



Death: the Key to the Door of Life, by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

There is no need to be afraid of death. It is not the end of the physical body that should worry us. Rather, our concern must be to _live _while weâ€™re alive â€“ to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with living behind a façade designed to conform to external definitions of who and what we are. Every individual human being born on this earth has the capacity to become a unique and special person unlike any who has ever existed before or will ever exist again. But to the extent that we become captives of culturally defined role expectations and behaviors â€“ stereotypes, not ourselves, -- we block our capacity of self-actualization. We interfere with our becoming all that we can be.

Death is the key to the door of life. It is through accepting the finiteness of our individual existences that we are enabled to find the strength and courage to reject those extrinsic roles and expectations and to devote each day of our lives â€“ however long they may be â€“ to growing as fully as we are able. We must learn to draw on our inner resources, to define ourselves in terms of the feedback we receive from our own internal valuing system rather than trying to fit ourselves into some illfitting stereotyped role.

It is the denial of death that is partially responsible for people living empty, purposeless lives; for when you live as if youâ€™ll live forever, it becomes too easy to postpone the things you know that you must do. You live your life in preparation for tomorrow or in remembrance of yesterday, and meanwhile, each day is lost. In contrast, when you fully understand that each day you awaken could be the last you have, you take the time _that day_ to grow, to become more of who you really are, to reach out to other human beings. [â€“]

Use this growth not selfishly, but rather in service of what may be, in the future tide of time. Never allow a day to pass that did not add to what was understood before. Let each day be a stone in the path of growth. Do not rest until what was intended has been done. But remember â€“ go as slowly as is necessary in order to sustain a steady pace; do not expend energy in waste. Finally, do not allow the illusory urgencies of the immediate to distract you from your vision of the eternal.

--Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, from "Death: The Final Stage of Growth"

