

## Are We Ready?

by Tom Peters

This evening is a party to celebrate the retirement of an old friend. You're partner says or you say to yourself, "Are you ready?", "Am I ready?" We're usually checking to be sure we've dressed appropriately, we're clean, all zippers are up and socks match, keys to the house and car, ID and money, and the gift you purchased all wrapped and ready to go.

'Ready to go' let's slow down and think about last night while trying to get to sleep. That chorus from the inner committee rattling off phrases like, "Ya gonna try some of those lame jokes that landed like lead at the last party?" "Don't you wished you would have sprung for the teeth bleaching your dentist suggested last month?" "Gonna drink four martinis like at the last month's wedding and find yourself wrapped around the porcelain throne for hours" You roll from side to side and reply to the internal judges, "NO", "YES", "NO"! "I'm just going to be me, the me of the where and now...shut up and let me get some sleep." You try those breathing exercises and check your Fitbit for your heartrate. Now your mantra....'I'm fine..I'm where I'm at today and that's as good as it gets', 'I'm fine..I'm where I'm at today and that's as good as it gets', 'I'm fine..I'm where I'm at today and that's as good as it gets'.

The character above may have a partner or not. Most likely you've been both, so I'll proceed. Attending a party with a partner has dynamics that might include, balancing the amount of attention you pay to your partner, smile and don't stumble during introductions, support each other in conversations, remember your partner only knows half of the folks at the party, after a few hours start looking for 'let's leave' body language, smile and enjoy yourself. Attending the party alone its own dynamics, introduce yourself gracefully to those you don't know, everyone is going to be paired off but me, don't lean on your friend whose retiring give them space, it'll be a busy night so don't monopolize their time, smile and enjoy yourself.

Smile and enjoy yourself, it's a party, a party for your friend. You are ready. Find your grace even when you discover a dark green piece of kale on a tooth on your trip to the restroom an hour after eating. Smiling and eating can be treacherous. Pay attention...mindfulness, you've read at least five books and seven fine articles about it....use it...you are where you're at today and that's as good as it gets. What's right in front of you, wipe the kale off your tooth and go right back out there after checking all zippers. See....you're ready. Of course, this scenario is set in 2019 before the pandemic. Now... you could have no teeth, a boogered up nose and a mask will be in place to save you. It's parties and dinners as we approach 2022. Carry a handkerchief and use it.

As we ease away from Zoom meetings to in person events, going to such a party will have an unknown number of awkward moments as we approach someone. Do we bump elbows, fists, shake hands, mention our vaccine history, and the ultimate....open one's arms in a pre-hug gesture...and if the hug is accepted don't forget they expect your head to sway to the side.

Not to mention uncomfortable conversations we might find ourselves in the middle of...consider it an opportunity to reach deep, fully mindful, and full of grace before trying to sway someone else's opinion like, Black Lives Matter, The January 9<sup>th</sup> insurrection, vaccines or not...be careful and remember this is your friend's retirement party.

So now, ask yourself, was I ready? Of course, that battle with the committee commandeering your brain last night, the check list run down before arriving....you were ready to pay respect to your friend and graciously attend the party...head home and mark off another milestone in a life sprinkled with parties both comfortable and uncomfortable, cuddle up in bed and start your mantra before the committee has time to remind you of the kale-tooth-restroom incident.