

The Daffodil Principle

Several times my daughter had telephoned to say, **A**Mother, you must come see the daffodils before they are over.@ I wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive from Laguna to Lake Arrowhead. **A**I will come next Tuesday@, I promised, a little reluctantly, on her third call.

Next Tuesday dawned cold and rainy. Still, I had promised, and so I drove there. When I finally walked into Carolyn's house and hugged and greeted my grandchildren, I said, **A**Forget the daffodils, Carolyn! The road is invisible in the clouds and fog, and there is nothing in the world except you and these children that I want to see bad enough to drive another inch!@ My daughter smiled calmly and said, **A**We drive in this all the time, Mother.@ **A**Well, you won't get me back on the road until it clears, and then I'm heading for home!@ I assured her.

My daughter said, **A**I was hoping you'd take me over to the garage to pick up my car.@ **A**How far will we have to drive?@ **A**Just a few blocks,@ Carolyn said. **A**I'll drive. I'm used to this.@ After several minutes, I had to ask, **A**Where are we going? This isn't the way to the garage!@ **A**We're going to my garage the long way,@ Carolyn smiled, **A**by way of the daffodils.@ **A**Carolyn,@ I said sternly, **A**please turn around.@ **A**It's all right, Mother, I promise. You will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience.@

After about twenty minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand lettered sign that read, **A**Daffodil Garden.@ We got out of the car and each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn down the path. Then, we turned a corner of the path, and I looked up and gasped.



Before me lay the most glorious sight. It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of

gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, saffron, and butter yellow. Each different colored variety was planted as a group so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

But who has done this? I asked Carolyn. It's just one woman, Carolyn answered. She lives on the property. That's her home. Carolyn pointed to a well kept frame house that looked small and modest in the midst of all that glory.



We walked up to the house. On the patio, we saw a poster. Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking was the headline. The first answer was a simple one. 50,000 bulbs, it read. The second answer was, One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and very little brain. The third answer was, Began in 1958.

There it was, The Daffodil Principle.

For me, that moment was a life changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun one bulb at a time - to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountain top. Still, just planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. She had created something of ineffable (indescribable) magnificence, beauty, and inspiration. The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration. That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires

one step at a time, often just one baby step at a time - and learn to love the doing, learn to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world.

It makes me sad in a way, I admitted to Carolyn. What might I have accomplished if I had thought of a wonderful goal thirty-five or forty years ago and had worked away at it - one bulb at a time - through all those years. Just think what I might have been able to achieve! My daughter summed up the message of the day in her usual direct way. Start tomorrow, she said. It's so pointless to think of the lost hours of yesterdays. The way to make this learning a lesson of celebration instead of a cause for regret is to ask, How can I put this to use today?@

-- Author Unknown

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are. After that, we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage.

We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, when we are able to go on a nice vacation, or when we retire. The truth is there's no better time to be happy than right now. Your life will always be filled with challenges. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway. Happiness is a way of living. So, treasure every moment that you have, and treasure it more because you shared it with someone special enough to spend your time with. Time waits for no one.

So, stop waiting: ...until your car or home is paid off, ...until you get a new car or home, ...until your kids leave the house, ...until you go back to school, ...until you finish school, ...until you lose 10 lbs, ...until you gain 10 lbs, ...until you get married, ...until you get a divorce, ...until you have kids, ...until you retire, ...until summer, ...until spring, ...until winter, ...until fall, ...because someday you will die.

There is no better time than right now to be happy. Happiness is a journey, not a destination. Happiness is from what a person is, NOT from what they do. So work like you don't need money. Love like you've never been hurt, and dance like no one's watching. Be patient enough to listen. Show kindness by being aware of others.

Seek NOT what lies dimly at a distance, but do what lies clearly at hand. Start today to live the daffodil principle and build a better world - **one bulb at a time**.