

Staying in Motion

Staying in motion is good for you.

And, it certainly is for some sharks. Sharks are kind of like airplanes. They don't have a swim bladder, so they use forward movement to control their vertical position. The shark's tail is like its propeller — it swings it back and forth to move forward. This forward movement pushes water around the fins, creating lift.

But enough about sharks. Let's talk about us.

At least mentally, from the time we are born, our brains develop quickly. At birth our brain was 25% of adult size, growing to 80% by age three. Dementia, forgetfulness and cognitive impairment are not givens as we age. However, without proper exercise, sleep, diet and reducing high stress factors, brain impairment can escalate rapidly as we age.

Staying in motion, physically and mentally, promotes continued learning and growth. Recent studies indicate our reasoning and problem-solving skills do in fact sharpen during our middle-aged years. Now we have scientific proof that we truly do gain wisdom as we age!

There's also the science about what our mind and body are capable of achieving. We all basically have the same DNA. We apply our free will, along with our cognitive skills, our personality, intent and internal striving instincts, to achieve whatever we want or need.

Our free will allows us to live in a state of mind that is either a paradise or a prison.

A prison? Yes—because we may opt to limit ourselves in many ways, shaping our physical,

mental and social selves into whomever we then become. Many times we just let it happen and bounce along in the ether of our existence.

We move about through our work and free time while thinking, daydreaming, meditating, exercising, praying or in solitude. Each mode may recharge and reinvigorate us. This provides a little “rebirth” each time we seek out peace, contentment, relaxation, fun, or just plain vegging out.

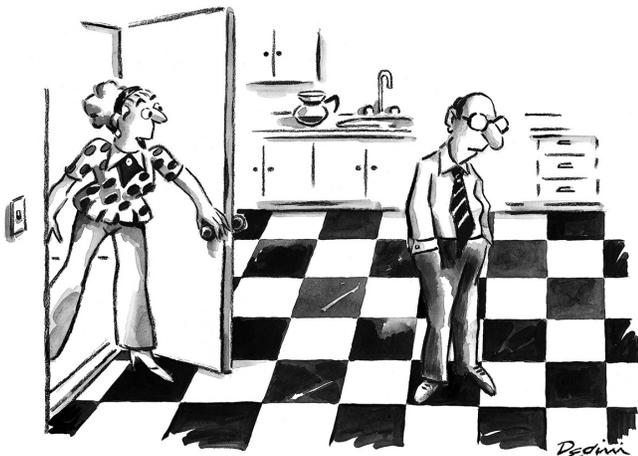
Although this routine is not necessarily a prison, it can become one if we have no greater direction, no purpose, no meaning in our lives. Trust babies, entitled heirs, even the “let them eat cake” crowd can be living in a prison of wealth, out of touch with reality, attempting to buy yet never really achieving true happiness.

Likewise, a prison of limited choice without money can push us to abject poverty: a prison seemingly without any future. We are cut off from society, invisible to everyone except for others in the same dire circumstance.

There are plenty of prisons in between these two opposite states of being.

Paradise is not necessarily defined by money. Neither is prison. It's simply easier to comprehend the tangibility of money and the options it affords. Comedian and actress Mae West said, “I've been poor and I've been rich. Rich is better!”

Paradise is that time in life when everything is in balance. Work, play, family, health, money, purpose and being are all in harmony. It is very fleeting. Personally, I've been in this state maybe a half-dozen times in my life, and never longer than a few days.



"You haven't moved all day."

Some of us define paradise as perfection, others of us as progress.

Progress is what we've been experiencing for the majority of our lives—for some, greater than others.

Wouldn't it be nice to stay in a state of steady progress for the rest of our life? Progress has been my good friend through most of my life. When progress is around, I'm happy. Yes, this includes all-nighters in college, 2 a.m. bottle feedings, the first day on a new job, enduring a major health challenge, experiencing the death of a loved one, and on and on.

That's life.

Through it all, progress during these tough times has been my friendly advocate, my shield against a negative state of mind, a muse of delight, and an exercise-aided comfortable set of clothes.

Many conversations that I have with business owners, executives, parents, grandparents, the young and old revolve around what to do in one money situation or another—or how to think about what one wants or needs to do.

The really simple answer: Stay in Motion.

Now before you judge this most simple explanation, please know that **a positive mindset is a must**. Also, it's hard to stay in motion while in

a place of complexity. We must first simplify to then multiply.

Staying in Motion is just the constant. The steering and the direction, along with some purpose for moving forward, makes a critical difference when striving to stay in motion. There's precious little forward movement with a negative mindset. It's analogous to applying the brake and the accelerator at the same time. If indeed there is motion, it is haphazard, random, and even sometimes counterproductive.

It's "busy work" at the office or home. It's "sleepwalking" through the daily motions, or just completing one energy-draining commitment after another.

Sometimes we simply have to simplify our life to rid ourselves of all the mind-numbing, energy-draining activities. The word many of us don't use very often is "no."

"No." is a complete sentence.

Progress happens when we stay in motion. As psychologist Abraham Maslow illustrates in his "Hierarchy of Needs," at the highest level or top of the pyramid is **self-actualization**. Buddhists may define this as **enlightenment**. Biologists as **metamorphosis**. Today's business coach as **transformation**.

