

the
book
of soul

52 Paths to Living
What Matters

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OF THE BOOK OF AWAKENING

Try, Accept, Begin Again by Mark Nepo

*When an imperative arises and it has your name on it – it calls you
and you know it's yours – take it, claim it, and let yourself be
claimed by it.*

– Tami Simonⁱ

When we can resist the urge to compare ourselves to others or to the imagined perfection of our dreams, our worth waits to be revealed through the daily experience of authentic presence. Only when this real can we discover the gifts we've carried since birth that no one else can love into being.

Though it's never easy. Leonardo da Vinci and Claude Monet are two dramatic examples of souls who gathered strength from what they knew as they rode the wave of life. Both worked very hard to align their gifts with the greater life around them. Sadly, Van Gogh was a tragic example of someone who had the wave crash harshly over him. Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton were as tragic, both talented poets who committed suicide. And Beethoven was someone who rode the wave of life, only to fall and almost drown. Yet through a tremendous effort of heart, he caught the wave a second time, riding it into his tsunami of unprecedented music. It's humbling to realize how easily we can be thrust into any of these positions, as there's only a hair's width of consciousness and circumstance between riding the wave and drowning in it.

These legendary figures highlight a journey we're all born into: we never stop paddling in the larger sea, while being tossed about by the tides of life. That we're

constantly disturbed and rearranged is inherent to life's journey. The work of integrity is to somehow sustain the elements of our true nature while being disturbed and rearranged by life.

We can't explore effort very long without talking about our will. Being willful describes our insistence to make things happen, our pushing to manifest things, our constant drive toward what we imagine or aspire to. This differs from being attentive, which describes our devotion to let, and even help, things unfold. When willful, we invent; when attentive, we discover. Yet, like light and dark, or music and silence, or X and Y chromosomes, there's nothing inherently wrong with being willful or being attentive. We're born with both capacities and they work in infinite combination.

So a basic question to ask as we summon our will is: Am I pushing things or tending things? While pushing sometimes leads to great achievements, attending leads to great experiences. Ironically, pushing often rushes us out of the holy center of our endeavor, while attending anything authentically can bring us further into that center.

And after years of pushing and tending, we might come to accept that our work is to be thorough. For in loving and creating, all we can do is receive each other completely. We are empty in the beginning and empty in the end. Neither is sad. To be thorough and emptied is our purpose. After being battered about by our endless want, we're asked to reach with whatever heart is left in a thorough attempt to accept everything. Awake in the world, we can only try.

We're all possible and limited, like a flag enlivened by the wind, though it can never be the wind. And though we're born with a yearning to see and touch everything, we can only be enlivened by what stills our heart. Though we have a need to dive into the depth of life, we have to breathe in the world. Though we're somehow bursting with a want to

be great, we're forced to accept that the blessing is released when we're utterly who and what we are. And through it all, it takes a quiet courage to wake to all there is and begin again. Perhaps this is what makes the human journey noble: that we reach for everything and land where we are—that we try, accept, and begin again.

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Questions to Walk With

- *In conversation with a friend or loved one, describe some endeavor you've been called to try, to accept, and to begin again. How has your commitment to this process affected you? What have you learned from staying with it?*

“When and imperative arises...” Tami Simon is a dear friend. She is the founder of Sounds True. This is from her wise audio program *Being True*.

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For more about Mark Nepo, please check out MarkNepo.com or ThreeIntentions.com.