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Coach's Corner: Keep Engaged in Life

By Sharon Pahlka

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“My life isn’t over yet!” was my thought as I walked my dog around Greenlake this fresh and sparkly morning. What had kept me away from this walk I had always enjoyed? I realized it had something to do with all that bellyaching I’ve been doing.

I have a few situations that cause me problems and pain — neck, knee, back and the latest, hmm, hip. I like things to be “fixable” so I can go on living just the way I like to live. No limitations, please. But some things can’t really be fixed. Sometimes, I find myself pulling back and avoiding engaging in life — exercise, friends to dinner, visiting someone, having fun, etc. This morning’s walk showed me something. For a couple of weeks, I had kept myself from walking around Green Lake because I knew I’d experience pain and frustration. By going ahead anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful morning. I did have to stop and stretch my hip out every now and then, but it was quite doable.

I was reminded of the 1971 film *Harold and Maude*. Harold is 17 and obsessed with death and fakes suicide scenes to upset his mother. Then, he meets 79-year-old Maude who is obsessed with life. Harold falls in love with this free-spirit and learns from Maude how to embrace life, instead of looking at it as a wrecking yard. We, too, must not be so focused on our issues — physical or work or emotional — that we see our lives as wrecking yards and miss seeing life’s beauty, meaning and fun. Our lives are not over, and the time to make sure we stay engaged in life is right now.

My “situations” will probably continue, but it seems better not to back away from engaging in life even when there are more challenges. I would just miss out. It may take more effort, more perseverance, even more courage, but an engaged life full of sparkly mornings is worth it.

Coaching Question: What is keeping you from being fully engaged in life?

Coaching Tip: Live your life as if your life depended on it. Use words to re-write your thoughts, such as, “I feel a little fearful about ____, but I am going to do it anyway.” Or, “I am not going to let my circumstances keep me from enjoying life.”

Homework: Make a list of five situations in which you take the easy way instead of the engaging way. Pick one a week, do it differently and note how you feel. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose. Was the cost worth it? Or think of something you have been tempted to do but chose not to because of fears of some sort. List the benefits and costs of choosing not to take this action.

Quotes:

“Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing.”

– Helen Keller

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

– Henry Ford

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon’s column, “Coach’s Corner,” offers helpful tips from her work.

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