

## THE BIG IDEAS

### Follow Your Bliss

Three very big words.

### Excitement

Have fun not knowing

### Phone Call from God

Answer it.

### Hero's Forest

Enter it.

### Shedding Skin

Shed your skin! Or perish.

### Crucify to Rise

You must die to the old if you want the new.

### Omelets

Break some eggs.

### Jump!

It's not that wide.

### Say "Yes!!"

Go ahead. Say it.

### Love Your Fate

It'll make you stronger.

### Your Hair & Fire

Here's a match.

# A Joseph Campbell Companion

## Reflections on the Art of Living

BY DIANE K. OSBON · HARPER PERENNIEL © 1995 · 320 PAGES

**"So that's what destiny is: simply the fulfillment of the potentialities of the energies in your own system."**

~ Joseph Campbell from *A Joseph Campbell Companion*

Joseph Campbell is awesome.

He sits in the grandpa slot in my spiritual family tree and he's one of the few authors on whom I've written three Notes (check out the other Notes on [Pathways to Bliss](#) and [The Power of Myth](#)).

If you've seen the Bill Moyers PBS series, [The Power of Myth](#), you know how incredible Campbell is—the glow in his 80+ year old eyes... the giddiness with which he talked about the spiritual truths. Simply amazing.

Alright. I can get all misty-eyed and ramble, but let's just jump in and celebrate the man who brought us *"the hero's journey"* and the wise, wise words: *"Follow your bliss."*

I'll share a bunch of Big Ideas with you here, and won't even scratch the surface of this ridiculously densely-packed book of wisdom. If it resonates, me thinks you'll love the book.

## FOLLOW YOUR BLISS

**"Follow your bliss"**

Those three words capture a key message of Joseph Campbell —the amazing mythology guru and mentor to George Lucas who based much of Star Wars on the classic archetypal journeys Campbell documented.

It's rather simple.

Three words: 1. Follow. 2. Your. 3. Bliss.

Key words: "bliss" and "your."

Not someone else's idea of your bliss. Not what you *think* should be your bliss. Not what you think would impress the crowd or appease the family.

Your BLISS. What truly gets you giddy.

Oh yah, "follow" is kinda important as well. Get off your butt and go out there and follow your bliss!

(Pretty please. Thank you.)

## EXCITEMENT

**"Nothing is exciting if you know what the outcome is going to be."**

*"There is no security in following the call to adventure."*

~ Joseph Campbell

*"When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets."*

~ James Joyce

How funny is it that we get stressed because we don't know *exactly* how everything is going to turn out?

Um...

Can you imagine a life where everything goes *exactly* as planned?

It's pretty much called "*Groundhog Day*."

Not so good.

Let's embrace the unknown and celebrate the excitement it generates!

## PHONE CALL FROM GOD

"To refuse the call means stagnation. What you don't experience positively you will experience negatively."

(Soul) Phone rings.

It's God on the other line.

You just let it ring... and ring... and ring...

Not good.

You stagnate.

All that potential positive energy you would have unleashed on your hero's journey?

It comes back against you. And destroys you.

Eek.

...

Jesus said the same thing, btw: "*If you bring forth what is inside you, what you bring forth will save you. If you don't bring forth what is inside you, what you don't bring forth will destroy you.*"

## HERO'S FOREST

"You enter the forest at the darkest point, where there is no path. Where there is a way or a path, it is someone else's path. You are not on your own path. If you follow someone else's way, you are not going to realize your potential."

That pretty much sums it up.

Are you following someone else's path? If so, you simply aren't going to realize your potential.

Yes, we know that society does anything but encourage us to discover who we are and how to go out and give ourselves to the world. But that's why they call it the "hero's" journey. If it wasn't a challenge it'd be something like "the average person's" journey. Not so inspiring.

Engage in your hero's journey! Find your own way.

## SHEDDING SKIN

"The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come."

