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"A great secret of success is to go through life as a person who never gets used to it." » Albert Einstein



Heeere's Johnny!

I frequently have too many things running through my head to easily fall asleep at night.

However, I've discovered something that seems to help. One of our streaming services offers episodes of The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.

As opposed to what my sons might think, those shows don't bore me to sleep.

In fact, boring shows often have the opposite impact on me.

I get annoyed and start wondering how in the world someone produced it and said, "Yeah, this works."

The Tonight Show's calming influence on me likely goes back to my youth. There was a long stretch of time in which it kinda sorta served as my nightlight.

Some nights, I fell asleep after the monologue. (Those don't hold up as well today.)

On most nights, I made it through the first guest or two.

Those interviews are still excellent.



No Time to Freeze Up

A video clip I came upon last week included a statement that stuck in my mind.

When talking about aspects of human nature, the narrator pointed out that fear tends to shut down the part of our brain that is designed to solve problems.

Two thoughts occurred. First, there are more than a few problems that we've been handed during 2020 that are still in need of resolving.

Second, there seems to be enough fear about the immediate and long-term future to go around.

Anxiousness is not in short supply.

Now, fear is not always a bad thing. Fear plays a key role in our survival.

Anyone who has ever lunged to keep a child from something the child doesn't recognize is dangerous can relate.

As we grow older, the things we fear tend to change as we learn more about our surroundings and the world we encounter.

We tend to become less fearful as we can predict outcomes.

In fact, watching Johnny Carson speak and interact with everyone from major stars, to up-and-comers, to animal handlers, to quirky folks with interesting talents is downright instructional.

I'm not sure if interviewing is a lost art, but watching Carson do it suggests that it might be.

Too often today, interviewers seem to use the conversation they are having as a vehicle to talk about themselves or what they think about things.

Carson's style is even more striking when you consider that for most of his 30 years on that show, he was the biggest star on each night.

He may have interviewed famous people, but few he interviewed had his fame, fortune, or influence.

Yet, he kept the focus and conversation consistently on whomever was in the guest chair.

He might make a personal reference or joke, but it was almost always in support of the guest.

Whether he was interviewing Burt Reynolds or Robin Williams at the height of their stardom, or a librarian from Nebraska...the guest was the star of the conversation.

It made for more enjoyable, humanizing, and informative conversations.

I would suggest that Carson's tried-and-true approach to conversations remains wise for most conversations.

Whether speaking to customers, co-workers, or employees, allowing them to be the "star" in the conversation produces better results.

You learn more. You also become a person that others genuinely enjoy speaking with.

In the end, that just might make you the biggest star of all.

That is why uncertainty can often immobilize otherwise confident folks.

Some people who would otherwise act purposefully and confidently become tentative and insecure when unpredictable situations develop around them.

That said, it's a fair bet that few major successes in our personal or professional lives have sprung from tentativeness and insecurity.

I asked a group of bank leaders a very simple question on a recent Zoom meeting.

I inquired, "Are you still discussing business development with your teams, or has that been put on the back burner until further notice?"

It wasn't my role to probe, but I surmised that most leaned toward the "not really talking about it" side.

That's understandable. It's also perilous.

Reduced outreach efforts lead to reduced results even in the best of times.

What do we expect reduced efforts will produce in tougher times?

There are always individuals and small businesses in our communities who need financial guidance and help. That is now truer than ever.

You may have solutions for them. Maybe you don't.

But neither of you will know until you hear their stories.

One of the most uplifting features of being a banker is the opportunity to support people in times of need.

Now is a fantastic time to remind our teams of the blessing it is to be able to help people.

Strive to share that blessing as often as you are able.

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways you yourself have altered."

» Nelson Mandela

Dave Martin, author of [The In-Store Advantage](#), has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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