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Listening to your own voice

Are you staying true to who you are?

Have you ever been really lost? Have you been unsure of where you were or which way to go? Do you remember the feeling? The anxious, almost panicked urgency that made you want to walk faster, run or drive — anything to be headed back to familiar territory and away from that dark cloud of helplessness that rises when you don't know where you are?

People who are lost usually run faster in the wrong direction. Every frantic step takes them farther away from where they want to be and farther from any chance of help.

In the business of life, there are so many ways to be lost. When we're asked to do something that will enhance our careers but compromise our personal integrity, we can feel lost in an ocean of rationalizations and imagined consequences. When we know that a friend desperately needs to hear a painful truth, but telling that truth may damage the friendship, we can feel confused by all the reasons why we shouldn't say what needs to be said.

Like a person lost in the woods, we often run in the wrong direction. We avoid the situation or the person, hoping that the choice will go away. We ask advice from everyone who will listen, secretly wishing they would make the decision for us. We rationalize endlessly, trying to find some emotional algebra

Jim Huling The Business of Life

that will make doing the wrong thing the right decision.

In an earlier time, when becoming lost was a matter of life and death, the Native Americans passed an ancient teaching to their children: When you are lost, stand still. Remember that the trees are not lost — they are home. Come to know the place, and you will be home, too.

Even in the very different worlds of business, career, family and friendships, this teaching can still help us find our way.

Do you feel lost in a forest of conflicting priorities, pressures to compromise your values or uncertainty about what really matters to you? Have you been asked to do something at work that doesn't seem right? Sometimes the pressure to bill the extra hours, tell the customer what he or she wants to hear or stay silent when we should speak up can be enormous.

If this is where you are, then stop. Stand still and listen. Find a quiet place and ask yourself a simple, but powerful question: What is the right thing to do? I promise you, the answer will come.

Even in the most difficult circumstances, if we stop long enough to hear our inner voice, we will find that we were never really lost. We will realize

that we always knew the right thing to do, we were simply frightened of doing it.

Living a great life is not really about achievement, financial success or any of the other surface-level ways in which we measure success. It's about being true to who you really are, about living in such a way that your actions are aligned with what you believe.

If we make decisions based on what we think will get us the raise, make others like us or any other external compass, we become separated from our true selves. That's when we feel lost. And losing ourselves is always the greatest tragedy.

The decisions that matter most in our lives are meant to be answered from the heart. If we listen closely and then have the courage to act on what we know is right, we will never be lost. For wherever we are, remaining true to ourselves will show us the way



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