

Sometimes the simplest moments, the simplest words, can have the greatest meaning.

And sometimes - you realize that perhaps your words have more impact than you ever thought possible.

I've always believed in being true to myself - or certainly striving to live to that standard. In the midst of all that, as a person and as a professional, as a friend and as a mentor, I've tried to simply lead by example. To me, it's been about maintaining my integrity, my beliefs ... and expressing them succinctly along the way.

In recent days, I've discovered (or perhaps rediscovered) some aspects of my thought processes that I've not seen since college days. No, that doesn't mean reverting back to the "actions" of college life (not that I'd survive that nowadays anyways!). It means having a firm reawakening of those philosophical (and perhaps modestly idealistic) beliefs that found flight in the collegiate environment. ♦ It was a time of creativity, of strong beliefs, of being passionate about those beliefs, and perhaps even espousing them in whatever way possible.

I had a strong belief in the values of the sixties - an era far removed from me but one that seemed to make perfect sense. It was a time of great leaders, of social upheaval, of college kids having an impact on the world as they knew it. Or at least trying to do so.

It could have been viewpoints related to music - or sport - or politics - or the health care system - or any of a number of topics and issues upon which I had a strong and passionate perspective. But the sands of time can wear away at us. Initially, the idealism of youth is hardened and worn-down by the mediocrity of society and social norms. Your passion and zest could be worn down by life ... or love ... or love lost ... or work. And over time, it's all too easy to become cynical, jaded, or pragmatic. Some call it realism.

But in that original passion, in those beliefs, lie the seeds of potential impact. Suddenly, you remember those times when you really did feel like you could change the world by speaking out - but you were just too green behind the ears to understand the ways of the world. Or so you thought. Now, twenty-odd years later, I am again acutely aware of that which I hold dear and about which I am passionate. As Shakespeare said, "the wheel hath come full circle". There is one big difference now. Whereas when I was 20 or so, I would speak passionately but perhaps not have the right way to say it (or the life experience to qualify it), now I am older - and can be just as passionate about something that I've experienced and witnessed first-hand. Some call it wisdom.

I now remember the value of speaking up and speaking out, of believing strongly about "change" in the world, and about standing up for those things you believe in. And there comes a time when it is truly "the right time" to speak out. That time is now.

If my words make one person better able to make sense of the world - or inspire someone to believe in themselves and fight their own "good fight", then I have been hugely successful. Frankly, if I can maintain my passion towards those things that matter most to me - and do so eloquently, elegantly, and simply - then I will consider my time on the planet a success.

A few days ago, I had a small realization of this. A student of mine approached me to tell me that "I hope you're not mad but I've read your blog and I really appreciate what you have to say". And all I could utter was "thank you" ... with the realization that yes, sometimes, someone finds some value in all of it - and I have far more impact than perhaps I believe I have. In the midst of "life" there was an epiphany - that certainly caused me to reflect on times past, good times, strong times, passionate times.

It's a good reminder - of striving for excellence, both as a professional and as a person. If anything, the latter is far more important.

For that one moment, I realized I had an impact on someone's world - and that had an impact on my own.