



Are You in the Game of Life— or the Plan for Survival?

A chapter excerpt from her upcoming book on Recharge & Renewal® entitled *Voyage to Greatness by Marie Moran*

*Do you recall that haunting song made famous by Peggy Lee, **Is That All There Is?** It tells the story of a life which has become flat and barren, devoid of enthusiasm, adventure and fulfillment. So many people are conditioned to live their lives seeking success and survival, either consciously or not – and unfortunately that song becomes their story! They end up feeling empty, as though they are dead before their time is up! How does this happen? How does one fall into this trap, and what's the path to stay alive and thriving instead?*

We each navigate the course of life with a fundamental choice that dictates our level of relaxation at any moment in time: We make the choice between "All is Well" and "All is not Well."

The Story of Mitch

Consider my friend Mitch, a successful attorney in private practice for over 30 years. Mitch has also augmented his wealth by owning rental apartment buildings for an equally long time. Yet, despite his financial success, Mitch has confided to me that he still has a deep fear of going broke. At age 56, he's bored with his work and the same old grind. His marriage has lost its passion, too. While Mitch continues to work late and spend time in the office on weekends, his wife keeps herself occupied caring for his aging parents, attending to the on-going needs of their two adult sons, and hangs out at the Country Club with friends. While Mitch could retire, he admits he's afraid to, because he has no idea what he would do with himself!

Mitch has chosen a path by which he has ultimately mortgaged his Life Fulfillment. The foundation of his belief system has been to care for family and friends, putting aside enough money to ensure survival. He has no hobbies or pursuits *outside* of work.

"Happy" is not an adjective that comes to mind when I think of him! Like many other men his age, Mitch has sold out his own fulfillment for security and the approval of others. He's spent many years being the good father, the good husband, the good son and provider, meanwhile sacrificing many adventures and gifts that life might have in store for *him*.

During our discussions, I've counseled Mitch to begin taking care of himself as a way to bring through more satisfaction and fulfillment; to step back and take some time for introspection and possibly make some lifestyle changes. But Mitch always balks. He admits that he is afraid to look deep within himself or make any significant changes that might upset the whole fabric of his life. He simply is not willing to face that level of change and honesty within himself – at least not yet. Mitch is committed to maintaining his **Plan for Survival**, regardless of the costs and consequences.

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The Story of Rich

Contrast Mitch's story with that of my colleague Rich, an executive at an international financial services company. Over the course of Rich's career, he's worked at several top firms and done well for himself. At one point, he was sent on an extended overseas assignment away from his family, and found himself with time on his hands in the evenings. Wanting to fill the void with something worthwhile, Rich remembered the passion he'd had for art in his college days. So he enrolled in an evening painting course to develop his ability. Not only did he discover that the passion was still there – it turned out he had talent, too!

When I met up with Rich at age 57, here was a person who could see beyond his corporate "retirement" and knew just what he wanted to do! He's now exploring how to open a small shop in some sweet locale with friendly people and a warm climate where he can sell his paintings. He doesn't really need the money. What he desires is the fulfillment of selling his art! Rich desires purpose, passion and quality of life, and he realizes it's never too late to make the choice to follow his passion.

The Two Contrasting Paths

As illustrated by Mitch and Rich, we each navigate the course of our life with a fundamental choice. One choice is to be ruled by the *Fear of Survival*. The other is to trust that *All is Well*. *Fear of Survival* typically leads to the **Plan for Success and Survival**. *Trusting in All is Well* leads to the **Game of Life!** These two paths are like AM or FM frequencies on the radio. We only listen to one frequency at a time, but at the flick of a switch, we can go back and forth. While it's rare to find anyone who operates on one frequency all the time, there is a tendency to choose either the **Plan for Survival** or the **Game of Life**, one over the other, based on our upbringing and belief systems. We don't receive instruction or guidance in school for either of these paths. Rather, we learn by observation and assimilation, or by choosing a path of self-discovery and self-directed learning.

People who typically operate on the **Survival** frequency live with an undercurrent of lack and fear. The underlying belief is that there is *not* enough, or that survival depends on fitting in and being accepted. Their subliminal self-talk becomes "All is *not* Well." This leads to behaviors which are intended to control one's environment to ensure survival, such as working way too hard and missing out on a whole lot of Life! In contrast, people who operate on the **Life** frequency come from a trusting place. They trust in the abundance available to them, they have the courage to be the individual, and ultimately know that things do have a way of working out.

