

## GETTING THROUGH ONE MORE DAY

### Notes from a very qualified life coach



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My mood of late has been like the summer sky.

A cloudy blue.

"Try and stay in the moment," I'm told.

The moment?

For me that means working.

Usually telling you other people's stories so I don't have to think so much about my own.

People like my old football teammate, Jim Ladd, and the story he tells about trying to stay alive.

"Just one more day."

Jim knows all about that. He's one of the fortunate residents of the Riverview Health Centre who left there alive. Which, among other reasons, is why he's so qualified to be a life and business coach for others.

It was in that capacity that earlier this month, Jim sent me one of his regular inspirational e-mails from James Ladd's *The Personal Coach Bulletin*. This time Jim made this one really personal for both of us. Jim began: "My old football teammate and friend Gord Sinclair at the Winnipeg Free Press has been writing a number of stories about individuals and families *in our community, who have and are enduring considerable hardship on a daily basis.*" In reading these compelling stories," Jim continued, "I was reminded of what I learned a long time ago about a whole other world out in our community."

He started really learning that seven years ago, when he was diagnosed with a lung infection. Within two years his condition had deteriorated to the point where he struggled for every breath he took.

"I had lost 53 pounds, was now just skin and bone, on six litres of oxygen 24 hours a day, unable to walk without assistance and was receiving three powerful antibiotics intravenously to slow the infection as I waited and hoped for a donor match. I was told early on that my only hope was a double lung transplant and without it, I would die."

And Jim would have died. Except fate and tragedy intervened.

A 40-year old Free Press carrier named Mike Antosh was struck and killed by a truck. It was Mike's donated lungs that literally breathed new life into Jim.

That was five years ago.

Jim recalled that in his bulletin to make a larger statement. It was during those near-death days in Riverview that Jim met others who wouldn't be as fortunate. "I watched them slowly die," Jim wrote, "without any hope or possibility of recovery. And as each one of them died, some of my hope for myself died with them."

Jim listed some of them:

- A 20-year-old young man, on a respirator, paralyzed from the neck down as a result of the West Nile virus struggling to hold on.
- A beautiful woman my age with pulmonary fibrosis waiting for a lung transplant that never came.
- A fireman who over a lifetime of dedication to the fire department and his community destroyed his lungs.
- A 28 year old man, with a young family, dying of an inoperable tumor in his lung because he worked as a welder without knowing he should have worn breathing apparatus.
- A wife and her husband -- her slowly dying of Muscular Dystrophy -- on a respirator, unable to speak or move her entire body but for her small finger and him there by her side each and every single day, to tenderly care for her.

Jim's point was this:

"There is a whole other world out there made up of thousands, yes, thousands of people in our community, who are dealing with debilitating chronic illness on a day-to-day basis. Huge numbers of these remarkable human beings spend each day doing only one thing: trying to stay alive just one more day."

I get Jim's point, of course.

And his other subsequent messages about offering emotional support to the chronically ill and making sure your family knows you want your organs donated when you die so others may live. But there is another category of people who struggle to survive on a daily basis.

The rest of us.

People who simply try to bring up their kids, and get through their working day. People who are lonely. Even when they're not alone. People who feel unfulfilled or unloved. People who are mentally ill. Although I guess Jim covered the rest of us in the footnote of his bulletin. That's where he quoted the book, *The Road Less Traveled*, and author Scott Peck's opening line therein.

"Life is difficult."

And once you accept that life is difficult, it gets easier. It's as easy -- and difficult -- as that.