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The Examined Life, August 2003

A free, monthly electronic newsletter brought to you by:

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Examine, Explore and Excel!  
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IN THIS ISSUE:

- \* Take an Aerial View and Discover the Benefits of Gliding
- \* Tip of the Month
- \* Coming Events
- \* Spread the Word

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#### TAKE AN AERIAL VIEW AND DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF GLIDING

During a recent coaching call with a client we explored the benefits of looking at life's issues from an aerial view. Flying over problems lets you glide and see clearly, while hacking through them with a machete, at ground level, is exhausting and it's easy to lose your way. The tool of stepping back and taking a big picture view is a useful one. As the pace of life quickens and we pile on more and more, it's easy to get caught in that nose to the grindstone perspective — where you think the world will end because you didn't get that vital task done. Or you neglect the things that really matter beyond the present moment, in a vain attempt to keep up with the never-ending urgent-today tasks.

The next time you feel overwhelmed by all there is to do, try the five-year test. Ask yourself which things will matter when you look back on them five years from now.

One of my readers, Mary Ann McElfresh, sent (and allowed me to use) the following story about aerial views to me when she received my last newsletter. I love its sense of celebration and the appreciation of the unexpected different experience.

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This month I celebrated my ninth anniversary of being cancer-free. Praise the Lord! Although my surgery occurred very near my birthday, I consider it to be my "real" birthday. My husband's present this year was fantastic. He gave me a hot air balloon ride. My friend Judy gave her husband George the same gift, so George and I rode, and Carl and Judy chased....

The aerial view was so different from what I expected. We could not feel the lift off — the trip was very calm and soothing (we could not feel any wind at all, because we were riding along with it). Were

it not for the surroundings, we'd have thought we were standing on the ground. We rode for an hour over all the mansions in Chester County. We saw so many beautifully landscaped in-ground pools — it made us wonder where the “normal” houses were.

We were headed toward Phoenixville with the flow of the wind. We got as high as 1,000 feet but most of the time we were close enough to the ground to shout out to the folks below us. Once, we were low enough to pick some leaves from the tops of the trees. The kids were yelling and waving; lots of folks on the ground asked us to land in their yards! One guy saw us and joined the chase then helped roll up the balloon. He told the pilot that he would help the crew (without charge) anytime he needed help. He just loves to follow the balloons. (I think it's more fun to be in one.)

Judy and Carl followed the chase car and saw us several times during the trip. We really didn't see them until the last leg when we were looking for a soft spot to land. You never know where you will land — we landed in a field adjacent to a kid's play-off game. The game was delayed to enable all the kids to come running to check out the landing. Once we all got settled, the pilot invited the kids to climb in the basket. What a thrill for them!

If you live in this area and are tempted to try a hot air balloon ride, the phone number for Magical Mystery Flights is 302-234-1665. Their website is [www.hotairballoonflights.com](http://www.hotairballoonflights.com)

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So the next time you're feeling bogged down by all there is to do, imagine yourself in that hot air balloon, gazing down at the mosaic that is your life and its activities. See if the view changes your perspective.

#### TIP OF THE MONTH

Do nothing!

Nothing, you say? I know I did when Wendy first suggested it to me. In fact, I had to hear it from two other sources before I said, “Hmmm... maybe this is something I should try.” The hook for me was to pair it with something I loved to do, something I got lost in. For many months, I began each day with a half-hour of piano playing followed by 15 minutes of doing nothing.

It was an amazing thing. I realized how much junk was floating around in my mind.. I did my time (it felt like a sentence at first) out in the garden. I would start by centering myself, noticing my body and releasing any spots of tension, and taking a few deep breaths. I started to notice the most amazing things...the way the light fell on the leaves of the trees, the early morning shadows formed by the rock at the edge of the walkway, the rustle of the leaves, how some days were windy and some were absolutely still. But I sat there, enveloped by a sense of peace. All the stuff of my life fell into place. I had a greater sense of what was truly important.

Do you have an effective way to avoid getting bogged down in the details of and keep the big picture in mind? I'd love to hear about it.

