

Genius

I used to be a genius. But age is a terrible thing. I don't mean time has worn away my faculties. I mean time has given me a better perspective of myself. I can sense progress on my long and arduous road to maturity when I look back to my younger days and see a clueless dimwit whose company was graciously endured by his elders. And I was gently blessed by a loving God who never leaves home without his sense of humor.

Working with men and women these past few years helped me to see the same shortcomings in myself that I saw in others. When I was about to ask, "Why did you do *that*?" I'd often remember my misdeeds and witness my human frailty played out before me in another person's movie.

Life is a struggle for most people, although some of us learn early how to make living look easy. A young man I evidently impressed once asked me to be his Life Coach. I told him he would have to wait until I had lived all my days and was at death's door before I'd know enough to offer any trustworthy advice.

He brought it up again, saying he wanted help in avoiding some of life's storms. I put a twinkle in my eye and told him to pray to Barnabas, the patron saint who holds forth against hail storms and other unpredictables. He laughed and said he got my point. I wasn't sure he had.

When I was a young man my fellow Spark Plugs in the Jaycees were infatuated with what I think they called Thought Patterning. The technique discouraged negative thinking, and there was far more emphasis on positive thoughts as a route to success. You kept your mind on getting a great job, for example, and it somehow came your way, because imagining success motivated you to accomplish little deeds that added up to big results. Of course, we were young and had a narrow understanding of success. We wanted money, frankly, more than we wanted to find a purpose or to build a life upon our strengths. I was nearly forty years of age before I began to see that real success could

happen only when I dug deep in order to know myself, then set reasonable goals and worked toward them. What I labored for was just as important. My goals weren't always worthwhile. Sometimes they were selfish and benefited no one else.

I'll admit Thought Patterning made some sense to me in those years. That was before I learned I couldn't control the future. I might try to accomplish many things, but the results were often out of my control. That took a while to sink in.

Of course, the idea of thinking your way to success is fraught with controversy. You may not be surprised to learn that billions of people don't believe you can have what you want by simply imagining it.

On Amazon's website, a book that promised astounding career results was dealt this comment by an unhappy buyer: "The publisher of this book should have their right to publish revoked. A colossal waste of money." But anyone has a right to empty dreams, both publishers and those who would try to achieve their dreams by reading a book.

Somewhere in my young adulthood I also discovered that native ability trumped wishes every time. There are people walking the earth with amazing special talents and I am not one of them. When I finally came across true genius, I was stunned to see how it overshadowed my ordinary abilities. I got over my disappointment, however, and was relieved to finally understand why some men and women comprehended so much more than me and understood ideas so much faster. They are the brilliant ones who see concepts in their mind's eye as clear and bright as jelly beans in a crystal wine glass, while I squint to see meaning as if peering through a glass of day old tea.

Grateful to know my role on earth was not to explain everything to everyone, I settled down to live with my comparative dullness. I began to ask questions, instead of always assuming I knew the answers. That's when I began to get a tiny bit more intelligent. It's been going slowly. I'll never be a real genius. But if I live to be about 111, I might get pretty smart and become a Life Coach.

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