

... I learned in kindergarten ... or at least that's how the book is entitled, yes?

Admittedly, Robert Fulghum gave us a delightful exploration of this in his 1986 novel. I read it after much cajoling from those around me. Friends said that it was a "must read" - but I always get a little concerned about the "must read" list because it usually involves some level of "pabulum for the masses". Eventually, I read it - and it was definitely a necessary addition to my bookshelf.

Yesterday, I found myself wondering - if perhaps "all I really need to know" was something I learned in utero. Perhaps kindergarten was merely my graduate degree. If that were perhaps the case, then my PhD would be life-long learning. Of course, this evolved into the thought of "if PhD stands for 'Piled Higher and Deeper' then day-to-day life was definitely given me a doctoral dissertation"!

We are born with the tools we need to be successful. Assuming that you arrive on the planet with all the appropriate genes, your body is equipped with the amazing ability to adapt to the demands imposed upon it. Be that physical demand, emotional demand, psychological demand, intellectual demand - we all have the base elements for effective survival on the planet. We're wired that way. From there, it is simply a case of how one adapts, and if those adaptations ultimately have long-term limitations in efficacy. The beauty is that our cells are constantly changing and we evolve as humans - as people - as personalities.

We never stop learning. It happens in the quiet times, in the simplest of moments, in the hectic days and long nights of study and reflection. But the hard part is to leave ourselves open for this to occur. I've watched my students struggle with the concept of daily learning - with the idea that "learning" is only about "what they study in school". Yet true life-long learning is an experiential process that involves reflection. It might even involve some pondering. At worst, it involves an afterthought of the day's moments.

In this process of learning, we all make choices. As I so acutely remember, Geddy Lee once sang of, in my words, "by not making a choice, you have in fact made one" (from the aptly named "Free Will" - someday I will speak more of Neil Peart's influence on my reflective world, but that's another story). We all make the best choices we can with whatever data we have at hand and whatever life experience (and learning) we have explored. There's no existential scale

of "bad choices" - we make them based on what we have to work with - referential to our own reality. Our perception, as I always say, is our reality. We work within that map of reality - and with that comes (hopefully) a respect for another's map, be it consistent with ours - or not.

So what have I learned the past few days? Life is all about learning - and that it comes at us full-speed. The question is, did I take a moment to see it happen?