[Nietzsche](#) made a brilliant comment on this as well: "*Shedding one's skin. The snake that cannot shed its skin perishes. So do the spirits who are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be spirit.*"

We MUST shed our old selves to transform into the new.

How's your skin?

Need to shed a bit, my friend?

...

And, while we're on the subject of death and re-birth, how about this:

## CRUCIFIXION & RESURRECTION

"If you want resurrection, you must have crucifixion."

That. Is. Powerful.

As we just learned, a snake that cannot shed its skin perishes.

The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come.

And, if you want resurrection, you must have crucifixion.

QUIT HOLDING ON TO YOUR OLD IDENTITY.

As Campbell says: "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

Now a good time for a little change? :)

## OMELETS

"You can't make an omelet without breaking the eggs."

I love that.

Why do we have this silly notion that we can transform our lives without some challenges?

Makes NO sense.

You break any eggs lately?

Quit tip-toeing and go for it.

In fact: Jump!

## JUMP!

"A bit of advice given to a young Native American at the time of his initiation: 'As you go the way of life, you will see a great chasm. Jump. It's not as wide as you think.'"

The hallmark of the advanced soul is a healthy relationship to fear.

As we grow, we develop a deeper and deeper trust in that force that beats our hearts and grows our fingernails and, miraculously, seems to make those chasms not quite as wide the moment we jump.

[Emerson](#) tells us "God will not have his work made manifest by cowards." And pleads with us: "Always, always, always, always, always do what you are afraid to do." And assures us: "Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain."

What about this classic from Everest-climbing mountaineer, W.H. Murray?

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness concerning all acts of initiative and creation. There is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans; that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision raising in one's

*"The hoarder, the one in us that wants to keep, to hold on, must be killed."*

~ Joseph Campbell

*"What will they think of me? -- Must be put aside for bliss."*

~ Joseph Campbell

*"What does not destroy me,  
makes me stronger."*

~ Friedrich Nietzsche

*favor all manner of unforeseen events, meetings and material assistance which no one could have dreamed would have come their way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now!"*

...

Are you at a chasm?

Jump.

It's not as wide as you think.

## SAY "YES!!"

"The warrior's approach is to say 'yes' to life: 'yea' to it all."

Love that. Say "yes" right now.

*"Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!"*

Feel that? Good.

Now say, "No."

*"No, no, no, no, no!"*

Feel the difference?

If you're like me, "Yes!" has a light, fun energy and "No" has a heavier, closing-in energy.

Open up to ALL of life. The ups, the downs, the opportunities to let your soul shine.

Say "Yes!"

*"The privilege of a lifetime is  
being who you are."*

~ Joseph Campbell

## LOVE YOUR FATE

"Nietzsche was the one who did the job for me. At a certain moment in his life, the idea came to him of what he called 'the love of your fate.' Whatever your fate is, whatever the hell happens, you say, 'This is what I need.' It may look like a wreck, but go at it as though it were an opportunity, a challenge. If you bring love to that moment—not discouragement—you will find the strength is there. Any disaster that you can survive is an improvement in your character, your stature, and your life. What a privilege! This is when the spontaneity of your own nature will have a chance to flow."

Then, when looking back at your life, you will see that the moments which seemed to be great failures followed by wreckage were the incidents that shaped the life you have now. You'll see that this is really true. Nothing can happen to you that is not positive. Even though it looks and feels at the moment like a negative crisis, it is not. The crisis throws you back, and when you are required to exhibit strength, it comes."

Wow. That's worth a re-read (or four).

I don't know about you, but *"the moments which seemed to be great failures followed by wreckage"* have been the incidents that have shaped the life I have now.

Where to begin?

How about when I dropped out of law school after a semester at 23? Oh. And I ended a 5-year relationship in the same week. I was spinning for months. Moved back in to my mom's house to her great delight. (Um. Not so much.)

