

[Water Bucket](http://www.flickr.com/photos/21493421@N04/3688487208/)  We are faced with our own [The Counsel Of Death](http://www.lionslinger.com/2009/11/01/the-counsel-of-death/) mortality on a regular basis. We may build a [The Bucket List](http://www.amazon.com/Bucket-List-Jack-Nicholson/dp/B000YAF4MA%3FSubscriptionId%3D0G81C5DAZ03ZR9WH9X82%26tag%3Drhub-other-20%26linkCode%3Dxm2%26camp%3D2025%26creative%3D165953%26creativeASIN%3DB000YAF4MA) bucket list - a list of things you want to do before you die because of this sense of holy crap, I need to do some things while I have time remaining on this planet. The phrase became more widely used after the release of the movie of the same name starring [Jack Nicholson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Nicholson) and [Morgan Freeman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morgan_Freeman).

In principle, the bucket list makes good sense. I understand that people may have a list of items that they want to experience prior to departing this world. Or things they want to see or do. And I get that. Hell, I probably have a few of my own. But it's the modern-day interpretation of it that loses me. You complete the bucket list item, say I did that, scratch it off the list, and move on to the next item. It's done. It's so 21st century.

In my humble opinion, there is so much more to life than just knocking a bunch of items off a to-do list. And therein lies the incongruity for me. Is the bucket list about the journey or the destination? Is the bucket list about doing things? Or is it about the journey of self-actualization, context and growth? Is it about our instant gratification mentality, our drive to achieve and to accomplish, our need for a defining moment that gives us meaning? Or is it about leaving a legacy for the world to enjoy when we are gone?

My own personal bucket list (if I was to call it that) consists of items that have a direct relationship to my evolution on the planet. They stem from the interests I've developed over the years. They are all things that lend context to my world. Perhaps they are evolutionary steps in my development. But what happens if I don't accomplish them? When I am lying on my death bed, will my world be incomplete? Probably not. Why? Because it's just something that provides context to my world, but its presence does not define it.

And that's the funny thing about how many people view their bucket list items. They become defining moments, experiences that lend themselves to defining who we are, instead of just part of the flow of life. These moments define us as part of a group, part of a tribe. See? I belong. I am a marathoner. I am a mountain climber. But are they really experiences, truly living when all you are doing is just checking it off the list and saying I did it?

This has become all the more frequent with endurance sports. Completing a [marathon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marathon) or an [Ironman triathlon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironman_Triathlon) has suddenly made it's way onto a whole lot of bucket lists. Why? How do either of these events even make the list if you are completely sedentary? There was a time when marathons were reserved for the crazy purist runners who had probably run countless 5Ks and 10Ks before moving up to the marathon. Now? You could be completely sedentary, put it on your bucket list, get into a 6 month training program, complete it, check it off

your list, and never run again. I see it all the time. It's not about lifestyle as much as it is about accomplishment. Or defining moments to reflect on with your grandkids.

I am all for experiencing life to its fullest. But there is far more to experience than simply flying to Italy, standing at the base of the Tower of Pisa, taking the obligatory digital photo (which can now be shared instantaneously with all your friends and family look at me, here I am!), then hopping off to the next experience.

I think a bucket list may well serve as a step-wise part of the journey that we call life. When used with intent, reflection, and purpose, it can bring us back to a simple reminder that if nothing else, the journey needs to be vibrant, and focused and a daily call to arms. It can remind us that today is, in fact, the present because tomorrow may never come. It reminds us of growth and definition of our lives by who we are, by the journey itself, and not the stops along the way or the finish lines we cross. It does not define us.

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