

Are You There Yet?

Category General Series

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Are you there yet? Where, you might wonder? This question represents the heart of this article. But first, I should issue the following warning: if you do not like being challenged, if you do not like to engage in soul-searching, if you are a status-quo kind of a person, or if you believe that you are superman or wonder woman and will live well past a hundred years, then this article may prove difficult to read.

As a child, you never thought about death—unless you were touched by the death of a loved one or a close friend. As a teenager and a young adult, you thought you were immortal and the concept of risk was synonymous with a level of coolness. As a middle-age adult, you lived not to die, while everything you did contributed to your certain demise—lack of regular exercise, high fat diet, higher intake of processed and fast foods, excessive drinking, long work hours, long commutes, increasing debt, extreme family feud, and on and on. As a retirement-age adult, you finally realized that life is indeed short, and often wonder what could have been and ponder the wisdom of pursuing a few life aspirations late in the game. And finally, as a golden-age retiree—if you are fortunate to achieve this milestone—rich with wisdom and a lifetime of experiences, you seek individuals who will listen to you and freely receive a few words of life changing advice in the form of valuable stories, words of wisdom, and words of comfort. So, are you there yet? Where, you wonder yet again?

In life we experience many kinds of personal fears. There is the fear of failure, the fear of losing a home—a place of safety, the fear of losing a job—a source of income, the fear of losing a child—a source of joy, the fear of rejection, and the fear of growing old and poor, to name a few. Above all, in the top three at least, there is the fear of death. Most people will admit to this fear—of death. There are many studies that have examined this fear (of death), and while these studies have established a measure of psychological, philosophical, sociological and spiritual connection to this fear, my question here has to do less with these connections. When I pose the question—Are you there yet?—I am leading to the ultimate question: Have you accepted the fact that you are going to die someday? And if so, how has this acceptance reshaped your attitude? Has it reshaped your thinking for better or worse?

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Of all the things in life that are certain, it is that everyone will die someday. The good news is that no one knows when he or she will cease.

Death is a natural part of life. As surely as the sun will rise tomorrow morning, everyone will face death sooner or later. The good news is that no one knows when he or she will cease. Why is this good news? If you knew when you would die, you would probably engage in a lot of unspeakable deeds and spend your last day making up for countless misdeeds—life would be too easy and unaccountable; however, not knowing holds each one of us accountable—whether we like it or not. But, knowing and accepting that you are going to die someday is only half of the realization. Reshaping your attitude in a manner that motivates and guides your actions daily is the other half—and this part relates in many

ways to self-respect. This topic (of fear of death) is one that I am studying currently as I work on my new book, *The Top Ten Laws of Self-Respect*, which I hope to publish later this year or early next year.

So, are you there yet? Have you reached that point in your life where you realize and have accepted the fact that you will die someday, and that life on earth will continue without you, just as life persisted before you? If you are there, or already past this point, then what are you doing about it? **What do you do daily or weekly as a result of this realization? Are you living with a worthy purpose? More specifically:**

1. What are you doing to spend more quality time with your wife or husband?
2. Your young children—what plans do you have to spend more time with them? What plans do you have to be a better role model to them?
3. Your parents—do they know that you value them? Are you sure?
4. What are you doing to repair a damaged, but valued friendship? That friendship may be a gateway to overcoming some real obstacles in your future!
5. What are you doing to repair sour relationships with your valued relatives? If you cannot relate with your valued relatives—the ones that stand on principle and that are responsible, why do you think strangers will prove better?
6. What are your plans to strengthen your relationship with that significant other? Will another year of dating solidify your commitment?
7. What are you doing to establish, strengthen or renew your faith in God? Whether you believe in Him or not, you will ultimately find out if He exists—when you die!
8. What about the excessive drinking? When will you address this problem? Your liver is dying a slow death and soon it will stop cooperating! You can count on it.
9. How about the smoking—any plans to give it up for good? The funding for more studies on the ill-effects of smoking has run out.
10. What are you doing to regain control of your health through a healthier diet? There is more than enough research-based information out there that proves the dangers of high sugar foods, high saturated fat, excessive caffeine, Trans fats, and processed foods.
11. How about all that credit card debt? Surely, it will be the least of your concerns if you dropped dead today. However, while you are alive, how much longer will you be a slave to the credit card companies? They are in it for the long haul!
12. What plans do you have to put an end to the abusive relationship you find yourself in? Are you willing to realize that you are worth much more and deserve much better?
13. What are you doing to finally put an end to the abuse suffered at your hands—by your spouse and, perhaps, children? Is your spouse' life worth so little? Is your child no longer the pride and joy of your life?
14. How about those individuals you call friends—the ones who belong to that gang? Are they more important to you than your family? Will they care for your family if anything happens to you?
15. What about your workplace? As a supervisor, does your staff respect you? As a manager, does your team value you? Can they freely come to you knowing you will listen?
16. What are you doing to become a more effective leader in your workplace? Are you honest in your dealings? Are you trusted? Are you prepared to share good news

- and recognize true contributors? Are you also willing to share bad news and take responsibility?
17. What are you doing as a business owner to make your place a better environment to work? Do your employees feel they are treated fairly? Many of these employees will stick with you through thick or thin, if they feel you are fair.
 18. What are your plans to take your business or work experiences and use them to inspire younger adults and professionals eager to learn and do the right things?
 19. What are your plans to teach your children and help them to achieve the same realization that you have achieved?
 20. Finally, what are you doing to exercise your freedom—to live everyday and to pursue a worthy goal or aspiration that will stand well after your life journey is over?

While the fear of death is a normal human emotion, acceptance of death is often difficult. But when you “get there,” you find that it becomes easier to define your purpose and pursue your aspirations with vigor and have fun doing it. American civil rights leader, author and educator, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), is credited with saying, *“There is no power on earth that can neutralize the influence of a high, pure, simple and useful life.”* This from a man born into slavery and a man who endured the death of two wives—the first soon after child birth and the second due to tuberculosis. He—Washington—went on to achieve historical milestones that continue to inspire and benefit millions today. **Are you there yet?**

About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He has been studying the topic of respect since 2004. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master’s degree from RPI. He is a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.