

Perspective Matters!

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2017, distributed on Thursday, May 11, 2017

The phone call you dreaded just came in from the doctor. “It’s terminal. You’re going to die.”

Is it cancer? No. It’s the terminal disease known as “life.” You may live sixty more years--or thirty--or ten. Or, perhaps tomorrow, your allotted time will be up. Your daily ritual is a precious, fragile gift.

This article is about perspective and context. Its purpose is to invite you to pause from your full agenda, figuratively sit back from your daily life, and reflect. Consider how you spend your time and compare it to what’s ultimately most important to you. Is there an uncomfortable disparity there?

What’s your objective in the relatively few years you have remaining? Is it to get all you can? Or is it to share as much of your uniqueness as you can before all of you is lying in a coffin, being mourned by those who were blessed to experience a small piece of your life?

Atul Guwande introduces his 2015 book, *Being Mortal*, with this statement: “I learned about a lot of things in medical school, but mortality isn’t one of them.... I encountered patients forced to confront the realities of decline and mortality, and” Guwande realized he was unprepared to help them.

My wife and I have lived through the sequential decline and departure of each of our parents. Guwande’s book helped us with the most recent, the withering degeneration of my mother.

The above thoughts stimulate me to direct Atul Guwande’s counsel to you, the leader of other human beings. You may be doing your best to get all you can from them. Pause and reflect. How would your behaviors be different if, instead, you were sharing with them as much of you as you possibly could?

I’m not suggesting you assist with their daily tasks (though that might be a beneficial activity on occasion). I propose you use your experience and wisdom to help them grow and develop, so that they contribute in ways that are important to each uniquely. (Read “Why Do You Work--HERE?” on the Article Archives page of my website: www.buildingfutureleaders.com/article-archives.html)

I offer this enhancement to your leadership awareness. Spend fifteen minutes reading and pondering eight pages of Guwande’s book. Though I recommend the entire book highly, simply go to a bookstore and turn to page 92. Start at the break in the page and read to the break on page 100.

As you read about “family” and “friends” and “the people closest to you,” think about those you engage at work: your direct reports, their direct reports, your colleagues, your suppliers, and your customers.

Perspective matters! If you spend your time seeking to “get” something from your team members, from opportunities, from your bosses, you’ll behave one way. If you spend your energy seeking to “give” to your team members, you’ll find many opportunities to serve. And your bosses will become a valuable resource to you, not someone to whom you simply must acquiesce.

I close this reflective piece by modifying only slightly a couple of sentences from Guwande’s epilogue. His words are in quotes. My words are outside the quotes. Please put your words within the brackets.

“We’ve been wrong about what our job is” as leaders. “We think our job is []. But really, it is larger than that. It is to enable well-being. And well-being is about the reasons one wishes to be alive. Those reasons matter not just at the end of life...but all along the way.”

I realize that you have responsibilities. Consider that your organization is filled with individuals, each of whom is unique. Ask each direct report, colleague, and boss, “Why do you work?” and “Why do you work HERE?” Then support each person in creating an ongoing state of both growth and well-being.