



# Tips to keep you airborne!



On being human  
April 2024

Picture a man in his 'last quarter' on a beach, facing inland, with an incoming tide.

Smoothing a swathe of uneven sand, he started to paint by finger on the beach face surface, 'rubbing out' his attempts at breakneck speed till he was satisfied with his unfinished result.

Unfinished, I say, as he incrementally expanded his canvas with a smoothing hand, allowing him to extend his work, all the while rubbing out and re-working as he went along.

I couldn't make out what he was creating from my distant vantage point (I imagined a series of still frames from a movie) but I could see that the waves were licking at his heels and knew that it wouldn't be long till his back-breaking work was wiped clean.

This got me thinking of a letter I read recently by the Stoic philosopher Seneca, who, writing on death said:

'Death is just not being. What that is like, I know already. It will be the same after me as it was before me (our beachgoer's flat, pristine canvas).'

Comparing life and death to a lamp, he said 'We, too, are lit and put out. We suffer somewhat in the intervening period (the many attempts at achieving perfection and failing in the artist's challenging, sandy landscape), but at either end of it there is a deep tranquillity.'



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If you buy into this illuminating notion...or not, as the case may be, your life will likely be peppered with painful problems (the suffering piece) that you can choose to confront or avoid (clear a new stretch of sand to continue re-working the piece or get stuck and fall short of the mark).

Self-help gurus, including the Mark Mansons of this world (author of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*) will likely suggest you confront the uncertain and get uncomfortable if you wish to grow and realise your potential. They'll remind you that growth is a never-ending iterative process; that when you learn something new, you don't go from 'wrong' to 'right' but from wrong to slightly less wrong (Manson's spin).

Garrick Ohlsson, highly acclaimed American classical pianist, echoes the same sentiment on the subject of failing. In an interview with ABC radio, he commented that it's OK for world class artists to make mistakes in concert. It reminds the audience that they are human. If perfection is that which they seek, they should buy a recording!

As an aside, some years back, about 1 minute into playing the 3rd movement of Mozart's K.330 as an encore, Ohlsson had a memory lapse, turned to the audience and said...mind if I start that again? And that he did.

Long story short...on this sandscape, journey, rollercoaster production of being (call it what you will) called light...I mean life (damn...I stuffed up), if you're choosing a growth journey, give yourself permission to make mistakes along the way and to be less than perfect.



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This will help smooth a less anxious way forward and allow you to complete the challenging journey with greater ease, presence and purpose.

So, here's to lights, camera, action, stuff up, reaction, inaction, resurrection, course correction and so forth...till the credits go up, the lights go out and the waves come crashing in.

Of that we can be certain.

*Caroline*

*PS - If you know of anyone who might enjoy reading my newsletters, feel free to forward this to them and ask them to subscribe.*

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