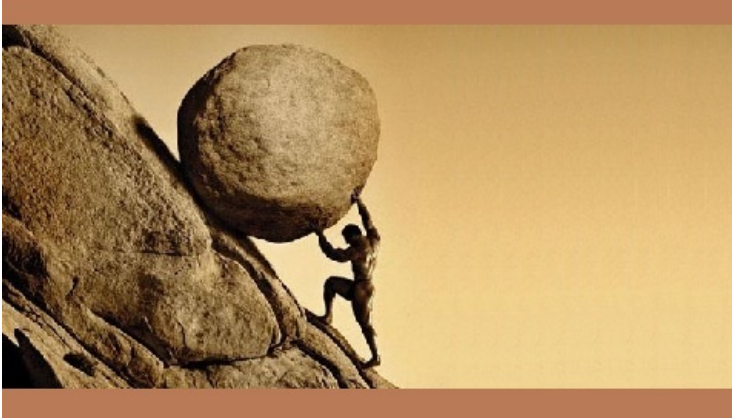


STAYING MORALIZED WHEN THE JOB HUNT PLATEAUS



One could find encouragement in the classic psychological studies about the relationship between happiness and extraordinary events. After a man or woman becomes a paraplegic they at first fall into melancholy and depression; but within a few years, they return to their baseline happiness as if nothing had happened. We therefore need not fear such tragedies. Further, after a man or woman wins the lottery they at first celebrate and are elated; but within a few years, they return to their baseline happiness as if nothing had happened. We therefore need not lament our luck. Yet despite the interest such studies hold, subsequent studies have shown that some events do alter our baseline of happiness. Three things in particular can make you permanently more depressed: the death of a spouse, divorce, and prolonged unemployment. Given then that **struggling to find a job** is exasperating, and that continual defeat will lower your baseline happiness, what can you do to anticipate all this, to plan around it? First of all, if you have lacked it so far, you will want to familiarize yourself with your capacity for endurance. We all know that some things in life require considerable commitment and prolonged endurance to gain success. Rearing children for instance can give considerable pride and happiness. Nevertheless, many of the problems children have, from autism and ADD to every manner of bad habit -- bedwetting, whining, tantrums -- require continual attentive correction. And we do it, because we know their lives depend on us. How then to foster a sense of commitment to something that often seems futile? How to keep fighting a fight we have no assurance we will ever win? How to keep moralized and motivated when we aren't seeing progress? This requires faith. There is the sort of stupid person's faith that everything will work out, that they will one day be happy, or go to heaven, or whatever else; but that's not the kind of faith we need here. To have faith in yourself, the only faith, in the end, that matters, means that you believe that doing your best is good enough, rewarding in itself, even if the external environment doesn't praise you, endorse you, encourage you, give you the interview, give you the job. You must find a way of validating yourself, of feeling proud of yourself, for trying and continuing to try. Instead of judging yourself a winner or loser based on whether you get the job, much of which is determined by external circumstances you have no real control in, and so, are no reflection of your worth, you should judge yourself for real effort, and recognize when something is difficult for you and when you've overcome something, when you've grown as a person. Even if you never work again, you are still growing as a person, and you can take pride in that. Finding happiness and cheer in what you are doing, and praising the specific things you do each day, will keep you moralized and enduring, no matter how long it takes.