



JOY VS Pleasure

Last November I wrote about creating the happiest, healthiest and highest performing versions of us by adopting the behaviors associated with becoming a Corporate Athlete. Fundamental to achieving this life and performance enhancing goal is the need for us to nurture and optimize our spiritual health. When we talk about our spiritual health, we are not necessarily talking about religion, but for some, prayer and other religious related engagements may be important. This dimension of wellness is supported by bringing the pursuit of joy into focus.

A number of years ago a priest astutely asked our congregation what five dimensions of our lives gave us the most amount of joy. The conversation for my wife and I and those around us consistently gravitated towards five people. Then he asked us if we understood the difference between joy vs pleasure. A little more dialogue resulted in us fundamentally agreeing that joy was more associated with people and pleasure was associated with stuff. And finally he asked, “What % of your day, week, month and year is spend in pursuit of Joy vs Pleasure?” The answer for most of us was clear, we all wanted more joy, but were focused disproportionately on pleasure. Light bulbs came on for all of us.

David Brooks in his book titled “Road Too Character” puts it another way. He talks about the pursuit of resume vs eulogy virtues. Resume virtues are about accomplishment and accumulation (pleasure), while eulogy virtues are about legacy and being of service to others (joy). While the pursuit of resume virtues in of themselves is not a bad thing, he suggests that there is an opportunity for many of us to dial up our pursuit of eulogy virtues.

So why do I bring this up in the context of us becoming Corporate Athletes? It is because we as business leaders all too often double down on our businesses during difficult and turbulent times, and this results in us spending less time with friends and family. We consciously or unconsciously shift from joy to pleasure and over time this drains our spiritual bank account and can even put important relationships at risk. COVID has required many of us to take stalk and more closely define our tribe (cohort) and for many of us we have only allowed people that give us joy into this limited group. Personally, no one who has caused friction in my life is part of my COVID tribe and that has in some ways enhanced my joy. It doesn't mean that I don't still love some of the people that aren't in my tribe, it just means that I am now loving them from a distance. This has freed up time and cerebral energy and has allowed me to be more focused on my joy generators and other business interests that require me to be at my best.

As you think about your joy vs pleasure recipe, it is important to remember that if you want to be a maximalist (awesome) at anything, by definition you need to be a minimalist (less awesome) at other things. It is not possible to be fantastic at everything. James Lawrence (The Iron Cowboy) says it best, "There is no success outside the home that compensates for failure within". What pleasure's will you dispense with in order to experience more joy? Figuring out your Joy recipe is an important step in ensuring that you Burn Bright vs Burn Out.

If you, your leadership team or organization want to explore improving your sleep and performance or getting everyone off the Burn Out path and back onto a Burn Bright one just give me a call.

Wishing you a life of Abundance

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