

FS News: Leap of Faith Edition

Dear Friends ~

Here we are. At the end of another year; reflecting on all that has gone on over the past 12 months. Thinking about what we lost, what we have, what we regret, what we hope and what we are thankful for.

As most of you know, it is a tough year-end for Fair Shake. But as every reader understands, we do what we can with what we have. Often, that includes a pivot or two to make things work...and so it will be for me as I venture into the balance of starting up an old biz (in a very new way) while continuing to run Fair Shake. (while finding time to make dinner and shovel!)

Fair Shake and I have received a lot of support from you all in donations of money, stamps and envelopes, and invigorating "You can do it!" encouragement in cards, letters and email messages...filled with the faith that we'll make it through the under-funding storm. I know we will, too!

Thank you, Donors, for your unfailing support and for believing in me...that I will do my best with your investment in our future together. You support the folks who write to Fair Shake for information...and you also support me. Your selfless act of sharing gives me energy! Your kindness, in all forms, helped me through this challenging month.

I'm glad I put the offer out for the Pell info and SBA in the last newsletter; I received more than 650 requests for information! I had around 300 messages in my 'inbox' all month and I sent more than 250 replies each week. Whew! I'll certainly keep you posted when I hear more about the Pell Grant ~ :)

Many things will change to accommodate my switch from working at Fair Shake for 70 – 80 hours each week to working the long hours in the new/old biz. For starters, I am shifting to two full days each week at Fair Shake. If you write with questions, please be patient! My responses will likely be more brief, too. Sorry.

I'm grateful and honored to be connected with you all and excited about what comes next. Transitions are tough! (I know I don't have to tell you this ~ :) They are easier to manage when we've got support. This is something we do for each other. There is no product or service that replaces authentic care. Thank you, everyone! Ubuntu!

2023 EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

According to Forbes, it will be "The Great Rebalance" The magazine reports that the top industries for job seekers in 2023 are web-based commerce, artificial intelligence, restaurants and hospitality. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, new and growth areas for jobs through 2031 include managers: general and operations; software and website developers, wind turbine service techs, all medical fields and continued growth for service and hospitality (hopefully the wages will grow for these industries, too!). And from a variety of sources I found these employer interests: a desire for better soft skills in all areas of the workforce, and possibly paid leave opportunities for frontline workers (that would be amazing)

A Gartner report from earlier in the year states that "eighty-two percent of employees say it's important that their organizations see them as a whole person, rather than simply an employee."

I believe this was always the case, but no one had ever asked the hard-workers for their opinion on this matter.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION: “JUSTICE TECH”

A catchy new phrase has started to capture the imagination of folks preparing for release. “JUSTICE TECH”, like most types of tech, promises all manner of resources and the things that we all want most: freedom, creativity, agency and self-determination. Also, like most types of tech, the “catch” is that you get an ‘app’ on your phone that tracks you, gets your contacts, nudges you, captures your photos, and shares all of this data with other apps, and with, well, everyone who is willing to pay for it.

They also share your information with parole, probation, the medical industry ‘for you’re your own good’. David Graeber (RIP) called this ‘managerial feudalism,’ George Orwell called it “Big Brother”, and in 1967, Richard Brautigan called them “machines of loving grace.”

Just as we can be overly optimistic about events (and, subsequently, extremely disappointed by reality), we can also fall prey to minimizing the costs of a “free” app when it offers a tool that we want to use. It’s hard to weigh the hidden costs of giving corporations (who share the data with the government) access to our contacts, our location, and even other apps in our phone. Be careful! This does not mean you should deny the services or offers, but educate yourself first to prepare for the full cost of engagement. You’re an adult; you don’t need to get burned to learn to use a hot pad ~ :)

HOLIDAY BONUS: YOU’RE IT!

by Tom Asacker. (He told me that he hopes you’ll share your reflections about this piece.)

Have you ever heard the expression, “You’re It!”? It’s a pithy way of communicating that you, as an individual human being, are not a separate entity. Rather, like a ripple in a lake, you are a temporary manifestation of a much greater, transcendent whole; i.e., God, the universal consciousness, the life force, the infinite spirit.

And that’s absolutely true!

