

The Imperceptible Peak

January 23, 2007 by [lifeshifting](#)

“... *So subtle, slight, or gradual as to be barely perceptible*” ...Yup, that is exactly what it was—imperceptible. I’m not sure that I use that cool word very often, or even appropriately, but this time it fits. Last night I had a rare and miraculous moment: I had an experience of what all the gurus call “peak performance”. And I almost missed it. Yikes. Here’s the skinny: I’m a yoga practitioner who has been taking hatha and vinyasa yoga classes for about 2 years with some regularity. Now truth be told, “some regularity” means two, sometime three times a week, but not every day or even every other day. Still, I have steadily progressed in my practice over this time period, becoming more flexible and attuned to my body, my breath, to my core sense of “self”—whatever that might mean (see blog #1 October 06).

It has been a wonderful journey both physical and spiritual. But last night something special occurred: I did a handstand. Yup, for me a first. It lasted perhaps 30 seconds, just a few deep breaths, but I stood on my hands, legs and body straight up in the air—away from the wall. No leaning. In the moment that it happened, I was actually a little shocked. It was as if time stood still and I stepped outside myself and watched. My mind kept saying (I could hear the words loud and clear): “You can’t do this”. But I was doing it. And then it was over. I was back on the floor, up in down-dog pose, on with the class. The moment had passed, and the momentary elation, doubt and ecstasy, dissolved. Did it even happen?

Now, as always, when I decide to write about an experience of mine or a client here in this space, I pose the question: what does this have to do with “Life-shifting”? As I pondered this question—and I have been pondering it deeply because it feels profound—I was reminded of a good friend who shared a similar experience with me recently...but I barely noticed. My friend is an artist, a whimsical creator of abstract and conceptual works—sculpture, video, paintings—in a variety of media. He has had a few successful “showings” in galleries and won a couple of competitions, but has never been shown in a big name gallery or a well-known art venue or museum. Last week when we had coffee and were catching up on our lives, he mentioned that one of his projects was to be exhibited at the Whitney Museum in New York City. He pronounced this so matter-of-factly that I barely noticed. Yet, I did hear him and I was frankly flummoxed at his casual, almost dismissive way of expressing this obviously BIG DEAL. His work was to be shown at the Whitney! This is a world-class venue where thousands of people were likely to see his work. Granted he is not getting his own show there and will be seen as part of a broader project with other artists...but STILL! It is clearly a peak moment for his career: he has hit a milestone. Yet, he didn’t seem to be particularly impressed or even acknowledging of this truth. He simply shared the information and went right on talking about what’s next for him.

Me too. I came home last night after my little “peak” moment on the yoga mat, and even as I was feeling a sense of fullness and satisfaction at reaching this new level in my

practice, I was very much focused on what I still need to learn, what I still haven't accomplished....thinking: there is still a "flying crow" in my future (don't ask!).

So here is the question for "life-shifting": how can we know when or how to "*shift our lives into high gear*" if we don't recognize the peak experiences that are already occurring in our day-to-day lives? Maybe most of us are already in HIGH GEAR!! (I think so, actually) The obvious problem here is the paradox of self-perception: we are ALREADY ENGAGED IN LIFE-SHIFTING every day, with every breath—we just don't notice it! As human beings we are constantly in varying stages of self-renewal. Every cell in our body is renewed or regenerated over a seven year period. Every human endeavor reflects a cycle of beginning, growth, expansion, peak, decline and death. Yet, our tendency in the Western culture is to focus our attention obsessively on the expansion or growth aspects of the cycle. In fact, we tend to ignore the peak moments, abhor the decline, and deny the death moment altogether. We like to believe that life is a straight-line heading up into the stratosphere, yet the deeper truth about all aspects of life is that nature works in cycles. At some deep level, of course, we know this, but we tend to forget; we actually choose to forget. Hence, we are all set up for considerable amounts of disappointment, a tendency towards depression and endless feelings of failure.

My artist friend and I are products of our over-achieving, productivity-obsessed culture, where nothing short of David Beckham-style success is worthy of notice. Not true. We need to stop, breathe, experience and CELEBRATE our peak moments in life, no matter how seemingly imperceptible or slight. They—and we—are worthy of our attention, our recognition, our gratitude. Success, our success, is BUILT INTO THE SYSTEM. We only have to notice.

So where have you simply passed by your peak? Where have you declared yourself a "failure" because you haven't achieved "world-class" (whatever the hell that means—on TV?) performance? Take a look close to home—at your hobbies, at your job, at your spouse? Many people come to me after leaving a relationship or in a painful moment in a relationship and they start our session by saying: "my relationship is a failure." "Oh, really," I ask. "How long have you been together?" Sometimes the answer is many, many years...but the point would hold even if only for a few months: *just having a loving relationship is a success!* What about the amazing experience of just coming together and falling in love? Have you celebrated that recently? What about the peak moment of having children or moving in together or building a home? Have you noticed, experienced and celebrated those peak moments together? Apply this same principle to ANYTHING else in your life.

Bottom line: we are having peak experiences of our own amazing essence all the time. Our challenge is to stop, breathe, and take it in. Celebrating success is a key principle of "Life-shifting".

Remember: we are all miracles in action....and that, my friend, should never become imperceptible.

Ok, so now go out and stand on your head!!! (ha