

A Braided Essay

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I. The Message

Upon arriving at the Chicago O'Hare International Airport during my most recent business trip, I took notice of one of those miniature billboards on the wall in the terminal corridor. This one was an Accenture advertisement with a life size picture of Tiger Woods trying to chip a golf ball out of tall, yellow grass. It was as if he sliced a drive and it left the fairway for a hay farmer's field in the Midwest.



Down by the ball, there is a message printed in white chalk. "What you did. 10%" A bracket, spanning the distance from the head of the club to the top of the golf pro's signature black Nike cap, highlights another message that reads, "What you do next. 90%" At the bottom left hand corner, Accenture declares, "We know what it takes to be a Tiger."

II. Emotion

When in a frenzy, my behavior can resemble a cyclone, a whirling mass of strained chaos lashing from right to left and randomly scarring the human landscape around me. It's a low-pressure buildup of a lack of time caused by too many commitments and self-imposed deadlines. A stress tornado.

I had let things get the better of me just a few weeks ago. Work, life, school, family, no sleep, some sleep, illness, bills, some time, no time, not enough time – it all came crashing down, inward. I became the Tasmanian devil's daughter. This will happen when you believe you are in control, that stars align based on your personal needs and desires.

III. Starting Over

*It's been too long since we took the time
No-one's to blame, I know time flies so quickly
But when I see you darling
It's like we both are falling in love again
It'll be just like starting over, starting over. ~ John Lennon*

IV. Chaos and Dysphoria

Can one be addicted to chaos? I think the answer is yes. What about small episodes of depression, anxiety and restlessness? Do they come from a lack of chaos or too much of it? The playground swing travels so high into the sky that the backward momentum disorients you. You see the ground, elevated and parallel to it, suspended by iron chains. You dare not release your grip on your links to the ground. You can't afford to plummet.

V. Starting Over

Keep on beginning and failing. Each time you fail, start all over again. You will grow stronger until you have accomplished a purpose - not the one you began with perhaps, but one you'll be

glad to remember. ~ Anne Sullivan

VI. Confirmation

On October 18, I stood for my goddaughter at her confirmation, the rite of admission by a baptized person into the full membership of their church. I've never been a sponsor to a confirmation candidate before and it was an honor. Lea is beautiful – on the inside. She's pretty too and carries the long, taut body of an accomplished dancer. Lea chose Anastasia for her confirmation name. It is the root of her mom's name, my younger sister Stacie. The bishop, a happy, caring man explained to us that this long dead saint was a first martyr in the church. Her example for Lea is focus and courage. I don't know about Lea, but I needed to hear those words. It was as if the Spirit passed from the bishop's hand, through Lea to me. It was a new beginning.

VII. Starting Over

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older the world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated of dead and living. Not the intense moment isolated, with no before and after, but a lifetime burning in every moment and not the lifetime of one man only but of old stones that cannot be deciphered. ~ T. S. Eliot

VIII. Little Children – The Movie

Rent it.

IX. Starting Over

My computer decided to crash right along with me during the frenzy. I hadn't realized that Hewlett-Packard and I had become emotionally synchronized. The sound of the hard drive accelerating to it's death was such that I believed the laptop would launch skyward from my desk with me clinging to it, my fingers Krazy-glued to the keypad in a desperate attempt to finish that last email. Envision an insane Peter Pan soaring over the eastern U.S. powered by Intel and not the sweet Tinkerbell. That was me.

And then I saw Tiger laminated on an airport billboard. Accenture was telling me they know how to think like Mr. Woods but I saw him laying down his golf club in that high golden grass and virtually reaching out to me, offering me a gloved hand.

"It is what you do after you screw up that counts," he whispered to me as I passed through security back into the insecure world. Thank God for new beginnings.