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Today is a rare day. I sit at the study table in my yoga studio with some time at hand to write this newsletter and jot down my priorities for 2022. I was chatting with a friend about how excited I am for 2022. Personally for me 2021 was a year of immense personal growth and like all journeys where one grows, I was taking two steps forward and three steps back :) But the task is to go on. To live our crazy lives as authentically, drawing from as many lessons, as we can.

A couple of weeks back, I was talking to a group of people on the power of Intention and the Need for Failure and the lessons it can teach you. I have never been a public speaker, I suffer from immense stage fright and my inside are revolting anytime i am on a stage - real or virtual. That changed a bit after I completed by first teacher training and taught my first class as a "teacher". Since then, I have not really lost the fear of public speaking, but around topics that are close to my hear, I have managed to overcome it and speak with conviction.

Usually I think about Saraswati before i speak. As the Goddess of creativity and speech, I ask her to hold my hand as I step forward and share what I have to say. It has worked all times. Except this last time when I was presenting on Intention and Failure. I lost my voice - I could not find the words my mind was looking for, I was struggling with examples and analogies -stuff that I have rehearsed. I felt a hot rush of embarrassment come over me. When that session ended I held my breath for a while and as I exhaled, I wanted to vanish.

Weirdly, I was wearing a Saraswati pendant and later that evening, I lost the chain and the pendant in a cab. I felt abandoned by the energy that the Goddess embodies. The weekend that followed was a hard one and the week even harder. My dear friend, Aishwarya, held me tenderly as I emerged from that debris of self defeat and blame. She asked me to focus on the topics I spoke on to live with Intent and to be ok with failure, she assured me that the energy of speech & creativity would never leave me.

This whole story to tell you that sometimes everything fails- all your careful laid plans come to naught, things are always changing - the nature of this Universe is change. And Change is hard. But you gotta keep moving. That's the only way you learn. Here's something that resonated with me, a text by *Wendy MacNaughton & Courtney E. Martin*.

Feel all the things. Feel the hard things. The inexplicable things, the things that make you disavow humanity's capacity for redemption. Feel all the maddening paradoxes. Feel overwhelmed, crazy. Feel uncertain. Feel angry. Feel afraid. Feel powerless. Feel frozen.

And then FOCUS.

Pick up your pen. Pick up your paintbrush. Pick up your damn chin. Put your two calloused hands on the turntables, in the clay, on the strings. Get behind the camera. Look for that pinprick of light. Look for the truth (yes, it is a thing—it still exists.)

Focus on that light. Enlarge it. Reveal the fierce urgency of now. Reveal how shattered we are, how capable of being repaired. But don't lament the break. Nothing new would be built if things were never broken. A wise man once said: there's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in. Get after that light.

This is your assignment.

I thank you as always for lending me a kind ear & welcoming me into your minds and hearts.

Nayana

The Joy of ONE THING AT A TIME



I am one of those creatures that wants to do everything. And I want to do it all at the same time. So, I'll be cleaning the carpet while listening to the news of the day and thinking about what to bake in the afternoon and maybe a part of my brain is also devoted to going over the sequence I will be teaching later in the day. Even when I take time out to sit and think about what I want to work on, I will think about everything all at once - at times it becomes so paralysing, that I often achieve nothing from that list. You might be feeling a little bit more of it, if you have been working from home over the last two years. You could be on a work call and emptying the washing machine at the same time. As efficient as multi-tasking is, there are now many studies that debunk the whole "Get more from your time by **doing** more." philosophy. As someone who works in the field of wellbeing, I need my mind, body & breath to be aligned & at rest. But I very rarely gift myself that time of doing one thing (or even doing nothing) at a time.

Here are a few things I am trying that I would love to share with you :

Less is More : "When you are speaking speak, when you are listening, listen, when you are driving the car drive...Do something until you are done. After you are done, then you can move on to the next thing". *Rob Brandsma*.

Do Nothing For Half a Day : One, you will realise, the world doesn't stop spinning when you stop for a while. Two, you realise, how important it is to leave your mind fallow for a bit.

