Another Spring — Renewal in the Face of September

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The May issue of Psychiatric Annals provides a helpful update on schizophrenia — its evolving definition and some up-to-date treatment concepts — ably guest edited by Philip G. Janicak, MD.

Your editor just turned 77 years young. Don’t tell anybody, they might start looking for cognitive slippage. I just finished writing my first novel, Living Forever. I have never knowingly written fiction before. What fun, feeling like I’m a god while writing, then having my characters do what they damn please.

The practice was a part of my Zen Mind, Beginners Mind project. Zen Mind, Beginners Mind is a book by the Zen Master Shunryu Susuki. I read it again every few years, and its message to me was that to recapture the enthusiasm of the young child as an adult, one should have no preconceptions, and always be a beginner at some task or interest. This has led me to take up a new “beginner” interest every year: glider flying lessons, fly fishing, writing a novel for the first time, etc.

But there’s the other side to it. Although I do everything I can to enhance my experience of consciousness and embrace the spring with its renewal and uplifting birdsongs, there is this relentless emergence of bodily design flaws. I keep asking my wife, Katie, to repeat herself. The right knee osteoarthritis won’t let me play tennis, and this year’s skiing was pretty pathetic, even if I did get to take my young grandsons up to the ski mountain on “super-senior” free skiing.

The latest is a “Gleason 6.” What to do? Any suggestions? I’m inclined toward watchful waiting, but who knows? It’s all part of life and living fully in the moment. Are you surprised that I’m walking mindfully, attending to “mindful presence,” trying to live fully every moment, and doing what I can to help others? I will attend to fully experiencing this spring while in the “September of My Years,” as Frank Sinatra used to sing so beautifully.

Will I give in to the aches and pains, newly discovered design flaws, to fatigue, to gravity? I’ll embrace them and savor my consciousness, the gift of Katie’s love. I’ll fight to stand up and not stoop to the gravity of life. I’ll continue to “stretch” middle age. I’ll stay in the game, practice mindfulness, try to beat time, and I hope you will, too. Here’s to another spring — here’s to life!

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do: 10.3928/00485713-20110425-01