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Choose carefully what you carry

Are you compromising your life's journey?

Backpackers are an unusual breed of camper. They venture into the wilderness carrying everything they need for survival. Food, shelter, clothing and even water are stuffed into their packs and hauled for miles before the perfect campsite is found.

If my pack had contained only those essential things on my first trip, I would have missed one of the great lessons in the business of life. But I crammed into my pack extra food, extra clothes, a pillow, a comfortable camp chair, books, soft slippers and a bottle of good wine to enhance my camping experience. By the second mile, I was disgorging my pack of everything that wasn't absolutely necessary just to survive.

Fortunately, lessons in backpacking are learned quickly. For my second trip, I spent more time evaluating the weight versus the worth of each item I packed. I ended up with fewer comforts and more pleasure on each step of the trail. As my experience grew, I learned to sense the real value of each item in terms of the cost of carrying it.

Today, I will always bring the things that mean the most to me, including some indulgences, but I have consistently pared away the things that I do not really need, the things that weigh me down without being truly important.

In the business of life, we can often find ourselves exhausted from the weight of the things we carry. Did you feel it this morning as you faced getting through another

Jim Huling The Business of Life

day? Was your first thought about how tired you were and all that you had to do before you could rest? Perhaps it's time to take a look in your pack at all that you are carrying.

Anger and resentment are heavy. If you're carrying them, you're paying a high price. Even if you were truly wronged or harmed by someone, carrying the weight of your bitterness will exhaust you.

We withhold our forgiveness as a means of revenge, but usually the person who harmed us is unaffected by it. Meanwhile we carry the weight of it through every step we take. Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves, and it has the miraculous effect of emptying our packs of a heavy burden.

Indulgent comforts, like the bottle of wine on my first trip, can also be heavy items. We enjoy them, but when do we stop to consider whether they are worth the cost?

We work longer and harder to surround ourselves with a bigger house, a newer car, personal trainers and exotic vacations without ever measuring their return in real happiness. Each of these things can bring pleasure, but cumulatively, they add a weight that we must carry. Like a backpacker, we must choose them carefully.

Abandoned dreams can be the heaviest burden of all. When we load our packs with every expectation our parents, our bosses

and our culture have regarding what we should do, where we should live, how we should think and feel, we leave no room for the things that are truly ours, the things that make the journey our own.

Did you have a dream once? Was there something you wanted to do before all the responsibilities and demands of your life took you down a different path? If you can remember it, then it is still within you, and you are carrying it every day. Taking the smallest action to revive your dreams will transform them from a weight to a source of joy and energy.

Everything we choose to carry through our lives has a price. Building meaningful relationships, engaging in work that honors our talent and living with integrity are things that bring a return in health and happiness many times greater than the investment we make. But others simply add weight — dead weight. The more of them we carry, the closer we are to being dead — physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Stop today to take a look at the contents of your pack. You just might find a lot of things that you no longer need to carry.



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