



*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*

October 2011

Tips for “Adjusting Your Sails”

People don't resist change, they resist loss. In adapting to change, we succeed to the extent that we can face loss and make new choices.

- 1) It is not only OK, but it is *important*, to mourn the loss. Even if the loss is simply a habit that is no longer good for us or is something significant like a job loss, divorce or death, we need to be able to mourn it. We have to be able to gripe and grouse, rage and rail, or collapse in a depressed puddle, because that is what will allow us to move on.
- 2) Find someone with whom you can share your sadness, hopes, and fears, as well as bounce ideas and get feedback. This can be a friend or a paid professional, but you want someone who will provide encouragement as well as a good butt-kicking when you need it.
- 3) Get medical help if you need it. Meds can do wonderful things to help a person function through a painful loss. Strong people recognize when they need help.
- 4) Make the choice to be happy. Studies have shown that people who *choose* to be happy actually *are* happier. Why? Because that one fundamental choice creates a cascade of other choices in terms of attitudes, skills, jobs, relationships and life styles.
- 5) With new eyes, do an inventory of yourself – what is important to you, what you are good at and what others value about you. Then think about where and how you can find that “sweet spot” where these three intersect.
- 6) And lastly, give it time. Don't expect instant results. You can still reach your destination – but perhaps in a different way, with new eyes, new experiences, and a new appreciation of the fine specimen of humanity that you are! ☐ cmp

Adjusting Your Sails

By Cathy Perme

Colin Duggleby was one of the best leaders that I ever met. As CEO of a mid-sized company in the UK, he had a depth of wisdom and compassion that I have found rare when working with top executives. He was 50 years old and on top of the world – leading a company, staying very fit through running, and recently married to the love of his life.

When doctors diagnosed his persistent stomach pain not as an ulcer, but as a very aggressive, incurable form of cancer, he was shocked to hear that he had only four to nine months to live. Can you imagine it? He was at the top of his game, and the game was being called.

Colin was mad. I heard from colleagues that he was having a difficult time accepting his fate; it was hard for them to comfort him. When I talked to him on the phone one day, he voiced terrible frustration about his “death sentence.”

I had a plaque hanging in my office that had a lot of meaning for me. It was the quote by James Dean, the American actor. “You can't control the direction of the wind, but you can adjust your sails.” On a whim, I wrapped it up and sent it to Colin with a note. That was the last contact I had with him.

A few months after his death, I got a thank-you letter from his widow, Valerie. She said that the gift and the message on the plaque were significant to Colin, and helped him to focus on making the the most of the time he *did* have. That plaque now hangs in the hospice where he died, for others to see and appreciate.

In many ways, large or small, we may not get what we want or deserve. A slow economy, continuing job losses, ongoing mergers and acquisitions, health problems -- all are prevailing winds over which we may have little control. Compounded by family or relationship concerns, these may seem overwhelming.

Colin's story reminds us that even in the direst of circumstances, we can make choices. We can: (1) choose to act like victims, (2) choose to fight back, or (3) choose to steer our ship differently.

I hope that Colin and Valerie had some wonderful moments together before he died. His legacy continued in the company that he led, with the annual Colin Duggleby Award, given to an employee who best exemplified Colin's ability to appreciate people and care deeply about mission and values. May he rest in peace. He is fondly remembered. ☐

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James Dean

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