



YOUTUBE LETTERS: SEEING WONDER IN YOUR WORLD

“Wonder... that sense of waking up and seeing things
the way you saw them before they became ordinary.”
(Nate Staniforth, Here is Real Magic)

Hello Friends,

I am often asked about the most important piece of advice I might offer to a graduate student, and it is this, “The vision, the sense of wonder, that motivated you to begin the journey, must be greater than the hurdles you will encounter along the way.” In mathematical terms it might be written as: $VISION > HURDLES$. What was it you saw that motivated you to begin this leg of your journey? Some of you uprooted partners, families, and pets to join you on this academic adventure. Others of you quit well-paying jobs, moved away from established communities, and deferred life opportunities. Do you recall what it was... that vision... that broad sense of wonder that prompted you to embark on the unknown?

As the opening excerpt suggests, wonder is not necessarily permanent. It can fade. Sometimes I forget about wonder. Other times I walk right on by wonder-full opportunities in my day, and ask when the hell the days became so endlessly ordinary and banal at best. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever questioned where the wonder went or when the ordinary became so commonplace?

I have discovered that a broader sense of wonder about life and my vision for it, can be strengthened by regularly acknowledging much smaller moments and opportunities of wonder that surround me on a daily basis. It is as if they have an accumulating nature about them. An affirming word from a friend. Savoring a “first” moment. The unexpected act of kindness. Can you intentionally look for wonder in your life? If you are drawn to art, or dancing with friends or the night sky, do you still make time for these parts of your life? And if not, can you change something so they can find their way back in?

Before...They... Became... Ordinary. I might encourage you to consider that amidst the seemingly endless work and diligent focus you put forth to attain your degree, do not let your experience here become ordinary... sustain the wonder that brought you here; look for wonder in the everyday. And the hurdles you encounter, regardless their size, will be no match.

I hope the wonder in this clip resonates with you as you go about your day:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGe2T-0e46I>

Standing with you,

Joshua Travis Brown, Ph.D.