

Recommended Movie:

Dr. DoLittle. First of all, I want to be clear that I am speaking of the old classic, starring Rex Harrison, and not the disappointing newer version, starring Eddy Murphy.

I have a videotape of this movie and decided to watch it again last night, seeking a bit of encouragement or insight to help me in continuing to be an anomalous person. What I really noticed this time, which somehow had never seemed as obvious before, is that ALL of the main characters are anomalies, but each in a unique way. Each of them seems to survive, however, by being (to some extent or other) oblivious to the fact that he or she is in fact an anomaly. Somehow they never notice that the reason they each encounter the problems they do, is because of the particular ways they are out of step with the world around them. At the same time, it is those

same idiosyncrasies that eventually resolve the situations they face.

The deeper challenge seems to be the task of clinging to one's personal integrity during the first three-fourths of the movie, of holding on and not giving up because somehow you just know that everything's going to turn out okay. Some portions of the movie are so terrible that my first reaction would be to cut them out--but then I would never reach the same conclusion nor would it mean the same thing when I did, if I did cut those scenes out. The bad moments have to be left in, or the good ones won't recognize their perfect time when it comes.

But how? How do I "just know that everything's going to turn out okay"? The answer to that question will probably take quite a few more viewings of this ~~movie and many other movies also.~~

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Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding.

Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed.

Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified.

Recommended Reading

The Three Faces of Mind by Elaine de Beauport. I've read about half of this book so far and look forward to the later chapters dealing with emotional intelligence. The reading is actually not difficult, making the subject equally accessible to people who have never been to college. What might make the book slower reading, is the amazing volume of insight and understanding the book contains--all of which is aimed at self-empowerment.

Considering the many different definitions of just what our emotions really are, I was thankful to finally find one that makes sense. In early comments about emotions, the author describes emotions as simply being the mind's response to its ability or inability to satisfy its needs. My interpretation of this is that the focus in dealing with emotions therefore shifts from questions of expression or repression to questions of alternative ways of satisfying needs.

Instead of berating myself for not being perpetually happy, I choose to accept whatever emotion I feel and understand that the emotion wants to tell me just exactly what I need. If I can find a way to satisfy the need, the emotion will change also.

More generally, the author presents in practical accessible ways, ten different ways that intelligence is stored within our bodies and brains. To the extent that we can develop all ten intelligences within ourselves, our potential for creativity, productivity, and wholeness increases exponentially. Give yourself time to really soak up the insights of this book and you'll never regret doing so.

Choosing Life

This isn't about choosing life or death, but about the choices which can be made, to receive the life each of us wants to receive. Also included are the ways in which we each affect others' choices as well as being affected by the choices of others. This article may offer some insights and discussion, but obviously will not be able to say all that can be said on this very difficult topic.

What inspired this article was the recent event of someone being placed into a residential facility for people who have been judged to be unable to care for themselves.

The first thing to note about this difficult subject is that there is no agreement. No matter what choice anyone makes, numerous people will disagree very strongly. It is all the more important, therefore, that everyone in the position of making such a decision find the choice, in which they believe so much, that they would stand by their decision no matter who disagrees or how strongly.

Central to this endless debate, are difficult questions: what is life, what is death, how wonderful or terrible are they, how much should they be avoided or embraced, and whose life or death is more important? No easy answers.

As with everything else, my vote comes down squarely on the side of self-determination. That is the choice I would stand by no matter who disagreed or how strongly. I also understand, however, that I may be one of a very small minority within the human race who would choose this position so resolutely.

The current general pattern of life allows most to be fairly oblivious to the total expanse of their physical journey between spiritual

**"Do you
protest that
an auto factory
produces cars?**

No?

**The world is filled
with victimizing
situations.**

**If you want there
to be fewer victims,
you'll have to start
sabotaging the
factory."**

existence and spiritual existence. Children are generally grouped in one area (schools or daycare centers), adults grouped in another area (some aspect of the business world), and the very elderly somewhere else. Children's exposure to the adult world they will enter is limited, as is the adult's exposure to the very different world of generally diminishing abilities. It seems that one of the reasons Change usually catches us by surprise is because we spend so little time with those engaged in other aspects of it.

Someone who is poor may suddenly win the lottery and not understand the attitudes and breadth of vision required to maintain one's integrity in such a foreign context. Someone who has been very wealthy for a very long time may suddenly be faced with homelessness and not know where to begin. Quite often I see adults shielding children from the ethical, economic, political, social, and sexual challenges of the world in which we live and thereby only condemning their children to the same internal struggles, with which humanity has wrestled for centuries.

Another friend with whom I discussed this matter described an extremely elderly person who had fallen and due to very advanced age, a broken hip joint, and a small case of undetected cancer of the brain, was unable to get up again. The person was removed to a hospital and died a few months later. My response was that I would rather have been undiscovered so that I could die within my own home, rather than in a strange place of strange people with nothing but my awareness left to me.

