

Pity the Incomplete

Want to get more sleep, have more energy, or be more resourceful? Either completely finish or drop completely that which is currently incomplete. You gain energy when you complete a task or fulfill a goal. You drain energy when you leave it incomplete.

Both organizational and motivational experts strongly suggest that you clean out your garage or that Fibber McGee closet in order to clear your mind. Having to move my basement workout area into the garage, I first needed to sort through all the junk the garage had accumulated in the last 17 years. Whenever you sort through belongings, you create a nice debate not between a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other, but between the sentimental on one side of the brain and the practical on the other. “Gee, I haven’t used that dish drainer since I lived in Chimichanga; I should really throw it out, but maybe someone else could use it” or “Gosh, I forgot I had those photos from college; I really should go through them and put them in an album or two, but where would I store the albums?” or “Gosharootie, Polkadottie, these seat covers fit my old Honda and they’re brand new; but no one I know owns that model anymore.” Yet to do nothing about the clutter is to leave both the task and part of one’s life incomplete. Either you have to trash certain items (some of which you just may find a use for within the next year, even though you have not used for the last 20 years), or you have to put them to use immediately. Storing them leaves your life cluttered and leaves you with the feeling not of failure, but of near-failure, like when you did not really fail calculus but dropped it in mid-term, thus earning an Incomplete.

The martial artist who chooses to study Chinese Kempo, Hapkido, or Aikido, for example, only to find midway to black belt that it was not his cup of cha, can do one of two things: he can pick a reasonable end-goal (like shodan) and tough it out until that goal is reached, or drop the art entirely, taking up another martial art from scratch, forever forgetting that he could have gotten further dan ranks in Chinese Kempo, Hapkido, or Aikido. If he talks about how close he came to mastery or secretly longs for the days when the Chinese Kempo, Hapkido, or Aikido floor welcomed him, he is in a pitiable state. The martial artist who chooses to discontinue his studies of C, H, or A, for example, claiming he will eventually return, will gloriously rise to fifth dan and operate his own school, had better shut up and do it, or just shut up, accepting that that was then and this is now. “Now” has left “Then” behind and is in no way desirous of a return visit.

The most pitiable situation is the person who studies Karate, for example, and leaves this art to study a little TKD, and later a little Aikido, then leaves that art to found his own A, K, & T-oriented art, his studies in each art incomplete, his closet crammed with clutter and his garage still full of stuff that seems valuable but that he should either use or remove completely in order to get his head in gear.

Things incomplete tug on one's sense of wholeness and satisfaction. We know that we all tend to leave things in our lives incomplete: a relationship we did not close with dignity, a promise we did not keep, a sentiment left unsaid, or even a Fibber McGee closet. But good golly, Miss Molly! If I had not brought it to your attention, it would have been a pity and would have left that little part of my life incomplete.