The Journey

The month of May is a time of celebration as students are graduating all around the nation, colleagues are retiring and/or moving away. For many people, this is the end of one of their journeys in life.

“Before moving to the next phase or chapter in life, take a moment to celebrate and admire where you are TODAY! Do not forget to be grateful for what you have and what you have accomplished. More importantly, happiness resides in you, not in the external goals you have set for yourself. It is great to be ambitious; it is great to want to accomplish enormous things in our life, but sometimes we get so wrapped up in getting where we want to be we stop enjoying life all together. This can lead to us dreading the journey and even complaining throughout our journey. We crave the destination even more because there we think we can finally be happy. The key is simply finding the right balance, discovering a mindset that allows us to pursue big things without sacrificing the “little things” that make life worth living. One, five, or ten years down the road, make sure you can look back with joy at all the great memories you created.

“It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.”
Ernest Hemingway

“It is not measured by the number of breaths you take but by the moments that take your breath away” ~ Maya Angelou

It is important to slow down and to take a moment to experience the beauty around us right now. If you are feeling a little disappointed or struggling to stay patient, I have a few suggestions to help you enjoy the journey right now and during the next phase of your life.

Focus on progress and small victories:

- Getting the results we want and the personal growth from these results is ongoing and can be a lifelong quest. However, recognizing how far we have come in life and giving ourselves credit along the way is essential. Yes, there is always more work to be done, but appreciating the progress we have made and celebrating the small wins work in our favor.
Embrace challenges, risks, and mistakes

- Obstacles, challenges and mistakes along the way are inevitable. Our perspective, however, is a choice. We can chose to feel like a failure and give up when a challenge comes our way or we can accept the challenge and learn and improve from it. Enjoying the journey involves learning how to have fun with the challenges, and practice stepping into the unknown with curiosity as well as letting mistakes be an opportunity to learn and grow.

Slow down and smell the roses

- Multi-tasking is the buzz word these days. Some people even post their busy schedules on Facebook or Twitter just to show how “important” they are. When we multi-task and pack more onto our schedules, we end up doing less and we do these tasks worse. This obsession about accomplishing more, faster and faster, leads to burnout and frustration. Slowing down helps us think about what is truly important. Slowing down helps us pay attention and focus. Slowing down may be the only way for us to gain clarity so we can experience the richness of life.

I have a simple example to share from one of my recent experiences. One of my goals this year is to compete in at least 12 mountain bike races. Of course, I want to do as well as I possibly can. Initially when I set this goal, I set a really high standard for myself - try to make the podium in most of the races. After three months of training, I wasn’t looking forward to my daily training rides any longer. I started making excuses to not ride. When I would force myself to ride my bike, I was complaining throughout the ride and I couldn’t wait for it to be over with. This was exactly what I DIDN’T want to happen when I decided to compete this year, but because of the way I developed my goal, I was not enjoying bike riding anymore. I made a change. I still want to compete in mountain biking because I do love the challenge but I have taken the pressure of myself to place in every single race to now enjoying the journey which includes the training and race days. I am focusing on my progress even if I do not place in a race. A month ago, I could not see any small victories because I was too focused on the destination. I have made mistakes and come up against many obstacles so far, but I now learn from them and I am working on mountain biking skills to help me be a better rider. Most of my training rides were all about speed which was hurting my body because I wasn’t recovering properly. Nowadays, I make sure I have at least 2 easy rides in my week where I can look around and enjoy the scenery and all the beautiful wild flowers Socorro has to offer. I am back to enjoying my mountain bike rides and feeling a sense of satisfaction again. This lesson has taught me to evaluate all the things I am doing in my life and to make sure I am serving myself and others in an optimal and healthy manner.
Takeaway

I believe in moving forward and doing the best we can each day to manifest our goals and dreams, but if we are not careful about our intentions we will miss out on the captivating, thrilling, and the subtle stuff along the way. When the day is over, remember, we do not get that time back. Spend your time wisely.

Slow Down and Enjoy the Slow Cooker

Weekends usually involve a really long bike ride (4+ hours). When I get home, I usually want to eat immediately. My slow cooker is my best friend on weekends. This is one of my favorite meals and left overs for days.

Slow Cooker Butternut Squash Pulled Pork Tacos

Ingredients:
- 3 pounds butternut squash, peeled and cut into bite-sized chunks
- 2 pounds boneless pork loin roast
- 2 tsp salt, divided
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tbsp olive oil
3-5 chipotle peppers packed in adobo, chopped
2 tbsp adobo sauce from the canned chilies
1 onion, coarsely chopped
2 tsp minced garlic (about 4 cloves)
½ cup orange juice
2 tbsp red wine vinegar

Directions:
1. Arrange the squash around the edges of a 4-quart or similar slow cooker. Sprinkle with ½ tsp salt.
2. Season pork with the remaining 1 ½ tsp salt and black pepper. In a small bowl, combine the cumin, cinnamon, olive oil, chipotle chilies, and adobo sauce to form a paste. Rub all over the pork. Place the pork in the center of the slow cooker (it will overlap with the squash). Top with the onion and garlic. Pour the orange juice and red wine vinegar over the top.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or high for 3 to 4 hours. Once the meat is tender and cooked, shred it. Mix the meat and squash.
4. Serve with warm corn tortillas then garnish with cilantro, fresh lime juice and cheese.