But nothing happens until we get into motion. Not just any motion. Rather, motion that moves us towards what is important to us. Our purpose for being.

Yes, this is a little deep. However, it's what keeps us alive and growing.

The 17th century French mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote, "Our nature consists in motion; complete rest is death."

Many, many people have inspired me throughout my lifetime.—Starting with my parents, my high school cross country coach, the many mentors who directly influenced me, along with many

more for how they achieved extraordinary lives.

Early on I tried, like so many, to be like my heroes. After some time, though, **I recognized the wisdom to just be myself. Because you know, everyone else is already taken.**

Once we are in motion, it's imperative that we stay in motion and move forward.

Each of us grapples with how to stay in our own unique motion. There is no formula, no simple step-by-step process.

Throughout their lives, Steve Jobs, Mother Teresa and General George S. Patton all stayed in motion. But their choice of motion was completely different from each other.

Staying in motion is in itself a mystery that some figure out early and accelerate rapidly, while others—your humble scribe included—take decades to learn.

Money plays into staying in motion. Money is fluid. It is the blood flow of our free market economy. As we gain wisdom over time, money becomes ever more important as it provides stability in our life, especially when we turn off the earning income spigots.

Our portfolios stay in motion. There is a balance between all parts of the debt, equity, cash and other asset categories. As with our lives, that perfect balance is perhaps achieved a few times for a few days. Then “Poof!” One market or another turns south.

Through it all, by staying in motion, by making at least some incremental progress one greatly improves the chance for longer-term progress and success. **Persistence defines staying in motion.**

“I move, therefore I am,” observed renowned Japanese writer Haruki Murakami.

Like the shark, halting all motion and then attempting to initiate a cold reboot is often difficult at best. Newton's First Law of Motion states

that a body in motion wants to stay in motion, while a body at rest seeks to stay at rest.

This is a true statement, in a vacuum! We are not in a vacuum. We are exposed to an additional law, the law of friction. Think of friction like a brake. We can have a dozen brakes happening all at the same time.

It's called living.

We need constantly to remind ourselves to keep our head up, scanning ahead for our future surroundings where new opportunities and new obstacles lie.

Time is itself perpetual motion.

Life is like a bicycle to keep your balance, you must keep moving.

-ALBERT EINSTEIN

The best among us scan horizons very well. When they see the brakes being applied voluntarily or involuntarily, they shift direction. They shift focus. They stop activities that lead to an agony of endless brake lights, and turn toward smoother open roads in harmony with the physics of staying in motion.

Staying in motion is about changing direction when necessary.

Staying in motion is also about recognizing that as we gain more of life's wisdom, our purpose changes.

Think of it like ascending the floors of a building. Upon reaching each successive floor, we can see further to the horizon, allowing us to refine the path we want to take going forward.

Albert Einstein said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

When we are in motion, we experience, we

learn. We gain new wisdom. We adjust. Staying in motion is a bracketing challenge. There's a left and a right limit. We go too far left, then back to the center, then back to the right, then back to the center, and repeat.

As we get better at bracketing and continuously staying in motion our path becomes less zig-zaggy, more of a gentle sine wave curve with occasional oscillations of more predictable amplitudes.

The number of hours in our day; our physical, intellectual and emotional limits—they all stay generally constant. **What changes is the straightness of our path as we stay in motion.**

To emphasize: The key and defining principle to continual progress is always staying in motion. For us slow learners, it's all we have in our favor. Staying in motion, continually learning and then gaining the wisdom necessary to adjust, affords us an edge as we move forward.

Staying in motion is the long play that favors Aesop's tortoise over the hare. Many a "genius" has burned out in his or her twenties because of not staying in motion.

I love music and movies. There are numerous artists, actors, directors and playwrights whom I follow. It's exciting to watch or listen to their new creations. They seem to have dialled in to a perpetual "fountain of progress" by staying in motion. Jazz musicians, for example, have learned to set a cycle of motion into play, creating new compositions by laying down a distinctive drum rhythm, layering in keyboard and supporting instruments, then experimenting with new melodies.

These artists know how to stay in motion with a

purposeful, intentional, straight path of progress.

They are everywhere in the business, political, spiritual and social worlds. They know how to tap into their own universe of continuous progress.

What is really comforting is that staying in motion is easily achieved in a nation that affords us a maximum level of freedom.

Earlier, I mentioned how sharks stay in motion. Their various fins work like stabilizer wings on an airplane. They give sharks amazing maneuverability, letting them cruise at high speeds, stop suddenly, and make sharp turns in every direction. This is a key reason why they are such effective hunters.

Surely you can see where I'm going with this analogy.

In the wild, whether on an African savannah or in the ocean, the law of nature favors the swift and fleet.

So, too, in today's competitive, complex, ever-changing human society. **Stay in motion. Accumulate new knowledge. Relish progress no matter how little at times. Gain wisdom. Stay steadfast with your purpose. Find joy and fun. Move confidently yet carefully forward.**

"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man."
— Heraclitus.

I'll end here with Newton's Law of the Weekend: "A body at rest will continue to be at rest. Until one's spouse notices, is not at all pleased, and makes an undebatable case for resuming one's chores, or else."



Gary Klaben

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