However, it is also true that, right now, you are the unique energy of that whole as flesh, blood, memories, and feelings. The pain you feel in your arthritic hip is you. The anxiety you experience when meeting new people is you. The tears that well up in your eyes when you see a suffering animal? That’s you, too!

But there is one thing that is definitely not you.

A little more than five years ago, the Universe gave me a little shove—“Tag, Tom! You’re it!”—which sent me flying. When I landed, my quadriceps tendon was detached from my kneecap. The “it” of that experience was painful and the healing process was long, but “it” wasn’t “me.” It was simply a happening.

I didn’t realize that “it” wasn’t me until much later during a follow up visit with my surgeon. I had spent many painful months, stretching and working out to get my leg to do what I wanted it to do. It wasn’t back to how it was before the injury—it never would be—but it was all I had. It was me, with the holes in my kneecap, internal sutures, scarred tissue and various memories, and I was going to make the best of it.

I was sitting on the examination table in my doctor's office, and he was at his desk writing something (most likely illegibly), when he put down his pen and waved me over. As I stepped off of the table and walked towards him, I noticed that his gaze was fixated on my leg. Finally, as I stood at his desk waiting for his instructions, he looked up into my eyes and said something unexpected and life-changing.

"Why were you limping?"

"What?! I wasn't limping," I replied, somewhat defiantly.

"Oh yes you were! And knock it off!"

And that was it. That was his expert diagnosis and prescription, and pretty much the extent of my visit. I walked out of his office that day, and I have never limped again. Why not? Because he made it crystal clear to me that I was not that incident—I was not my past—and I needed to let it go and stop dragging it around with me.

When I limped over to his desk, for that very last time, I couldn't help myself because I wasn't aware that I was doing it. It was an unconscious reaction to my trauma. The happening had been wired into my memories and stored in my cells, such that my nervous system was doing me. Sure, the happening wasn't me, but the effects certainly were.

That is, until they weren't.

The same is true of all experiences. The effects are you—the feelings, reactions, and unconscious beliefs. But you are not, nor have you ever been, the happenings. This is a difficult distinction to feel. You are not the "it" of your upbringing, no matter what your feelings may be telling you. You are not the "it" of your past decisions, whether thoughtful or impulsive. And you are certainly not the "it" of your environment, no matter what the people around you are telling you, or have told you, about who they think you are or will be. Let me try to be crystal clear.

All of your experiences have had an effect on you, just like my slip and fall has had an effect on me. But they are not you, and you do not have to limp your way through life. You just have to become aware, like I did, that you are not your past. You are not what you have done and you are not what has happened to you. Once that becomes clear, once you see the absolute truth of that statement, you can get on with the hard and life-affirming work of healing and growth.

Tom would love to hear what you think of this piece. If you're willing to share your thoughts, I'll organize them, and send them to Tom. At the end of the month, I'll assemble the reflections and Tom's response together and offer them in the next newsletter. If you like this exercise, we could build on this in 2023; a mini learning-society!

To share your reflection, please start a new message to me. Write "you're it" in the subject line and your reflection in the body of the message. I'll pass it on to Tom!

END-OF-YEAR QUOTES:

“Remember: Small changes lead to lasting breakthroughs.” - Mark Manson

“You are a function of what the whole universe is doing in the same way that a wave is a function of what the whole ocean is doing.” - Alan Watts

“Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go. They merely determine where you start.” - Nido Qubein

“The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot.”- Michael Altshuler

“Just when the caterpillar thought her life was over, she became a butterfly.” – unknown

“Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?” - Charles Bukowski

“You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you.” - Eckhart Tolle

“Last year's resolution was to lose 20 pounds by Christmas. Only 30 pounds to go.” - unknown

"Every year you make a resolution to change yourself. This year, make a resolution to be yourself." - unknown

All the best to you in 2023!

Ubuntu and gratitude!! ~ sue

Fair Shake PO Box 63 Westby, WI 54667

As always, when you are released, remember to find support in your phone-gizmo:
2-1-1 Fairshake.net HelpYourselfTherapy.com FindHelp.org

Newsletters are available at FairShake.net for your family and friends to read or print.