

## PDF - Lancaster - Rev. Wil Darcangelo - The Benefit of Risk

One of my favorite lessons in acting school was about the benefit of taking risks. Those risks were specifically about the skill of acting and expressing the truth of a character, but all actor training focuses entirely around emulating the inner workings of human feelings and behavior. So it becomes quite a good test kitchen for understanding it.

Which also means facing the very human anxiety of taking those risks. Describing it as a fear of failure is somewhat oversimplified. Because often we are just as equally afraid of success and the implications of succeeding. Ironic, isn't it?

We most comfortably prefer something called homeostasis, meaning something which remains in a constant state, unchanging. It feels safe and familiar. But it is also stagnant. And we are not built for stagnancy.

Life is much like a successful gene pool. It requires diversity of experience. Curveballs. Adversity. And especially failure. It requires a steady stream of new input to engage with.

Thinking for a moment about the nature of risk, it's worth mentioning that there is a big difference between taking a calculated risk and being reckless. There's nothing admirable about recklessness. But risk taking can be strategic, especially if you put in place the appropriate supports.

No one jumps out of a plane without making sure their parachute is in good functioning order and folded properly. They don't jump until they've been sufficiently trained. This is smart risk taking. Attempting to open a door on a commercial aircraft midflight with the intention of jumping out is beyond reckless. And no one's suggesting you do that.

What type of risks are you already willing to take in life? One could argue that crossing the street is a risky business, and it is. But it's a calculated risk that we have been trained to undertake. We were taught to look both ways.

Emotional risks are some of the biggest. It's hard to put ourselves out there within the sightlines of rejection. But think about that for a moment. What does rejection really take from you? Rejection doesn't take away your birthday. Rejection alone is solely an emotional experience, not a physical one. Is it possible to remind yourself of that fact so that you are more capable of taking an emotional gamble? You will be OK.

The fact is, we must take risks in life. They are natural to us. They foster our development and expand our experiential learning. They make it so that we have a greater breadth of experience to draw upon when facing challenges ourselves or when comforting those who are. We are better servants to humanity when we are willing to take a chance on something that may not work out.

For me, it's always seemed more logical to spend my energy developing resiliency than preventing disappointment. Because disappointment is inevitable, whether we have developed resiliency against it or not. So it's better to remain calm and have faith that things will work out. And when they don't, we spend far less energy soothing ourselves and more energy planning our next risk taking adventure.

A spiritual principle I've employed for decades is "leap and the net will appear." Is that something I expect to literally happen if I were to suddenly jump off a building? No. But it is my faith in action.

Making the choice to leap and believing that a "net" of some kind will appear is a form of risk taking that works under the assumption that the Universe understands our deeper intent, and seeks to align with it. In that sense, I can't really make any mistakes. Because even things which look like mistakes have a deeper resonance with my intent and therefore manage to work out in spite of my expectations of how. My mother has always referred to this using the expression "everything happens for a reason." It's one of my favorites.

I recognize that some people bristle at that notion of faith. They might reply with something like, "Yeah, but what if that reason is bad?" Or they'll conclude that there is no larger system at work, perceiving our intent and co-creating with it. That's OK. I have no proof of a larger system at work, so I certainly am not in a position to convince someone else.

But the quality of my life is improved by my willingness to fail, to make mistakes, to seek adventure when my couch is so much more comfortable. My faith rarely disappoints me when I do so. And in the end, I'm often left with the feeling that the risk I chose was something God was hoping all along I'd take and had paved the way for me just in case I did.