



The Joy of Small Things

A fifteen-minute pause in a noisy world – with Paul Cleworth

THE BIG IDEA

The bigger-better-more story is, on quiet reflection, mostly nonsense. The small things – the morning coffee, the dog, the walk before anyone needs anything, the Sunday afternoon nap – are not the supporting cast of a well-lived life. They are the main event.

“I wish I were big.”

– Big, Penny Marshall, 1988

Josh makes the wish. Wakes up thirty. Spends two hours discovering that almost none of it is as good as the bedroom he left behind.

“People have forgotten what life is all about. They’ve forgotten what it is to be alive.”

– Awakenings, Penny Marshall, 1990

Thirty years frozen. The wish list: a street, rain, a newspaper.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

The Hook	Zoltar, a wish – and the FAO Schwarz piano floor.
The Lie	Bigger, better, more – and who it left tired.
The Second Film	Awakenings – a wish list of ordinary things.
The Science	Hedonic adaptation, and 85 years at Harvard.
Four Japanese Words	Wabi-sabi. Komorebi. Kuchisabishii. Kodawari.
The Practice	Pick a ritual. Stop upgrading. Name the good thing.
Who It's For	Anyone tired of chasing the next thing.

WHY ‘SMALL THINGS’?

In investing – the smaller, steadier choice usually wins. The upgrade rarely pays for itself.

In family life – the Tuesday afternoon walk with the dog beats the weekend away you spent on emails.

In business – small, repeatable wins beat big launches with nothing to follow.

In life – the upgrade rarely solves the problem the upgrade promised to solve.

“If nothing changed, what would I still be grateful for today?”

– the question that quietly disarms the upgrade treadmill

STOIC & OTHER WISDOM

“Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking.”

MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS (BOOK 7)

“Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.”

EPICETUS · DISCOURSES

“Please notice when you are happy, and murmur: ‘If this isn’t nice, I don’t know what is.’”

KURT VONNEGUT · A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

“No need to laugh and cry – it’s a wonderful, wonderful life.”

“And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.”

THE HOUSEMARTINS · HAPPY HOUR, 1986 · LOUIS ARMSTRONG · WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD, 1967

REFERENCES THIS EPISODE

FILM

Big (1988) · Awakenings (1990) · Good Morning, Vietnam (1987)

MUSIC

The Housemartins – Happy Hour (1986) · Louis Armstrong – What a Wonderful World (1967)

BOOKS & THINKERS

Meditations Bk 7 – Marcus Aurelius · Discourses – Epictetus · The Good Life – Waldinger & Schulz · The Joy of Small Things – H. J. Parkinson · Wabi Sabi – Beth Kempton · Ikigai – Ken Mogi · A Man Without a Country – Vonnegut · Robert Brault · Laura Ingalls Wilder

JAPANESE WORDS FOR SMALL THINGS

Wabi-sabi – beauty in the imperfect and the weathered · Komorebi – sunlight filtering through the leaves of trees · Kuchisabishii – ‘lonely mouth’; eating from habit, not hunger · Kodawari – disproportionate care given to one small thing

THE STEADY PATH PRINCIPLE

Notice. Savour. Repeat.

THIS EPISODE’S REFLECTION QUESTION

“If everything stayed exactly the same for the rest of my life, what, today, would I be grateful for?”

If the honest answer is ‘nothing’, it is not a financial problem. It is an attention problem. The small things are, almost without exception, already there.

COMING UP – EPISODE 10

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

“Whose voice has been narrating my life?”

Sit with the question before the next episode.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU The small things are not small by accident. They are small by design.

Slow down. Think clearly. Keep walking your steady path.

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