



CHANGE YOUR FOCUS CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Fun I Almost Missed

By Silver Rose

Over the last thirteen months I learned something profound about myself that you'd think would have revealed itself much sooner:

I love physical adventure (and I don't use the word "love" lightly.)

I swear I did not know. In fact, if asked, I would reply that I was definitely not interested in things like hiking, kayaking and white-water rafting. I was convinced that people who do such things were slightly off their rockers. Back when I was dating, if a man revealed that he was into any of that, there would definitely be no second date.

What a lot of fun I missed over the years.

*There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is **contempt prior to investigation.***

Herbert Spencer, Victorian
Biologist and early social philosopher

That's what I suffered from—contempt prior to investigation. Because I had not previously been exposed to outdoor adventure as a child or as a young adult, I dismissed it out of hand as something I didn't like, **even though I had never tried it and knew very little about it.**

What have you declared as "not your thing" even though you haven't tried it and know very little about it? Where have you deprived yourself? How have you shut down possibilities?

Too often we are like small children, wrinkling our noses at unfamiliar food, stubbornly refusing to even try it. We are impatient when children exhibit this behavior but how often do we do it?

You get more of what you focus on. When we focus on limiting ourselves to only the familiar, we begin a subtle process of shrinking. My friend Bill puts it this way: "There is no hover. You are either progressing or regressing." Contempt prior to investigation feeds regression.

In my change consulting practice, I see this all the time—so-called leaders who are unwilling to try something new, employees who cling to the familiar even when it's cumbersome and no longer efficient and salespeople who are trying to sell a solution to the wrong problem. The more of these shrinking violets there are in an organization, the more quickly the business condemns itself to obsolescence. The world simply passes it by.

The same is true for individuals. Even when what we are doing no longer serves us, we continue on the path because it is familiar and we are afraid to try new things. Of course, because we are so used to operating this way, we don't even realize that we are afraid. Our explanations, said in proudly defiant voices are phrases like, "I guess I'm just set in my ways," or "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," or my personal favorite, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Ironically, those of us who cling to the familiar in those areas of our lives over which we have control, often *embrace* change in areas like technology.

For some, if we approached technology like we do our lives, we'd still be watching a black-and-white television with rabbit ears for the antenna and using rotary phones that are tethered to the wall.

Contempt prior to investigation is a habit and, speaking for myself, a poor one. Now that I've become aware of how much fun I've been missing for years by declaring, "I'm not outdoorsy," I'm looking at other areas to see where I've placed myself in regressive mode:

- What software programs have I dismissed that might make my life easier?
- What board games have I declared myself not interested in that might turn out to be fun?
- Which people have I not taken an interest in because I thought we had nothing in common?

The next time you find yourself wrinkling your nose like a 4-year old, ask, "Is this contempt prior to investigation?" and investigate! You have nothing to lose and a world of adventure to gain.

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Silver Rose works with individuals who want work that they love and organizations that want employees who love their work.

Reach her at Silver@SilverSpeaks.com or 877-840-5416