I have heard descriptions of how "nice" some of these residential facilities are and I do not fault the staff of such facilities for trying, nor do I wish to condemn those who have chosen such facilities and are genuinely happy with them. What I most specifically object to, however, is how analogous these descriptions are to the selection of a good kennel for a family pet.

Whenever it was necessary to place my dog in a local kennel because I could not take him with me on a particular out-of-state trip, the kennel operators made sure I understood

how faithfully he would be well-fed and exercised. The better kennels suggested I bring a blanket or a favorite toy so that he would have something familiar close by.

People should never be treated like pets. Period. Yet I readily concede that this has often been the case throughout human history and to a large extent still is the case. Women and children have most often been classified as property, but the elderly, certain races, and people with disabilities have also fallen into this category. It was not so long ago that Gay and Lesbian people were classified as being sick and in need of severe psychiatric treatments. In an era when most believed that "the doctor's always right," many well-meaning family members signed the papers for people who were different to undergo medical and psychiatric treatments, which most people now consider to be barbaric. Thank God! (that we now consider such things to be barbaric).

I am not in a position to decide for others, whether or not someone should be placed within a residential care facility. I only know that I would rather be thrown off of a high mountain cliff than ever have such a thing happen to myself. I am not afraid of death and I see no value in sustaining physical life beyond anything I consider to be sufficient quality. If I've had my adventures, learned a few things, and touched a few lives, let me move on with dignity when the time comes. Don't let me linger in some sort of "undead" state, trapped in a physical world in which I cannot participate and prevented from the liberation of entering the spiritual realm again. Don't leave me "under house arrest" for decades during which the only anticipation is eventual death. Don't deny me death, just because you fear it yourself or because you resist the challenge of living without me.

Inevitably the time will come, when whatever work I have begun will need to be carried on by others, if the work is to continue at all. I hope that I will be gracious enough to surrender those causes I call my own, to new leadership and different methods than I would personally ever choose. I hope that I will be mature enough to understand that the new leadership will in fact repeat some of my mistakes, since no one has ever been

successful in passing on one hundred percent of his or her understanding to successive generations. I do hope that when my time of departure comes, sad though it may be, I will have given those who loved me enough memories by which to carry on and by which to write the next chapters of human experience and growth.

A couple of months ago, I videotaped the one-hundredth episode of my television show, "Sister Who Presents...". Who ever thought I'd get that far? Certainly not me. Yet it has never escaped my attention, during the first few moments of every production session, from the very first to the most recent, that I was engaging in something that has both a beginning and an end. I knew during the very first videotaping that there would someday be a last--I just don't know when that will be.

I knew when I first drove to a very small town an hour east of Denver, Colorado and purchased a very small longhair dachshund puppy who was only eight weeks old, that I would outlive him. In spite of how much this strong-willed dog pushed my patience and self-control to its limits, I loved him dearly and dreaded the thought of ever losing him. I did wonder though, considering how very special he was to me, just how it would someday happen. When the day came, no one recognized it. An uneventful morning changed abruptly to two hours of panic and ended with three days of tears. There's still a deep ache in my heart every time I think of him and I can think of very little I would not give to have him back.

Yet somehow I need to be okay with the fact that things with beginnings also have ends, if I am to truly appreciate the potential and power of the present moment. Without obsessing about every detail and holding it so tightly that I strangle it, I need to see the preciousness of the moment and the life which I am continually creating and shaping.

I need to run along with my toy plane held overhead and be ready to let go when the wind beckons the tiny wings higher than I can reach. As it soars out of sight, I need to remember what it felt like against my fingers and I need to let a little of my heart go with it.

Most especially, more than the moment of parting, I need to remember the moments shared together. Whenever I have gathered with friends at memorial services, many have spoken of

celebrating the loved one's life. The memories shared with the others gathered have always been beautiful and without exception have never included any weeks, months, or years of confinement within any residential care facility. Instead, the memories have been of unconfined moments of laughter, of wild adventures, and of shared accomplishments. If these are the aspects of life we value, why would we require anyone to live with anything less?

So what actual advice could I possibly give, to such a deep and diverse subject as maintaining quality within life experience? I don't know. All that comes to mind at the moment is what I hear so many others say, that we need to talk about all of these things long before we are ever required to act. No matter how uncomfortable, the words need to be said, the understanding needs to be communicated, and most importantly the final wishes need to be respected.

Here as well, I find there is no general agreement. Whose wishes should be respected--those of the deceased or those who are paying for the funeral? How important is it anyway? To me, it's extremely important. I shudder at the thought of all that I have lived for, being brushed aside or even derided by those gathered mournfully to "remember me." If it is their own illusion of me and not the person whom I really was, which they wish to "remember" and for which they wish to mourn, let them have their own private religious service somewhere else. I want the final gathering in my name to reflect as accurately as possible the person I really was, the things in which I genuinely believed, and the creative life which I had the courage to live. I would hate to spiritually attend my own funeral and not be able to recognize the person about whom the people gathered were speaking.

From start to finish, it is my own life, which I choose to live. I can only pray that there are enough people who will respect this choice, when the work of Sister Who is finally completed. May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.