

# **What is Coaching For?**

## **Lessons from Don Juan de Marco**

**by Charles E Smith Ph.D**

**Copyright February 2012**

Last night, my family saw the 1994 movie “Don Juan Demarco” on Netflix with Johnny Depp and Marlon Brando. It was funny, heart-warming, sensual, intelligent and very well acted. We were transported from our everyday world of people struggling with their desire to get more out of life and work to a place where life was either a romantic adventure or nothing at all.

Romance is “Ardent emotional attachment or involvement.”The opposite of “Romance” is to “depreciate, minimize, play down, reduce or understate. Secretly, and starting with the Lone Ranger as my childhood hero, I think that’s what I’ve always felt, but never had the courage to be direct. As a consultant, I’ve sold companies imaginative thinking, team building, culture change, breakthrough results and executive coaching.. People were helped, money was made, and customers served. But inevitably, a prior context of order and control, power and position would creep back in. In some measure, my experience was like the Ernst and Young training video where the guy says, “I always wanted to be a Lion Tamer but I’m afraid, so I’m trying to work it out as an accountant.”

T. S. Eliot captured this in his poem. “The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock.”

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, “Do I dare? And “Do I dare?”  
Time to turn back and descend the stair  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

Do I dare?  
Disturb the universe? In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.  
For I have known them all already, known them all:  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

Here then are some “New Rules” for having life and work be either a romantic adventure or nothing at all.

*Rule Number One:* Stop needing anybody’s agreement ever for who you are and how you are being. Stop needing any agreement for the legitimacy of your heart felt projects. Speak about them powerfully and always say what inspires you. Act as if this is your world, you own it, it's your stage and others can play if they wish. If not, it can't be helped.

*Rule Number Two:* Pay attention to what you love and to what truly attracts you. All that matters is that you are attracted in that your inner energy is moving out into the world. Be specific about this in the words you speak, where you look, who you associate with, where you go. Feel free to be dramatic in speech and dress consistent with what lifts your spirit.

*Rule Number Three:* Know in your blood that your power and impact is coming from the way people contrast your way of being, moment by moment, with their own attitude and experience. Know that's the rest is only words.

*Rule Number Four:* Fully accept people and situations exactly the way they are. Know that everything you do or wish you could do to change them creates resistance, defeats your purpose, and makes a romantic adventure impossible. Let your experience flow through you.

*Rule Number Five:* Be content being stuck where you are. Prisoners who do “Hard Time” fight the fact that they are in jail and suffer. Prisoners who accept that they are in jail do “Easy Time” and are happier. In any moment, realize that you are where you are. Don Juan was content to be incarcerated and held to his self designed identity in the face of it. Freedom is the ability to choose how to be whatever the cost.

*Rule Number Six:* You do not have to do seek breakthroughs and extraordinary results in intentional and forceful ways. Follow the call of romantic adventure in word and deed and breakthroughs will follow while others join you because the path is so attractive.

The purpose of coaching is coaching is to help create the best life and work possible through the people you touch. A senior executive client I will see tomorrow feels depreciated , minimized played down, and understated. His boss has a boss has a boss. Starting with his wife and kids, he sits on a chain of number of human and bureaucratic bosses each resting on the one below. Only he can change this and he is responsible for all of it happening. The coach’s job is to help him turn this experience on it’s head.

Tomorrow, I will be Don Juan, the Coach.