

# THE SETFREE LIFE

## Moving Forward

It's a time for transitions! We usually attempt resolutions at the beginning of a new year; I take a broader approach, one less binding but just as purposeful.

"Transition" means a movement or a passage from one place to the next. When I used to make new year's resolutions, I would detail my plans and then be disappointed in my lack of discipline. It has taken me a while to learn I am not a hard-and-fast goal-setter. While I certainly consider it important to chart a destination of some kind, I tend to live life a bit more serendipitously: I trust that I will be led. The secret is that when I am led, I follow. This means pursuing an experience, taking advantage of open doors, and putting in some work to see if the road is worth taking. Sometimes it is not. "That wasn't the right way," I can say, and turn around.

This kind of life "planning" makes some people crazy. They want to see my goals neatly organized and carefully crafted. "Great men and women have always worked a plan," they tell me. Really? Golda Meir did not plan on being Israel's prime minister at age 70; she came out of retirement to do what destiny presented to her. John Quincy Adams did not plan on running for Congress after one term as president; he, too, was retired from political life but was summoned by compelling forces to a position in the House of Representatives at age 64 and continued there for 17 years. He died while preparing to address his colleagues, and during his tenure persistently, patiently, courageously opposed slavery. Harry Truman failed at every business venture he undertook until he tried politics and found it suited him, and he never expected to be president! All moved forward from one place to the next, following the leading, having had their plans disrupted.

Don't get me wrong: plans are necessary! In the absence of leading (we don't always sense it) we must have something toward which to work. John and Golda and Harry weren't sitting around slacking off until their ultimate contributions revealed themselves; they had set themselves on a course. They were able to rise to the unexpected because throughout life, transitions called to them and they followed.

We experience many transitions in our lifetimes; I'm in one now and plain old statistical probability ensures that a portion of you receiving this newsletter are as well. We've been through enough to know that sometimes shifts are incremental (it takes time to lose weight or finish a degree

### Today's Quick Links

Dr. Robert Pennington

Dr. Alan Weiss

IFMA

Access Group, Inc.

Personality Principles

Range

Adopt-A-Greyhound

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## Moving Forward (con't)

program) and others hit like an earthquake, coming without warning. We're caught figuring out what to do next. We probably all agree that it's not events per se that are most important but our responses to them. I remember something Dr. Robert Pennington said at a conference I organized some years ago. He tells his story of surviving a gunshot wound to the chest with a powerful admonishment about the necessity to receive the effects of change with thoughtful positivity. "How interesting it is," he commented, "that when we lose a job, we say, 'What if I don't find another one?' Why isn't our first thought, 'What if I find a better one?' " How often have we found these unexpected events are our leading?

Whatever our circumstances, transition can be bumpy and often a bit scary. Whether you're making resolutions or negotiating a change, stay open to moments that grab your attention and compel you down an unplanned path; they may be far more important than your charted and listed expectations. Don't be afraid! Some of us have experience in this type of direction and can speak to its satisfying rewards. It's my time to move forward, and I'm following what I feel led to do.

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference*

*Robert Frost*

*Set Free*  
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Sue

Thompson is a personality trainer, an etiquette expert, and an instructor in life lessons.

Her seminars on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused listeners at companies and business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.



Find out more at Sue's web site by clicking the mouse



## TRAVELING, TALKING & TRAINING

In October, I presented a seminar at the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) annual convention, called "World Workplace," in New Orleans. I spoke on how we are born with talent and what we're supposed to do with it.

In November, I was a seminar speaker at Access Group, Inc.'s conference for financial aid administrators. Held in San Francisco, it was my second time speaking for this event. My topic was "Etiquette is Not Dead!" The attendees warmed to the subject immediately, asking questions about everything from mispronouncing names to shaking hands. We gathered at the table for a quick lesson on dining etiquette (right). It was great fun!

Fellow seminar speaker Kathryn Robbins, who presented on the way different personality styles manage stress, accompanied me one evening to a restaurant in the Mission District called Range, which I'd seen mentioned in a foodie blog. The service was excellent, the tastes exquisite.

I wouldn't recommend it for an intimate dinner; the seating is quite close and it's a tad noisy but it gave opportunity for the couple at the table next to us (he an architect, she a medical science liaison for a biotech firm) to strike up a conversation. "You selected a great restaurant to try out," the woman told us. "We come here at least three times a



week." I had the pot pie, which was more like a soup. Heavenly. I recommend it highly.



## Teddy Bear Says . . .



Hello everyone—Teddy Bear here, the most well-mannered, elegant, and gracefully aging Greyhound you have the pleasure of meeting!

I'll be providing you with valuable tips on presenting yourself with style—something I do even in my sleep! [Editor's note: This is true. Teddy Bear crosses her front legs as she reclines upon her plush pillow.]

My tip for today is one I am passing along from

Koufax the Wonder Dog, who manages [Alan Weiss](#). Dr. Weiss has a monthly newsletter called [Balancing Act®](#) (sign up on his website). I recommend Alan's work because he honors Koufax's fine sense of perspective. We would all do well to show some respect for the good dogs.

Alan noted this in the May '07 issue: "Only remember one person's name when you have to introduce two people? Simply say to the person whose name you DON'T remember, 'Have you ever met Joan?' They will then use both their names for you."

Everyone forgets a name occasionally, so don't panic. It's always best to simply take the blame for your forgetful self and say with a smile, "I'm so sorry. I know your name but I can't seem to find it in my memory--please remind me!" No need to make a federal case out of it. After all, you're only human. I, of course, have an excellent memory and always respect others by remembering their names. For some reason, they don't always hear me when I address them. I'm gracious of about it, of course, and let them rub my silky-soft ears anyway.

The  
Frequently Annoying,  
Occasionally Offensive,  
Always Dismaying  
SIGNS OF  
OUR TIMES

In a television commercial over the holidays:

Woman: Do you believe in Santa Claus?

Seven year-old child: I believe in cashmere.

(We're not trying to change anyone's values. Honestly.)

An ad on MTV's website:

Science was wrong; The world revolves around YOU (Who knew?)

## Do You Work for a Psycho?

Have a boss who defies description? Is your work situation nearly unbearable? As I prepare my manuscript on surviving a tormenting work environment, I'd like your stories about the things you've had to endure: insensitive or self-serving supervisors, evil coworkers, poor managers, backstabbing executives. I may use some of them in sidebars in the book (and will certainly seek your permission before doing so). Send your experiences to:

[Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com](mailto:Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com)

## A Parting Thought

*What was good for the holiday season is good all year 'round: perform random acts of kindness. Don't take things personally. Practice your own manners and respect others' (even if it appears they don't have any). Forgive those who have offended you and move forward.*

*If you know of anyone who might be interested in this newsletter, please let them know about it. A serendipitous new year to you all!*

Sue Thompson  
Set Free Life Seminars LLC