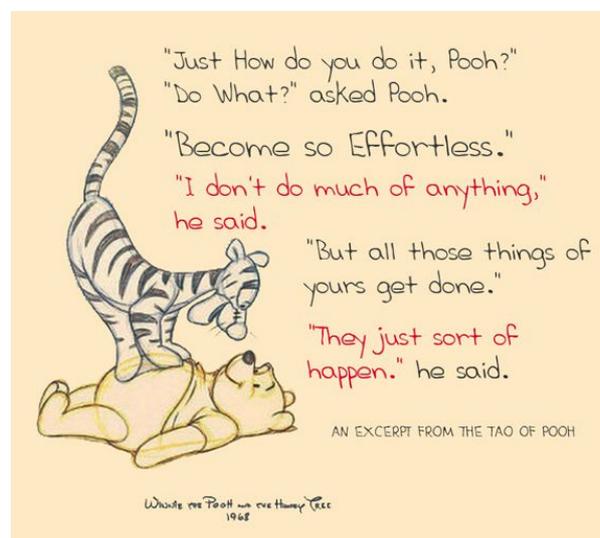
Step Out : Work from a café every now & then - take yourself out on a coffee date - hear ppl chatter, hear the barista machine buzzing, listen to the notes of soft jazz in the background.

Switch off that notification : Turn off the sound on your email & whatsapp. Maybe dare to turn off your phone on the weekends - let people who need to know, know and take your eyes off that phone

Practice Focus : Pick up a skill that requires you to focus. Even writing by hand instead of typing things out will train focus better. I love Pranayama - alternate nostril breathing immediately puts me in the NOW.

Prioritise & Put a Timer : I am learning to do this. Make a list of things that need to get done urgently and move other to the bottom of your list. Then put a timer and dedicatedly do ONE thing for say 30 minutes without ANY distractions.

The Art of Wu-Wei



In Yoga, there is a philosophy of Vairagya and Abhyasa. Very simply : Abhyasa means conscious effort, Vairagya is to let go. In Taoist philosophy there exists a similar concept of **Wu-Wei**. Literally translated it means "**non-action**" or "**non-doing**". It does not mean mindless inactivity, it refers to an effortless state of mind that does not involve excessive struggle and relates to cultivating a state of life where our actions are aligned with the flow of life.

Big words all this!

When I used to be at a corporate job, I'd really treasure the moments of my day which I would dedicate to yoga and yoga learning and reading about life's philosophies. It did not seem like an effort to me, it felt like I was right where I was meant to be.

But now, since this is also my career, I am "**trying too hard**" to get everything right and invariably I have an attitude of "**have to**" instead of "**want to**". You might relate to some of this, there might be some areas of your life that feel so full of effort.

As counter intuitive as it sounds, we can often undermine our goals if we consciously try to achieve them. The point is not to stop trying, but to do it with an attitude of ease.



It means being at peace while engaged in frenetic tasks so that one can carry these out with maximum skill and efficiency. It's like "*being in the zone*" or "*in a state of profound concentration & flow*", "*at one with what we are doing*".

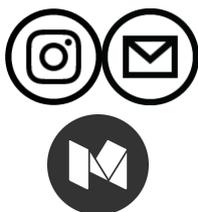
Wu-Wei is closely connected to the Taoist reverence for the natural world. For it means trying to make our behaviour as strive-less or as inevitable as certain natural processes & to ensure that we are swimming with and not against currents.

We are to be like the bamboo that bends in the wind.

It involves *letting go of ideals that we may otherwise try to force too violently onto things*. It invites us instead to respond to the true demands of the situations which tend only to be noticed when we put our own ego-driven plans to one side.

As we stop trying to force our will onto the world — which will do whatever it wants anyway — we begin to practice Wu Wei. It means to choose to act, when it actually makes a difference, instead of tirelessly reacting to that which is outside of our control.

Where can you invite Wu-wei into your life?



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