

## Moments of Insight

“A moment's insight is sometimes worth a lifetime's experience. “

– Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., American jurist

“So, what do you think?” I was almost afraid to ask.

“These are much better,” he said at last.

It was my second meeting with the new lifestyles editor at the newspaper. I was pitching an idea for a self-esteem and personal empowerment column. The previous editor had little interest in the idea. The new editor was mildly interested and asked for some samples. The initial response was lukewarm but, unlike his predecessor, this editor asked for a rewrite and even provided some suggestions as to how to “ground” the columns and make them more applicable to the average reader. I immediately rewrote the sample columns and resubmitted them to him.

“Now I need you to write 10 more,” he said. “If you’re up to it.”

“Not a problem,” I said, even though the idea of writing 10 more columns seemed daunting. I knew what he was doing: he wanted to see if I had enough workable ideas to maintain the concept. Also, he had to be certain that I was truly committed to the idea and willing to do the work. There was little sense launching a new column in the paper that would run for a couple months and stall out because the columnist ran out of ideas or ran short of ambition.

I had the 10 additional columns back to him within a couple weeks.

Did he have faith in me? I don’t know. He hardly knew me at the time, but he did recognize a worthy idea and encouraged me to pursue it, and for me that was life-changing.

I remember the column idea came to me in a moment of insight. After reading a few books by self-esteem gurus, it suddenly occurred to me that I too had something worthwhile to say.

All of us experience moments of insight. I think it happens when – for whatever the reason – we’re able to remove or temporarily change a perceptual filter and see the world differently.

Like a radio suddenly tuned into a frequency, a moment of insight is a burst of clarity where before there was only static. It is the proverbial “A-ha!” moment. It may provide us with an instant of discernment, set us on a new path or maybe turn our entire world upside-down.

Most of us are so set in our beliefs that we're not open to insights. Something has to happen to temporarily suspend our beliefs and open us up to new possibilities. To put it another way, we need to get out of our own way – to change our vantage point. Unless we're able to do so, we'll remain forever shackled to a fixed way of thinking and being. Life becomes an endless loop, playing itself out day after day, year after year – boring, tedious and predictable.

We can become so ensnared in old, habitual ways of thinking and being that we become blind to all the possibilities life holds for us. The more willing we are to re-evaluate our thinking and delve deeply into our motivations, the more open we become to gifted insights.

Insights are a flash of light on a dark night showing us where we are and helping us to find the best route home. Insights are the instigators of change but only if we honour and respect them. An insight without action or investigation fades away and is soon forgotten. If we don't seize the insight and use it as a guide to self-actualization, we soon lose the knowledge.

Some self-esteem experts say that insights are a connection to our higher or intuitive self. If we bring awareness to moments of insight, they occur more often and more profoundly to us.

It was a defining moment when the editor agreed that I did appear to have something worthwhile to say. When I took action, the insight became a life-changing reality. When I committed my life to change I was actually committing myself to a life of greater self-esteem.

When acknowledged, moments of insight can direct our lives onto new paths born of illuminated insight and expanded awareness. Sustaining these insights requires action. Without the inertia of commitment, we are certain to slip quickly back into our comfort zone.

Sometimes defining moments can only be viewed in retrospect. Though we may have missed the insight in the busyness of everyday living, we can still find the lesson waiting for us in memory. Through reflection I have come to many realizations and understandings. Had I realized the lesson in the moment of its unfolding, it may have helped me to sidestep a number of challenging issues in my life. I gain solace from knowing that the lesson and the gift is still mine.

Take a moment to consider the defining moments in your life. Can you see how they've taken you in new and exciting directions? If you're having trouble finding a defining moment, it may be because you've been living your life in a state of conformity – influenced by fear.

Anish Kapoor, an Indian-born British sculptor, once declared, "Re-investing in one's own little moments of insight is very important."

Be open to moments of insight and actively search for them through reflection. Moments of insight offer us the opportunity to bring greater awareness into our lives and in doing so grow in our self-esteem and personal empowerment. Over the course (and years) of writing 400 columns, I have captured and shared hundreds of insights. I believe that insights are a vital component of personal growth and evolution but only if we recognize and act upon them.