



The Joys of Old Books and Imperfect People

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Last weekend, I spent part of the holiday finally clearing out my basement of old books that had belonged to my parents when they were alive. This was a task I should have felt good about finally doing-even though it has taken me many years to accomplish!

It was Memorial Day after all, and what better a way to spend it than remembering what I have valued in my past and what I want to honor in the present.

Pleasure washed over me as I discovered all the treasures, connected to my past, and reveled in all the memories and feelings of warmth that I associated with these wonderful old books.

Suddenly at some point, though, this pleasure became overshadowed by that other voice- saying how ashamed I should feel that some of these books were musty or partly chewed up and ravished by time. The voice went on to further berate me that I should have been a better, or actually even a "perfect" caretaker.

Even though I knew I had been the one to rescue the books, to store them, to keep them, and to preserve a legacy, I began to lose perspective. My focus narrowed as those old negative views kicked in as they often do whenever there is a trigger of disorganization, messiness, or carelessness.

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My husband, seeing I was losing perspective, moving away from the pleasure and toward messages of failure as old as these books, said something to me that helped me regain my perspective.

My husband, appreciating the work that I do every day (the whole picture) could see that I was placing the worth and importance of these old books above my own self worth.

He lovingly said to me “You do more good in a week than these old books ever did in all these years. “

Could I have been more careful? Yes, of course. But it was this rearrangement not of the books, but of my perspective, that got me thinking straight again and let me go back to enjoying the rest of the holiday- lost in the pleasure of memories and connection. After all, what I relish and enjoy and what gives these books depth and meaning is not their perfect condition. Instead, I am thrilled and my imagination is stirred, when I discover what someone scribbled in the margins in 1935 or when I find an underlined passage that moved someone so many years ago.

What I came to understand during this past Memorial Day weekend was that old books are not meant to be perfect and neither am I.