Following the Plan for Survival

Having worked as a coach with hundreds of clients over the years, I've observed that this is the path that most people are conditioned to accept as "the right way" by society, often reinforced by their parents. The teachings on this path lead first to survival, then to an image of success. The aim is to create nice, appropriate, socially acceptable persons who fit in with the group and achieve status and possessions as their tokens of success.

About the Author

Marie Moran is a nationally recognized expert in executive presence and leadership style development. She began her career as a workshop leader and executive coach in 1981, making her both a pioneer and a 25-year veteran in the field of executive development. Today Marie provides dynamic cutting-edge workshops and one-on-one coaching for people in entrepreneurial and Fortune 500 companies across all industries.

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The most common elements of the **Plan for Survival** include:

- A mental model of how to get ahead in life and be successful by society's standards
- Encouragement to adhere to your social and familial obligations and the "should be's" over and above your heart or intuition
- Adhering to traditions, which dictate what "a good person" does, despite your deep desire to be or do something different
- Other Success/Survival "rules" typically sound like this:
 - If your view conflicts with group opinion, it's best to be accommodating and go with the group so you'll be accepted.
 - Do what it takes to get to the top. Work hard, associate with the right people, make as much money as you can, and be sure to hang on to what you got.
 - Be in control, lest things fall apart.
 - Don't act frivolously. Life is serious and you need to be taken seriously.
 - Following your personal desires is selfish, can lead to troublesome excesses, and are distractions from purpose. It's best to put others first.
 - When speaking the truth, tone it down to keep from hurting anyone's feelings.

Playing the Game of Life

In the **Game of Life**, the focus is to *Follow the Adventure and bring through your gifts and greatness. The Game of Life* means living in full expression, connecting to your judgment, intuition and conscience, bringing through your Destiny.

Being in **The Game of Life** means that you:

- Develop yourself, prepare for opportunities, but stay flexible and present so you can respond in the moment.
- Don't put others' opinions over your own intuition and inner knowing without adequate reflection.
- Have the courage to be the first one with a new idea.
- Develop the discipline and endurance to "go the distance" with your ideas.
- When you don't know the answer to something, you relax, give it time to unfold and remain open to discover.
- Rather than just following the rules, teachings, and the expectations of others, you look for the truth in the situation, the flow of the day, and work from guiding principles instead.
- Have gratitude for everything that comes your way. You recognize that even things that seem totally negative are there for your learning and development. You trust that things will work out.

People caught in Survival let their cautions and fears stop them. Those who play the Game of Life understand that courage is not the *absence* of fear, but going forward *despite* fear.

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Update on Rich

My colleague Rich has returned to the U.S. from his overseas assignment and still holds his full time job. And rather than give up his avocation because he is back home with his family, he spends one night a week painting. With this new routine in place, he is able to turn out a series of works and continues to develop his artistic ability.

Rich's story illustrates a vital step in my **Recharge & Renewal**[®] process: Discipline. Having discovered his passion, Rich has the discipline to *develop* it. He is willing to invest time and energy to cultivate his ideas and abilities, regardless of his age. He has the drive and discipline to follow through, and his art has brought him great joy! Rich is definitely in the **Game of Life!**

Time for a New Song?

*Have you or someone you know grown tired of **Is That All There Is?** Looking for a way out of the **Plan for Survival?** Is it time to learn to switch from AM to FM and start playing the Game of Life?*

*In our **Recharge & Renewal**[®] workshops, we examine fundamental choices and learn to take steps which will connect to the greater fulfillment of the **Game of Life**. This is how we each discover more joy, greater freedom and ease in areas where previously there was entrapment, sacrifice or a lack of adventure and fulfillment. Is it time for you to sing a new song? Are you ready to celebrate with Joy to the World?*

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Marie Moran & Company offers workshops, seminars, and one-on-one consulting to develop personal leadership and life effectiveness. We impart skills and principles to enhance excellence in the workplace, and increase Life balance, fulfillment, and joy!