Seeds, Life and Love

September 29, 2016 By Matt Starr

We recently sold our environmental, agriculturally based cohousing home of 16 years and bought a place a little north, near my boy's high school, Dartmouth College, and the many friends I'd made teaching for over a decade in Hanover. We left a lot behind at Cobb Hill, but are living with electric excitement about this new chapter.

Our new house is an old house, and needs a lot of work before we can move in. We rent across the road while waiting. But, soon we will be able to garden, plant flowers and preparing the soil for a large vegetable garden.

We are also planting fruit trees and a couple of Vermont natives. It's odd to be giving a life to something that you will not be able to see when it is matures. It will be like that for Sophie and I anyway, when we start putting seeds and saplings into the ground. We won't see them at their peak, providing full harvests of apples, plums, and pears, or the deep shade of a healthy hardwood.

But, for those of you with chronic illness like hepatitis who don't plant seeds, as well as those of us who do, there is an important life issue to address. Many of us are parents. We imagine, as they age, what kind of person our children will be, what they will do.

Does this ring a bell? I have one going to college next year and another graduating from Northeastern. What are the adult decisions they'll make or life journeys that will affect them? Will they have children of their own someday? (Code for "When will I be a grandfather?")

Everyone knows time is finite. Death and taxes and all that. But if you have chronic illness or disease, you also know that your life expectancy is potentially marginalized. You might not see those grandchildren, or may not see them make their own run at life. You are, at least I am, likely to leave this physical life without seeing them to grow to full bloom; healthy, shade giving, fruit producing adults.

That's kind of the way things work in general, but for me, realistically, I don't think I'll get to 80 years. Maybe, but I kind of doubt it. You might have a similar or even more intense reality. So, what can I do to be peaceful with this reality lingering?

Well, there is now. This is all about relationships, right? I've found that investing more quality time with my young adult kids, my dad, sister, and best friends is a helpful way to face an unknown

future. We spend time with each other, basking in all that we appreciate about each other.

Make more time now for your adult or younger kids. Live and love for now, not for a then you cannot control. It will bring the kind of emotional health and peace that helps us heal as well as a medicine can.

Dig in with them, and reach with empathetic listening and understanding of possible differences. Family and close friends hold us when we struggle. Hold them too. You'll feel more alive.

Anything is Possible.

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