

Finding yourself

Contributed by Boy
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Hi Cecil,

I am glad that you have started to study on your own. In reality, you can learn a lot on your own, if the passion is there to learn. In today's fast pace of technological development, what you would have learned technically in school would be obsolete by the time you get out. Thus, you have to keep on learning to keep abreast. The most important thing that a formal education should have imparted is the ability to learn how to learn on your own.

If I am not mistaken, Bill Gates of Microsoft never did finish college. And yet, he is now the richest man in the world. Many rich people were self-made and did not have formal education to succeed. All they needed was the initiative and the burning desire to do something.

Closer to home, your Aunt Fely in Laguna is an inspiration, even for me. She succeeded to start and create a business of her own from nothing. In that same vein, so did your Tita Ching, your Dad and your Tita Priming. If you never had a chance to hear their stories, each of them were self-made. I believe, it was not so much what they learned in school that mattered but what they truly are. Your Tita Flor, was going nowhere at some point, but when she shaped up, she was able to start a small business that was the foundation of her being able to send her kids to college.

[I think I shared some of my thoughts about your Dad, in a previous letter last year. I will tell you more about him, in another letter and may risk repeating myself, from what I already shared in the previous letter. But, the story of how I see your Dad is worth repeating. In so doing, what I hope is that you will know him more as a person, not just being your Dad. I wish I had a chance to really talk to my Aunts and Uncles about my own parents.]

So, it is really up to you what you become.

Among your cousins, Jojo is a very good example of how a person can discover his potential; not so much from what he learned from school, but what he wanted to achieve. It is true, it helped that his parents were not poor, but in the end, what matters is the dream that burned inside him.

I watched Jojo grow up in the shadow of Jude — the latter being the favorite of his Mom, while Lor was the apple of his Dad. I am not sure whether it was this situation in life that steeled him.

Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to watch you (my nephews and nieces) grow up to be the young men and women that you are now. However, the last time I visited, before Jojo's Mom died, I had a chance to talk briefly with Jojo. Beneath his shy demeanor, there is a determined person behind — more like her Mom was. I am not surprised to hear therefore that he is quite successful.

<That is what I have been trying to tell Mary Anne, but she becomes so bitter sometimes. She is so jealous and consumed about how successful some of her cousins are, instead of trying to find a way to better herself given the odds that were dealt her in life.>

You mentioned that you get lazy sometimes. We all do. But, what you have to ponder perhaps is that the zest to do something may not be there because there is no passion associated with what you have to do.

It is all about having a dream, and the burning desire to have that dream become a reality. What you may have to do then is to search yourself. Try to spend some of your quiet moments, or what you call your lazy moments, to find that which you are meant to do in life. Some dream that you can latch on to; so much that it will consume your thoughts, in your waking moments and even in the depths of night.

Finding that dream may take time and to most even a lifetime. But, that is what life is. In search of that dream that defines us. Give meaning to our existence. Understand our role in the mystery of this universe. Without a dream, there is no essence in life as a human being. We become no different from the creatures around us.

Above all, what you have to realize is that the essence of success, happiness and contentment need not be measured in terms of getting rich.

Artists, writers and others who tried to pursue a dream did so not to get rich but more to find out what they are destined to be in this world, their reason for being. Some of them succeeded and became the famous people we know today. It is

not the wealthiest people in their time that we know in the present, but those who shared their gift with mankind. Some of them died thinking perhaps that they might have failed in life, but those who came after them found the beauty, the nobility and the lasting truth in their work.

If you have an interest in art, one famous example is Vincent van Gogh, the Dutch painter, whose work near the end of his life, you may recognize in the song "Starry, starry night". The art critics and cultured people of his time did not like his work as much. As an artist, he was able to survive only through the generosity of a brother who cared deeply for him. [He committed suicide, partly because of some psychological problem.]

Today however, any van Gogh painting always got the top prices, in tens of millions of dollars, whenever any is auctioned. If you ever follow art, his "Sunflower" painting auctioned in the 1990's I think and bought by a Japanese company became the highest paid work of art, during that time.

The writer, Herman Melville is another example. He was never considered a success during his lifetime. Today, he is well-respected for his book, Moby Dick — considered one of the finest written books.

These are but two examples.

What is common among many of these artists and writers, whether they eventually succeeded while most failed, is the zest to struggle and keep on trying to follow a dream. It is what kept them alive. Otherwise, life would have no meaning.

At the end of the day, what we do must give us some satisfaction and that there is a purpose to all this that we do, to what we are meant to be as human beings.

Begin then by trying to understand who you really are. What you want to be. What you want your legacy to be when you are no longer here. This journey to find yourself will take a lifetime. In this journey, some answers to the questions you will pose to yourself may require you to take a break once in awhile from the mundanes of day-to-day life. Take those lazy breaks as you said you do sometimes. But then, try to use them, if you can, to find yourself.

Give yourself some time for quiet moments, to answer these basic questions that many thinkers have pondered through the ages. Really, there is no one answer to each of the questions. Just the hope that one day, you will find yourself.

In the end, whatever you do, whatever you become is not always within our control. There are greater forces, in our space and time, that determines to an extent the fate that befalls us. The only thing we can control is the courage to endure, the optimism that our dreams may come true, and the faith that there is a greater being always watching us in our journey through life.

It is for this that I want to tell you more about your Dad, in future letters — what a wonderful person he is in my heart and mind. Perhaps, in knowing him more as a person, rather than just your Dad, you may also find yourself. What you are meant to be.

Your Tito Boy

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