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USE YOUR IMAGINATION

All things being equal, the thing which lifts a man out of the rut is imagination.

Imaginative thinking is necessary if you are not to be merely a plodder, but you must be able to dream without making dreams your master. Imagination is not a sedative to deaden life, but a force toward a more abundant life. It is the mind's ability to recall past experience and relate them to new situations in combinations of infinite variety.

Everyone's imagination needs limbering up once in a while. It cannot be ignored for long periods and then called upon in some crisis. The differences between the successful man, and the mere routine worker is simply this: the successful man has kept his imagination at work. The flash of inspiration is important, but the chance that it will occur can be increased by enlarging the stock of ideas in one's mind upon which imagination has an opportunity to work. The hunch, the bright idea, the inspiration — they only come when habit of alertness has been established in examining, thinking constructively, and looking expectantly for a link between something present and something not yet thought of.

We must learn to hold our mind's door open to new ideas, all kinds of them. When a new idea enters, it may seem timid and rough hewn, and it will need to be encouraged and to have its jagged edges smoothed. It may be only a small idea, but we must never discount it or ignore it.

It is said that people who give free scope to this sort of creativity are not conformists, but their difference from other people lies in the realm of the mind and not necessarily of outward appearance. If a man seems out of step with his fellows, it may be because, as the social rebel Henry David Thoreau said "he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away".

This is quite different from indulging in extravagances of appearance or behaviour. Adopting strange manners or clothes is purely an empty form of exhibitionism assumed by some "poseurs" to create the impression that they have something to convey. This kind of behaviour is far removed from the self-confidence of the constructive seeker after goodness in life. He uses his imagination to look bravely and fearlessly into the face of life and follows the dictates of his inner direction. He knows the difficulties of living, but does not shrink from them. He finds no need to lean on other people. He is not afraid to face facts. Deep in his heart he is stimulated with the urge "to be".

This is the pattern which we should strive to emulate. Our imagination, optimistically used, can be a tremendous force in our endeavour to make the most of our lives, and in creating happiness from the things we back ourselves to be and do.

— Progress