*"In my world, nothing ever goes wrong."*

~ Wayne Dyer

At the time, I simply couldn't figure out how I was possibly going to create a life within what I saw as very limited options. I like to say that I felt a bit like a fire hydrant with all this energy but there was this glass wall 6 inches in front of me—bouncing the water right back on my face and nearly drowning me. Entertained way too many different creative ways I could end it all.

EEK.

Here's the interesting part: the ONLY thing I knew I wanted to do when I dropped out of law school was to coach a Little League Baseball® team. (Well, first I burned my resume...) So, that's what I did. I volunteered to help a neighbor friend coach his son's 9 and 10 year-old team, the Angels.

We were the Bad News Bears. I think we lost our first 5 games. But I learned something. I learned that the quality of a kid's experience in youth sports was shaped, in part, by the quality of the coaching he received. My neighbor friend and I had no idea what we were doing and it showed—not just in the standings but in the morale of the team.

Before law school, I was a consultant with Arthur Andersen and learned a few things about technology and databases. And, I had an idea: what if I could create an online system (the web was in its toddler stage at that point in early 1998) that could bring these teams and leagues online and create a community where new coaches like me could learn how to run a practice from the expert coaches (you know, the ones with the headbands and clipboards who kick everyone's butts!)? And wouldn't it be cool if I could make it easy to put a picture of Johnny sliding into home that his grandparents could check out if they missed the game?

Out of this idea, I created my first company: eteamz.com. My genius 22 year-old partner and I (I was 24 then) cracked open our piggy banks, invested \$5k each and, from our living rooms, within 8 months we built a suite of tools that served thousands of teams from around the world. We won the business plan competition at UCLA's Anderson School of Business, raised \$1m from angel investors, grew from 2 1/2 employees to 45 in less than a year, raised another \$4m+, hired the CEO of Adidas to replace me as the CEO (we also hired the eventual winner of the Apprentice II), and then saw the market bottom out in 2000.

That's when I first REALLY got into self-development. A woman who worked for me said I would love [Dan Millman's](#) *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. I read it. It lived up to its sub-title *A book that changes lives*.

Long story a little shorter: we wound up selling eteamz (it now profitably serves 3 million teams and Little League Baseball uses the technology we built). I got enough cash to take a few years off to figure out what I'm here to do. I became a philosopher, immersed myself in the universal truths, became friends with Dan Millman, created my next business Zaadz, sold that and here we are.

Guess what?

It all started because I followed what TINY bliss I felt at the darkest point in my life. I followed that little voice within that said, "You don't want to be a lawyer. It's time to leave this path. You'd dig coaching kids. Do that while you figure everything out."

And, out of the wreckage, I learned to trust the words of another favorite teacher, [Wayne Dyer](#), who tells us: *"In my world, nothing ever goes wrong."*

As Nietzsche says: *"What does not destroy me, makes me stronger."*

I say we learn to love our fate.

As Campbell says: **"Whatever the hell happens, say, 'This is what I need.'"**

And, most importantly, follow your bliss.

*"Follow your bliss. The heroic life is living the individual adventure."*

~ Joseph Campbell

*"People say that what we are seeking is a meaning of life. I don't think this is what we're really seeking. I think what we're seeking is an experience of being alive."*

~ Joseph Campbell

## YOUR HAIR & FIRE

"Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Do not seek illumination unless you seek it as a man whose hair is on fire seeks a pond.'"

That's hot. (No pun intended.)

We're way too timid in life.

And that includes our spiritual development.

Is *your* hair on fire?

Or, are you afraid of looking "too intense" and freaking out your friends and family?

I say we get over that. Life's a little too short to worry about what other people think. (And, as Tim Ferriss says, don't worry—they don't think that often anyway. :)

And, remember: The only people who are going to give you a hard time for being "too intense" are the ones who aren't living very fully. Guarantee you that.

\* hands match box over \*

Time to light our hair on fire, my friend.

Let's have some fun with this one precious life of ours.

To our hero's journey,

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**Brian Johnson,**  
*Heroic Philosopher CEO*

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## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at [heroic.us](http://heroic.us).