

The Secret of Life Is to Get On Board

by Mary Ann Bailey

One of this year's box office hits was the movie, Polar Express. It's a wonderful story about the power of believing.

It is Christmas Eve and a little boy waits in his bed hoping to hear the bells of Santa's sleigh. As he anxiously waits for the reindeer to appear, a mysterious train pulls up in front of his house and the conductor invites him on board. The train is the Polar Express, and it is headed to the North Pole.

As the story unfolds, we learn that, "It doesn't matter where the train is going. What is important is deciding to get on." It is a gentle reminder to us all of how important it is to believe and follow our dreams.

Standing on the Platform

How many trains have you let go by in your life because you were uncertain of where they were going? How often have you found yourself standing on the station platform watching trains come and go, trying to decide which one was the right one for you? There you stand, frozen in indecision, as the world passes you by.

In order to keep growing and learning, we need to keep our lives moving. Water that doesn't run becomes stagnant, and the same is true of our lives. We need to be willing to try new things and be open to new experiences. We also need to trust that the process of life will take us to where we want to go if we remain aware and take advantage of the possibilities and opportunities that are constantly being put in front of us.

Jen was in the process of finding a new job. She was a college professor who had been recently laid off. She had been in education for a while, and although she had several other professional interests, she was having a difficult time actually visualizing herself in any other field.

As Jen stood on the station platform, the only trains that she felt comfortable boarding were the ones that were heading toward the academic world. But is that where she truly wanted to go? On the other hand, the trains that were headed in different directions were too scary to board. So, she felt completely stuck, unable to move in any direction.

Getting on Board

Jen soon realized that taking any train would serve her better than just sitting on the platform, so she took a leap of faith and decided to board the next train that came along. This train took her to an informational interview with the head of local environment group.

Environmental issues had always been something that interested her, but she had never envisioned it as a profession. The interview went very well. Jen immediately connected with the director, and she came away with an extensive list of people and organizations to call for further information and possible job opportunities.

This experience bolstered Jen's sense of adventure, so she decided to jump on the next train that came by. This train was headed to a job interview at a local college. The position sounded promising and Jen certainly had all the qualifications. So, she boarded the train with great confidence, only to find at the end of the ride that education really didn't interest her anymore.

The interview had gone well. They asked her back, but it had become clear to Jen during the interview process that she no longer wanted to work in the college setting. The passion and excitement that she once had felt was gone. It was time to move on to whatever her next career path might be.

There is No Wrong Train

It could be argued that Jen had boarded the wrong train because it didn't end up taking her where she wanted to go. Yet, had she not gotten on that train, she would have always had questions about whether or not she should leave education. Now she knows, and she can pursue other interests with her full and focused attention.

It will take some time for her to sort out exactly what it is that will rekindle her passion. But she knows something is out there waiting for her; and she is excited about all the possibilities and the process of creating a totally new career path. All she has to do is to hang on to her willingness to take a risk and step off the platform.

The answers we seek are not always right in front of us. We sometimes have to take a longer and more circuitous route than we would like to reach our destination. Our journey may require many trains; and if we hold ourselves back from boarding even one of the trains on our route, we may never truly reach our goal.

So, the next time a train comes your way, jump on board and take advantage of all the things you would have missed had you let it go by.

"Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over
if you just sit there."

Will Rogers

Mary Ann Bailey, MC, is a life coach who specializes in helping professional women successfully navigate the challenges of career and life transitions. Visit her website at www.baileycoaching.com to read more of her articles and to receive a free copy of "How to Make the Changes that Will Move Your Life Forward."