



By Silver Rose

Whether you're religious or not, the Serenity Prayer is one to live by:

...Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

For many delusional and painful years, I thought that if I worked hard enough I could control all aspects of my life. Completely misinterpreting what it means to take responsibility for one's life, I tried hard to bend it to my will. And you know what? I ended up with low self-esteem because I couldn't do it and I thought it was my fault.

Today I understand two things:

- **Most of life's circumstances are beyond our control** no matter how many affirmations we chant or how hard we wish it weren't so. There are legions of brides and grooms who have learned this the hard way when they planned an outdoor wedding on a day that Mother Nature chose to water her plants.
- **The one thing we do have control over is how we respond to circumstances.** In the past I was certain Nature would bend to my will. Today, if I were planning an event outdoors, I would have tents readily available.

I am fortunate to spend a lot of time on the island of Kauai. Knowing that even on an island paradise people have problems, I asked a waitress in a local café why the people who live in Hawaii seem so happy. She replied, "It's because we've learned to dance in the rain."

What a wonderful approach to life.

I am in the midst of one of the greatest challenges a person can face—the life-threatening illness of a loved one. The lack of any control is the most frustrating and difficult part. What has been surprising to me is how quickly we (Bill and I) have gotten used to this new set of circumstances.

When we first found out he had pancreatic cancer, it felt as if Bill had already died, so deep was our grief. But we have slowly returned to our day-to-day lives, albeit with adjustments large and small, and we are learning to dance in the rain. As one friend remarked to Bill, "You're having more fun with cancer than I am without it!"

Bill is a wonderful teacher of focusing on what you can control. On the days he's feeling good, it is time to go river boarding, kayaking or for a strenuous hike. On the days he is not, he catches up on reading, we watch fun movies or

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focus on the excitement of the NBA playoffs (last Fall it was football). Bill is not even a big sports fan but in lieu of being able to get physical himself, watching others do it is a good way to spend time.

Lest I misrepresent the facts, we *do* have bad days. We get really ticked off or depressed about this whole thing. However, we don't run our lives according to those feelings—they are temporary and we move away from them as quickly as we are able and toward the wisdom so beautifully articulated in the Serenity Prayer.

We have surrendered control, which is funny when you think about it since we never actually had it to surrender. No one does. So even though the title of this blog is "Surrender Control," what I am really suggesting is that we retire the illusion of control that most of us cling to. The only thing we can ever control is how we *respond*.

The next time you are in a situation that's driving you mad, ask yourself, "Do I have any control over this whatsoever?" If the answer is "no," then don't spend any more time on it. Shift your focus to where you **DO** have control.

Oh, and learn to dance in the rain.

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