

## WHAT -- ME COMPROMISE?

There are some things I don't compromise on and never have. Then again, there are things I have learned to compromise about, mostly health related.

Until I got ill, I liked to believe I would not compromise with food, health, and so on; instead I felt that I would stick to my guns. Well, that was BS.

One of the imagined defects (and actual benefits) about serious health events is that we have to compromise. I found out that I had no choice, but that does not mean that I was happy about the compromises I had to make. I still had to make them. LOL.

For me, this seriously started in 2016 when I had a small stroke (TIA) and it was discovered (in the process of examining me) that I had had 2-3 silent heart attacks and didn't even realize it. And, after being doped up and wheeled into the operating room, surrounded by folks in green garb and masks, and going through what is called catheterization, it was declared that my condition was inoperable. There was nothing they could do on the operating table, so they backed out of the catheterization and placed no stents.

Bottom line, I had to compromise as there was no other option. The only thing keeping me alive (and this is still true) is diet and exercise, neither of which I was particularly skilled or interested in prior to the event. They told me that three major arteries (including the "widow maker") were not blocked or clogged. They were gone! Instead, some adventitious new arteries had sprung up that were never there before and helping to keep me alive. This was all news to me. LOL.

Suddenly, my diet was reduced to the simplest foods, with no dairy, sugar, caffeine, processed foods, white bread, meat, fish, fowl, and on and on. I was instantly deprived of everything food-wise I was used to and most appreciative of. When I asked my cardiologist: can I not even eat any cheese and he said, "Oh, yes you can." And he went and came back with a bar of cheese and a knife. He then proceeded to cut four tiny squares of cheese about ¼-inch square and said.

You can have this much cheese once in a while.

The tiny cheese chunks were almost invisible and it just was his way of telling me “no cheese.” And I never did have any of those tiny cubes out of sheer disdain. And so it went.

I was quickly reduced to whole-grain, unprocessed, foods, with no meat, cheese, fish, nor fowl. No white bread, white pasta, and the list went on. I learned to eat kale, greens in general, whole-grain spelt and kamut bread, lots of tempeh, and so on. And most remarkable of all, I learned to like it all. It is easier to adapt than to fight change in most cases. We humans are very adaptive.

It's remarkable that we eventually learn to like what's good for us. And I did and am still working on it.

And what in the past, all the unhealthy foods, seemed so pleasurable to me were also so deadly. By compromising, by adjusting my appetites to what was actually good for me, it was not long before I was enjoying plain food almost as much as I had the fancier (and bad-for-my-health) food that I had relished for years before. I guess I just like food.

And while the adjustment to this new diet was perceived (perhaps) as somewhat painful, it was nowhere near as painful as the results of the health events that unhealthy food brought to my door.

As the artist Michelangelo (who was also a poet) wrote “What if a little bird escapes death for many a long year only to suffer a crueler death.” So I avoided healthy food for many years only to suffer a much crueler fate than if I had learned to eat healthy food earlier. And once I learned to eat and like healthy food, I am as happy with that as I was eating food that was not good for me. I am still working on a few hold-outs.

The occultist and poet Aleister Crowley wrote “To snatch at a gnat and swallow a camel,” which says what I consider another important point. While we argue over minutia, life slips past us.

Or, as my first dharma teacher said to me (many times) using

a traveling circus as an analogy: “Michael, if you spend all of your time in the sideshow, the main tent will be gone.”

All of these sayings have much in common. While we are busy sweating the small stuff, whole arcs of our life pass us by without our realizing it. While we are making sure none of our freedoms are forfeited, we freely forfeit almost our entire freedom by spending our time resisting and arguing through it.

Indeed, I found out that compromise is the nature of life. That part of me that won't compromise, compromises. LOL.

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,  
May those without it now create it,  
May those who have it not destroy it,  
And may it ever grow and flourish”

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