

# Knowing Which Fish to Keep and which to throw back!

AN ARTICLE BY MARIE MORAN

Life can bring us many opportunities to pursue. One of our biggest challenges as an individual is to recognize which ones to say “yes” to and which ones are better to pass up. For when we say yes to an opportunity, it takes us on a journey. While we are on that journey, we can miss *other* opportunities, some which might have been better for us!



Consider that in fishing, a fisherman may throw certain of his catch back into the sea. A particular fish might be too small to be worth keeping, a lobster might be less than the legal minimum length to catch and keep, or it's not a fish that's “good eating.” In our journey through life's adventure, we all could use similar guidelines for discerning which of life's opportunities are worth pursuing and which to let go of — and metaphorically “throw back.”

When our discernment skills are less developed or when our judgment may be fuzzy, we say yes to things we ought not to. We keep and eat the wrong fish. Then, while we are digesting that one, we often miss another “great fish” swimming our way just around the bend. We dissipate our life energy by going after opportunities that end up having little return, being a waste of our time, a distraction, or altogether bad choices for us.

Sometimes an opportunity that is in front of us can be just perfect for someone else; it's just that it's not on purpose for us. Or the problem might be that the timing isn't quite right when the opportunity first appears. If we pursue the opportunity full force anyway, we usually discover, as time goes by, that there's just not a flow with it. It becomes clear that we're not ready for

it, or there's no enduring passion with it, or this idea or opportunity is ahead of its time — all the elements aren't in place to have it work out just yet.

When we have developed and honed our discernment, we can sense these signposts more quickly, saving ourselves a lot of wasted time and effort! The next time you are wondering if an opportunity is for you or not, try sticking your toe in and testing the waters. It's easier to throw the fish back before you've reeled it all the way in and brought it up on your boat for all to see!

While the challenge of discerning which fish to keep certainly applies to all sorts of opportunities, here are a few specific examples you might relate to from your own experience or from your observations of others:

- A new job opportunity comes along, and while it sounds good on the surface, you're not really turned on by it, or you sense that you're not yet prepared to make that change in direction.
- A vendor or service provider is available to assist you, but you don't feel a great exchange going on in your connection with them. Instead, you feel like you're utilizing them because it's convenient, but you're just not getting the excellence you're after in that arena.

## Knowing Which Fish to Keep

- You're dating someone you really like, but they just don't "get" who you are. They want you to be the person they are looking for, rather than you!
- You have a small client that is very high maintenance and doesn't appreciate all you do for them. They are eating up a great deal of your time and energy with very little return.
- There is a business colleague with whom you would like to collaborate, but the exchange feels unbalanced, all one way. You're giving a whole lot more than the other person. You wonder if you might not find similar qualities and talents in another colleague who is more willing to have a reciprocal, balanced exchange.
- You continue to spend time with a companion or potential romantic partner because the person is nice, and you're flattered that this person is interested in you. But there is no real sizzle! The connection is safe and comfortable but doesn't provide the fulfillment you seek.
- Something that appears to be a large business opportunity has come along. Yet you sense that it will sabotage your life-balance preferences (e.g. too much travel or financial risk) or your overall direction. Or you sense it won't turn out to be the type of project you really desire to engage in at this stage of your life.

### How to Know Which Fish to Throw Back

To stay on course and make the best decisions about these opportunities, it's important to develop **Razor-Sharp Discernment**. This means that as opportunities present themselves, you put in place mechanisms for calibrating your decision making, a process that affords you a certain amount of intuitive listening time. Rather than responding immediately to requests, you give yourself some "soak time" to calibrate all aspects of the opportunity. You develop a process for discovering what to keep (or consider) and what to pass up.

### Questions You Might Ask Yourself:

- What is the payoff that this opportunity can bring me, both short and long term?
- What will change immediately, and what do I envision happening down the line?
- If I'm totally honest with myself, why is this attractive to me? Do I feel true desire and passion with it? Or does it play more to my ego needs (e.g. power, affiliation or recognition)?
- Will this opportunity take me closer to my vision and purpose? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- If I say yes to this opportunity, what may I subsequently have to say no to? What other opportunities might be lost?
- What else might I have to give up (or sacrifice) if I say yes to this opportunity?



### Developing your Razor-Sharp Discernment Process:

Here are a few more guidelines and thoughts for your consideration:

- How can you carve out some intuitive listening time into your day for reflection?
- At what time of the day does your intuition seem to be sharpest?
- Who else can assist you? Who is a great coach or counselor? Who is an objective sounding board for you?
- Who should you avoid talking to? Who might muddy the waters of your discernment?

- What does your gut say about this choice you're considering? How do you feel as you picture yourself moving into it? Enthused, neutral, drained? What does your heart say?

### Clues That a Fish You're Considering Should Be Thrown Back:

When an opportunity or decision is right for you, you'll notice a passion and flow with it. What seems like magical coincidences can occur! The opposite is true when something is not right. There **won't** be a flow, and you'll feel like a fish swimming upstream against the current. Watch for clues like these:

- Appointments (or commitments) you've made that relate to this idea keep falling through. Things don't gel easily.
- You're starting to doubt, or you don't feel fully committed to the choice.
- As you tune into it, you don't get the energy to get up and into action — there is no real passion or pull with this opportunity. It feels more like a "should."
- You sense that your motivation for doing this is to prove something to yourself or others, to be liked, polite, or politically appropriate.
- Inherent in this opportunity is a personal sacrifice — someone is asking you to do something (or give up something) that doesn't feel good or seem balanced.
- As it comes time to make a change, there's so much in the way you can't see how to make it work with an ease and a flow...it's a big struggle or hassle.
- You start to get a headache or other physical symptom of stress as you move in the direction of that opportunity.

### Benefits to Choosing Only the Right Fish for You:

Clearly, you'll be investing more effort into your discernment process as you follow these guidelines, and there are lots of benefits that make it all worthwhile. They include:

- You'll become clearer about what you really desire, making your stride more steady and sure.
- You'll stay on purpose in your life, achieving the targets that really matter.
- You won't be distracted from the things that do matter to you.
- You'll feel more energized as you avoid distractions.
- You'll find yourself becoming more honest as you learn to say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no.
- You won't sell yourself short and settle for opportunities that "aren't quite it."
- Your self-esteem will rise as you make decisions with more certainty.
- Your life will flow more easily with less stress and strain.
- You'll attract more of what you **do** want into your life!

#### About the Author

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