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Can being in the moment help you?

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson



Linda with her daughter during Camino walk in Spain Photo provided

Camino de Santiago, a walk that brings life messages. I had the experience of walking over 100 miles on the Camino in Spain this past month. The path is the pilgrimage of the apostle St. James the Great, his bones are housed in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain. Unlike most walkers who do 10 miles a day - I did 6 plus miles most days. There were some very tough uphill grades as well as steep down hills and rocky passes.

If anyone had told me I would do this at my age, I would say they were crazy. I usually walk about two miles a day, five days a week. However, I trusted my daughter to plan the trip, making sure we had private baths in our rooms and a couple of days of rest. In all, it took us 16 days to do our trek. We had only one rest day and we took a 2-mile hike on that day.

This walk is called a "pilgrimage" and you are called a Pilgrim by the Spanish people you meet along the path, who treat you very nicely along the way. You also meet people from all over this world, all doing the walk for a variety of reasons. The advice is to do the "Camino" your way - there are people who feel they need to carry their pack and some think unless you do the entire 500 miles you just are not doing it. We had our suitcases transported daily between stops and just carried a daypack. We never felt like we were less than the other pilgrims and kept our own pace. We walked in all types of weather, warm and sunny, fog and rain. Like life, we experienced all the challenges of a long journey on foot through the wilderness, farmlands and cities.

A big challenge was the long uphill climbs; I had to find a way to manage the burden of physical endurance. As a result, I learned that worries in life can be a hidden barrier to accomplishing goals and surviving tough days. What I said looking down at the path (and not at the hill in front of me) is "the path is flat" and "the world is round". As long as I just looked at what was right in front of my eyes and stayed in the moment I was able to climb most hills with little stopping.

I did not ignore the reality of the challenge in front of me - I called that "the world." At the same time, saying the path is flat allowed me to be truly present in the moment. That simple statement became a metaphor that I will use for the rest of my life.

Most of us lead busy lives and some of us are caregivers for those who cannot manage their own life. Thus, we are always thinking ahead and rarely do we enjoy the moment without the burden of worries. The trip taught me the importance of being present in the moment, overcoming obstacles, and a valuable lesson in how to feel calm and beautiful when we simply live in our surroundings - smelling, tasting, touching, hearing and seeing without thinking or processing.

I shared this lesson with my dementia support group and they heard the message. It will be interesting to see if they are able to find 10 minutes a day to be in the moment and how it changes their burden of caring. The world is round and we do have to climb at times but if we do it with the intention to be "present in the moment," it can recharge our energy and give us a calm that other activities do not. Peace to you.

The Zoom dementia class for November is about managing "behavioral challenges." I will add some new interventions for challenges based on my experience. The class will be held on at 11 a.m. Nov. 11 - for a Zoom link, go to the website (www.LindaFodriniJohnson.com) or send me an email.

Affirmation: I spend time daily in the "Moment." Time without thinking, just being.

Zoom Classes:

Dementia:

Managing Behavioral Challenges, Nov. 11

Dementia:

Self-Care/Preventing Burnout, Dec. 9



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