Thursday Memo – December 13, 2018

This week we have an essay from Jenny LaBonte, former Hahnemann Family Medicine graduate and currently practicing at the Shore Drive location of Saint Vincent Medical Group in Worcester. For some, this time of year is called the festival of lights - surely we need some light in the midst of the shortest days of the year. Jenny offers us her thoughts about light, our passions, and what the Japanese call, Ikigai. Ikigai is about our sense of purpose, something the Blue Zones have focused on as a crucial element for living a long and healthy life. Jenny has reminded us all how important this is to preserve what we love about medicine and our life in general.

You can respond to Jenny at jenlabonte@charter.net or the listserv directly. Enjoy.

The Light in Me and the Light in You

I have always enjoyed hearing the word Namaste at the end of a yoga class, especially when the teacher translates the meaning out loud. May the light inside of me honor and celebrate the light inside of you.

What a beautiful phrase. It reminds me of the song: This Little Light of Mine.

This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine,
This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.
This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

We all have gifts and talents that we were born with. And when we identify and cultivate those gifts and then shine them out for the world to see, great and amazing things start to happen.

This year, I have spent a lot of time cultivating and tending to my gift of communication and connection. I realized that my power and passion are ignited when I am connecting with another human being, person-to-person. Sometimes that communication comes in the form of a face-to-face interaction. Sometimes it comes in the form of a phone conversation or a text. Whichever it is, I find that when I am spending time listening and reflecting on another person’s story, journey
or struggle, I feel this intense connection to them. I often marvel at who they are and how far they’ve come. As a family physician and a health and life coach, I have the privilege of working with people over long periods of time. I see them in times of great despair and have the privilege of seeing them come full circle into times of abundance. What an honor it is to be present and bear witness to their joys and sorrows.

Communication, connection, and cheering people on: that is my gift. Holding a sacred space for people to share their inner most fears, their worries and doubts, their vulnerabilities, their raw and naked selves. When I step fully into that space, it feels easy for me and I draw energy from it.

There is a wonderful Japanese diagram called Ikigai that helps to illuminate a person’s life purpose. In this diagram, there are four intersecting circles. Within each circle, there are words such as: gifts, passions, values, possibilities, where I excel, what I love, how I see the world and where I can make a difference. In the center of all these intersecting circles lies your life’s purpose. Aka: the sweet spot. This is where your gifts and talents meet your passion. When we are tapping into that sweet spot, that is when the magic begins to happen. That is where we are meant to be. It becomes effortless and success becomes inevitable.

As you contemplate your sweet spot and your career in medicine, I invite you to think about: are you identifying your gifts and talents that you were born with? Are you living a life that is in alignment with your purpose and your passions? Are you shining your light and sharing your gifts with the world?

As doctors, we can often get pummeled with the demands of the job and forget the true reasons why we were called to this career in the first place. However, I would offer that when we remember to connect with that sacred gift inside of us and allow it to permeate into all of our daily interactions, we begin to feel more at ease and more connected with our career and our purpose and all of the “nonsense” of medicine begins to melt away and feel less burdensome.

Coming full circle, I look forward to continuing to connect with not only my patients and clients, but also with each of you. There is a deep bond that pulls our family physician tribe together; a common thread of caring that we all share and experience in a way that no one else can quite understand. It is my hope that we all continue to strengthen these bonds and encourage one another, celebrating each other’s gifts and talents and reconnecting with our purpose in this crazy career called Medicine.

May the light inside of me honor, celebrate and respect the light inside of you. Namaste.