

## The Cracked Pot

by: Mark Susnow Letters on Life#3 Some experiences you never forget. In some of them there is great learning. Many years ago I had such an experience that remains with me to this day. It shows up in so many areas of my life. To begin with I like to perform. I was a trial lawyer for 30 years and have been a musician since I was seven. Most people would say I am comfortable in front of people. But even now, whenever I'm in front of people, there is an inner conversation going on that I do not want to have. It is always a variation of "can I do it" or "will it be good enough." This experience occurred when I participated in a weekend workshop sponsored by the Actors Institute which was designed to increase one's ability to give better presentations. The participants included actors, musicians, comedians, lawyers and politicians. After a long weekend of exercises designed to "stretch" us we were required to give our presentation. We then critiqued our own and each others performance. Without exception, our critique of our own presentation was much harsher than the groups. The instructor commented that if we had to hire ourselves we would never get a job! We are so hard on ourselves. The truth is, in the process of trying to be perfect, we often focus on our imperfections and sometimes that is all we see. Because of this fear of being imperfect, we procrastinate and agonize over seemingly easy tasks. My wife Annie reminded me of a story that illustrates this point. The master lived quite a distance from the stream. Every day his servant, the water bearer, would walk from his master's house to the stream with two large pots, each hung on opposite ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the walk, while the other pot had a crack in it and arrived only half full. This went on for a full two years and the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfections and of the fact that it was only able to accomplish half of what it had been made to do. Finally the cracked pot summoned up enough courage to have its own conversation with the water bearer. It went something like this. " I am ashamed and I want to apologize to you for I have let you down. Because of my flaws you have had to do twice as much work." But the water bearer would have nothing of this conversation. "Did you notice the beautiful wild flowers along the path and did you notice that these beautiful flowers were only on your side of the path?" That's because I have always known of your flaws and I took advantage of them and planted flower seeds on your side of the path and every day you watered them. And these beautiful flowers that you have watered everyday grace the master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house." Each of us has our own unique flaws and in our own way we are all cracked pots. We all know we have imperfections and to varying degrees we have shame around them. But what we need to remember is that with all our imperfections we create a lot of beauty and a lot of good in the world. Perhaps what real courage is all about is not letting our fears and imperfections stop us. We keep on going. Imagine experiencing your imperfections in a different way-- as a gift or unique opportunity. Identify one imperfection that keeps coming up for you and discover what gift is hidden in that imperfection. Where is the opportunity? Let me know what you discover. I love receiving your many responses and feedback and if you have other stories to share let me know about them. Feel free to pass on this letter to the friends in your circle and let them know about the advantages of being on the journey. Mark

## About the Author

Mark Susnow, formerly a trial attorney for 30 years, is a coach, speaker, musician, and group facilitator who motivates and empowers others to live the life they want and deserve. He lives in Marin County, and on the island of Kauai, with his wife and family. Be sure to visit his website at

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