

Tao of the Road Warrior: Dancing with the Sea

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During a transitional day between teaching tours, I found a nearby beach with hopes for physical and emotional renewal. I find nothing more relaxing than listening to the sounds of the shore. Hearing the waves crashing as they make their way to land and the feel of the wind massaging my body is a bounty for a weary road warrior.

While standing numbly on that sandy shore, the water began to lap against sore legs and my tight breathing became deep and relaxed after weeks of traveler's fatigue. While thoroughly enjoying the moment and feeling a bit more grounded, Mother Nature had a valuable lesson to teach. Intent on remaining rooted in the original spot, the undertow proved too powerful for me to remain there. As the water receded, I was forced off balance as my heels would fall into the hole made from the eroding sand. Having to adjust was irritating.

After moving to a firmer place, I'd have a few moments of peace before the next wave came to shore. Each time my serenity was interrupted with the continuing need to readjust. I didn't want to think, but a metaphor intruded. The nature of the ocean was in charge, not me. As I moved down the shore, finding one temporarily solid place after another, the similarity of life's changes became clear.

Although the very existence of the ocean is relatively constant, there is never a duplicate moment. The ocean's form is forever changing. The tide comes in and goes out, in and out, day after day. Life is like that. People come in and out of our lives. Jobs may come and go. We can't wait to get old enough to drive and date, and then we may wish to stop time as we age. At the same time we are gaining wisdom and developing new dreams, we may be smarting from our losses. The waves continue to come to shore at the same time the undertow carries out the previous surge.

I have experienced times of complacency of not wanting to be bothered by change. Like a self-induced inertia, I have tenaciously resisted the ebb and flow of life - becoming angry that life couldn't remain static. Even now, I continue to resist the inevitable gray hair (only my hair-dresser knows for sure), the increasing slackness of my jowls, the aging of elderly family and heartbreaking losses of loved ones. For years I fought with fear and frustration of impending corporate layoffs and when they finally came, was eventually grateful for the incredible gifts it brought. That day, the beach reminded me of the lessons of acceptance, movement and growth.

The more I tried to remain in the same place on that beach, the more off balance I became. Then I thought, "*Why should I, as a human being, expect to be above the natural laws of the universe?*" Life is about movement and growth. There's an ebb and flow of the tides, the changing of the seasons, the migration of birds, and dormant seasons of plants. It isn't *expected* that a beautiful blossom remain on the stem forever. Petals wilt and drop to the ground, feeding the soil. And with nurturance and time, there will be more blooms.

As I danced with the sea that day, those movements actually made me feel more alive. By respecting rather than resisting the rhythm of nature, peace descended on me. Resistance to movement in my life actually caused the exhausted numbness I had been feeling.

Have you ever "danced with the sea?" If not, try it and see what you take from its teachings. By walking through a stream, watching the seasons change or even returning to a family photo album you might be reminded of life's movement. If you have your bronzed baby shoes, I bet they no longer fit.

At some point, we all make decisions, conscious or unconscious, as to whether we wish to survive in life or to thrive in life. A thriving life means we continually adjust and grow and we support the growth of our loved ones - even when it is scary or painful. A thriving philosophy means we are enriched from the experience of movement and growth. Perhaps it isn't convenient or comfortable to *have* to move, but if we don't dance, the undertow of life will topple us...so dance we must!