapist would say, and I would sigh, roll my eyes, and rhyme off the list. "I'm grateful for my job. I'm grateful for my car. I'm grateful for my friends."

You get the picture. A lazy, half-hearted litany. What I eventually learned is that you have to go deeper. A wise person and spiritual advisor once told me that the practice of gratitude *is* powerful and transformational, but the key is generosity of spirit. Don't approach the immensity of the ocean with a little cup and then complain about the stinginess of the ocean.

How I find joy in the ordinary









I slow down. I shift my focus from the doing, doing, done and quiet my mind. For myself, nature is the remedy for busy brain, the catalyst for the shift in perspective.

I go outside and I open my eyes. I notice things. It takes patience. Sometimes it takes hours, but I always find something to marvel at. Small things that you would normally miss, because your eyes are open, but you aren't really looking. The magic of nature. A sunset. A flower. A butterfly. The keen and watchful eye of a wild bird.

Sometimes an ordinary walk, with the shift of the light, takes on a magical quality, if only for a few minutes. As a collector of sunset moments, I have learned to have patience, because it is worth the wait. In that magic moment, my joyful heart sings, and sings. Inspiration is everywhere.

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An avid writer and photographer. A first-time author, she recently published her first children's book to help children who are experiencing bullying. When she isn't at her desk, Nicole loves to spend her time doing yoga and meditation, ballroom dancing, hiking, and celebrating nature with photography. She is a collector of sunset moments.

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