



LEARNING FROM LIFE **By Charlie Badenhop**

The quality of the life we live is based upon the learning we derive from our experiences. I know that for me, it is sometimes easy to feel that “Life has taught me some tough lessons, and the scars do not heal easily.”

At other times it becomes apparent that if I had somehow learned something different from a particular challenging situation the quality of my life would be much more rewarding.

In working with a client struggling with alcoholism, we spent our first session with the client telling me in detail how he had come to live such an unhealthy, debilitating life. In short, he said: “Both my parents were alcoholics, and both of them were physically abusive to me. I grew up never knowing what bad thing would happen next. I learned from my parents that the best way to not have to feel the pain and uncertainty of life was to escape into an altered state of alcohol induced euphoria.” When listening to a client tell such a sad story, it is easy to believe that their situation was all but preordained.

As fate would have it, a week after beginning to work with this client, I went to a business luncheon to hear an inspirational speaker discuss how we can live our life fully, and succeed in times of hardship. Indeed, the speaker was truly inspirational. When the talk was over I waited around to thank him. After introducing myself and thanking him, I asked him how he had come to lead such an exemplary life. He looked around to make sure no one else was listening and in a low voice he said the following: “Both my parents were alcoholics, and both of them were physically abusive to me. I grew up never knowing that bad thing would happen next. I learned from my parents that the worst possible way to deal with the pain and uncertainty of life was to escape into an altered state of alcohol induced euphoria. My parents taught me a difficult but very important lesson. I learned from them that staying present in the moment is the only real chance we have for living a fulfilling life.”

What a truly great example of embodied spirit the motivational speaker offers us. The quality of our life is not dependent on the circumstances we encounter. The quality of our life is dependent on what we learn from the circumstances we encounter. Perhaps the greatest example of this wisdom is present in the life of Nelson Mandela. He is a man that suffered great pain and hardship, and somehow his suffering seasoned his soul in a way that has led him to be compassionate and caring.

In the course of exploring how to live our life more fully, we can consider pondering one question over and over again, “What can I learn from the difficulties I am experiencing that will actually **ADD** to the quality of my life?” At the very least we can begin to entertain the fact that we can derive a wide range of learning from any single circumstance, even, or relationship. When we get the most stuck in life is when we believe that the one thing we did learn is the only thing that can be learned.