## COMING EVENTS

Sunday, August 10 at noon

Myeloma Awareness Week: Mining for Gold in the Caregiver/Patient Relationship

Guests: Debbie Exner, Maddie Hunter

Host: Tony Maxwell

Tune in to Radio Alchemy on WVUD, 91.3 or online at <http://www.wvud.org/>

The bond between people who are dealing with serious illness and the family and friends who care for them can be a close one. Maddie Hunter and Debra Exner are both coaches with a connection to myeloma, Maddie as both patient and caregiver to her father and Debra as caregiver to her mother. This show will explore the strengths and challenges in the patient/caregiver relationship, including ideas on how to provide and get help, how to advocate for yourself or your loved one, and ways to tackle those taboo subjects.

Sunday, August 17, at noon

Myeloma Awareness Week: Myeloma & Getting Support for Serious Illness

Guests: Debbie Exner, Marilyn Alexander

Host: Tony Maxwell

Tune in to Radio Alchemy on WVUD, 91.3 or online at <http://www.wvud.org/>

This is the final day of Multiple Myeloma Awareness week! Marilyn Alexander and Debra Exner are co-leaders of the Philadelphia Multiple Myeloma Networking Group. During this show they will discuss what myeloma is, and how people with a serious illness, and their family and friends, can get support and information.

Wednesday August 20, First Unitarian Church, Wilmington, DE from 7-9pm

Free Seminar: Juggling Life & Work

Co-leaders: Debra Exner and Mario DiCioccio

Do you feel like a juggler with a few too many things in the air? And with all of that juggling, do you feel like you are missing something important? If you are ready to put yourself back into your life, this two-hour workshop will get you started. Compare the life you have with the life you want. See how these personal growth exercises and coaching can get you to where you want to be.

[This is a rare opportunity to get in on the ground floor with the workshop pilot. Come and learn about yourself, your life and your values. Be part of building the workshop agenda through your thoughtful feedback on the design and delivery of the material.]

Sunday, September 7, at noon

Disease to Please: Why is it Hard to Say No?

Guests: Rae Booth, Debbie Exner, Wendy Mackowski

Host: Tony Maxwell

Tune in to Radio Alchemy on WVUD, 91.3 or online at <http://www.wvud.org/>

Most of us are very good at saying No at around the age of 2 years old. Later, we learn to think of others and to compromise. Have you gone too far the other way? Would you like just a little of that 2-year-old spirit back? If you suffer from the Disease to Please, or find it difficult to set limits for some other reason, tune in.

Thursday September 18, Main Line YMCA, Ardmore PA, from 7-9pm

Free Seminar: Juggling Life & Work

Co-leaders: Debra Exner and Mario DiCioccio

Do you feel like a juggler with a few too many things in the air? And with all of that juggling, do you feel like you are missing something important? If you are ready to put yourself back into your life, this two-hour workshop will get you started. Compare the life you have with the life you want. See how these personal growth exercises and coaching can get you to where you want to be.

Thursday September 25, 7-8 pm

Free Teleclass: How to Unclutter your Life!

Co-facilitators: Rae Booth, Debbie Exner, Wendy Mackowski

Maximum of 20 attendees. Contact me ([DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com](mailto:DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com) or 302-478-5919) to reserve your spot.

Would you like ideas, support, structure or coaching around getting rid of clutter in your life? Join us for a fun and interactive hour of discussion with others who share your desires for more simplicity and space! You can participate in this free teleclass wherever you are on the globe! All you need is a telephone. You call the access number at the appropriate time and join the others on the call for a facilitated discussion. Just contact me for the access telephone number. The only cost is the long distance phone call.

## SPREAD THE WORD

If you are ready to make changes in your business and personal life or know someone who is, I'm looking for you. Curious? Email me at [DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com](mailto:DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com) or call 302-478-5919 to schedule a complimentary half-hour coaching session.

If you are enjoying this newsletter, please forward it to your friends and colleagues!

Thanks,

Debra Exner, CPCC

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Please let me know if you'd rather not receive these messages.