

Ability – used, abused and accepted

“There is no appreciable difference between ability not used and ability not possessed.” – Sri Chinmoy

When I first came across this quote by Sri Chinmoy it stopped me in my tracks, pained me in my solar plexus. Sri Chinmoy was talking to me; he saw through my mask, he knew intimately the way in which I had been conducting my life – and it hurt.

I’ve always been one of those people with a natural ability to perform at a high level in many areas of their life – international triathlete, national marketing manager, firefighter, CEO, model (briefly!). I could always get away with not trying too hard.

I probably only ever used a very small percentage of my god given talents and abilities to achieve what I did in sport. Alas, behind the closed doors of my heart and soul, my predominant self-belief for many years was that I was lazy and worthless, and that, irrespective of my outward achievements, I was fooling many people, including myself – I was eternally balanced on the knife edge of ‘being-found-out’.

It didn’t matter what my outward achievements indicated - world champion, multiple state and national champion in two sports – I knew I was only dedicating a very small percentage of my deep pool of abilities and energies to the tasks at hand. For this I felt less than others, I felt guilty and I felt weak – it was an exhausting, degrading and depressing existence, which came with an incessant battering of negative self talk.

I expected a great deal of myself back then. I thought I should be an Olympic Champion, I thought I should be smarter, faster, more attractive, fitter, more dedicated, more confident, more assertive, slimmer, more disciplined, more recognised, more, more, more – now, now, now. My mind was a thief, stealing from me the joy of my actions and achievements.

I didn’t laugh much back then either – I was seriously trying to get to the top of my chosen field, all-the-while undermining myself because I did not believe I truly deserved to succeed. My coach at one time used to berate me for smiling at people when I was racing...serious athletes behaved seriously, so I got serious (which doesn’t really suit my personality!), and all the fun went out of my sport. I thrive on fun.

I desperately needed and wanted recognition back then. Particularly I wanted my Father’s love and respect; I wanted him to see me as worthy, to praise me and to be proud of me. For over a decade, as an athlete, I sought his approval, nevertheless (to my mind), I never attained that love, respect, praise and recognition from him. These qualities have always been waiting for me to tap them - from the inside out.

I did not accept myself back then either. I didn’t like myself, didn’t trust myself, I rejected my body – demanding it to be other than what it was, I could not make peace with myself – couldn’t even conceive of the notion. I could not imagine an inner world being anything but a battle field. Today my practice of prayer, meditation, selfless service and gratitude have gone a long way to changing my experience of my inner world – I’m a work in progress now, not a failure!

I felt constant guilt. If I missed training I felt guilty, if I judged myself as not trying hard enough I felt guilty, if I didn't win I felt guilty, if I didn't act with 100% discipline I felt guilty, if I wasn't on time I felt guilty, if my father wasn't impressed with my performance I felt guilty – what a burden! I'm just not like that any more, all-but-gone are the daggers of self judgment and recrimination, replaced with a gratitude for the lessons I am continually offered by a universe with my best interests at heart.

When the going gets tough I get grateful.

I have matured a very long way from my days as a young, confused and fear driven athlete. I am blessed today to have the opportunity to share my experiences openly and honestly with my clients and friends, and to offer to them the benefits of my lessons (thus far) on my journey to wholeness.

In a nut shell, I have brought a few tools with me on my journey that keep me well and whole on a daily basis: **Laughter & Fun** (every waking hour of every day I am sharing an honest laugh and fun with clients and friends). **Gratitude** (for everything – the 'good', the 'bad', and the 'ugly'). **Responsibility** (I take 100% responsibility for everything I experience in my life). **Mantra** (chanted silently to calm my busy mind). **Exercise** (joy filled, fun, shared, centered and breath focused, in a calming and nourishing environment, and for the sheer pleasure of it). **Organic vegetarian food** (keeps me mentally, physically and spiritually clean and clear). **Expectations** (minimal indulgence in these, they are thieves of the moment). **Acceptance** (for who I am, for the temple that is my body and for where I am on my journey right now).

Upon reflection I understand that my experiences have been an integral part of the fabric of my journey toward becoming the persona I am today, and the person I am becoming in each moment.

I am human and I have given my very best to my life thus far...I look at Sri Chinmoy's quote today and know that I have used all of my abilities to get to this place I am today, and I am happy.