

The Safari Called Life by Denis Waitley

Many of my current keynote presentations to major corporations have focused on my recent experiences in Africa and how they can be applied to our individual and collective performance in pursuit of excellence and quality of life. I view life as a way of traveling on a mysterious, ever-challenging safari, where the trail is blazed by our daily choices, actions and responses.

There is an oft-repeated cliché I have heard ever since I was a boy: “It’s a jungle out there!” Every television and newspaper headline seems to shout about the perils of existence. Bad news is always the special meal of the day and because of the media’s increasing preoccupation with what’s wrong in the world, each generation believes it is living in the most difficult times in history. How are we to face our deepening feelings of apprehension and fear in view of increasing global unrest and insecurity? How can we achieve survival, success and serenity in this savage paradise called life?

What I have learned on my annual pilgrimages to Africa on safari can be applied to our own daily lives. Life in every environment today is a savage paradise. Savage to the ignorant, uneducated, unskilled, prejudiced and ill-informed. A paradise to those who have learned to adapt to and manage change, remain flexible, unhook prejudices, view failures and mistakes as temporary detours and target corrections, and remain lifelong learners. Our safari guides were comfortable and at ease in the dangerous ecosystem of Africa. We, on the other hand, felt vulnerable, insecure and hesitant. We were the newcomers, the tourists. They were the guides, confident through training and experience.

In my book, *Safari to the Soul*, I mention another book that had made similar points, titled *The Jungle Is Neutral*, written by Col. F. Spencer Chapman, an officer in the British army during World War II. Col. Chapman survived for four years as a guerrilla fighter in Malaya. Cut off from the outside world, which listed him as “missing, believed killed,” he was isolated deep in the jungle, undergoing ordeals such as few individuals have ever lived to document. He escaped twice from prison camps because, in his own words: “I needed to get back to my assignment!”

When questioned later about his adversaries being expert jungle fighters and the fact that he was up against scorpions, yellow fever, malaria, poisonous snakes, incessant rain, wild tigers, leeches and undergrowth so thick it can take four hours to walk a mile, these were Col. Chapman’s observations:

“I had my bouts with most of what you mentioned. Some of it I was prepared for. Some of it I learned on the job. I managed to get around by bicycle, dugout canoe, mostly on foot, and some of the time on my belly crawling through the jungle muck. The jungle provides drinking water, fruit and food, shelter and plenty of places to hide. I also made friends with the tribal chiefs and natives who had lived there all their lives and who taught me coping skills.”

When it was brought to his attention that others who spent only days or weeks in the jungle swore that the jungle is hostile, cruel and vindictive, Col. Chapman answered resolutely: “To me, the jungle is neutral. It is your knowledge, attitude, skills and habits that see you through. The jungle is what it is. It doesn’t think. It is the backdrop for your journey. Your preparation, training, resourcefulness and dedication are what count.”

On your own safari in pursuit of your professional and personal goals, as you look forward to a new beginning and the climb to a higher level, where you have never journeyed before, remember that acronym called the “KASH-flow” of life.

K is for Knowledge. Invest fully in your lifelong learning. The shelf-life of your formal education, with any and all of your degrees, is about eighteen months. Every five minutes there is a new scientific or technological breakthrough that upgrades or obsoletes what had gone before. Knowledge is the new power and the greatest tool for combating fear and prejudice.

A is for Attitude. Examine your “why” and compare it with those who are peak performers in every business. View problems as opportunities to grow and understand that virtually every successful entrepreneur has been a problem-solver and risk-taker. Taking the calculated risk is what creates security. Seeking security, provided by others, is the greatest risk to your personal freedom and fulfillment. Your attitude is either the lock on or key to your door of success.

S is for Skills. Attend meetings, conference calls and take advantage of every opportunity to gain insights

and experiences from successful role models and mentors. We learn by observation, imitation and repetition. Model yourself after mentors with proven track records of success, whose character traits and personal lives match their professional accomplishments. Behind every world-class athlete, there is a world-class coach. The same holds true in every business arena. Surround yourself with winning coaches.

H is for Habits. By the inch, success is a cinch. By the yard, it's hard. Break your major goals down into mini-goals and stair-step your way to the top by establishing a dynamic daily routine that eliminates time-wasting activities and maximizes performance-achieving activities. Remember, the more you train, the more you gain. Habits are like submarines. They run silent and deep. Repetition is the key. Habits grow, over time, from cobwebs into cables to shackle or strengthen our lives. Practice makes permanent. Only perfect practice makes perfect. You don't break habits, you replace them.

By using the KASH formula, you will increase your cash flow and your productivity, giving you more free time to go on safaris when and where you want to. Instead of a tourist, you'll become a tour guide, with a greater awareness of your environment, courage based on skills and training, and an attitude of confidence to turn every stumbling block you face into a stepping stone to success and fulfillment.

Life is a safari into a savage paradise. The quality of your journey will depend on your preparation, choices and responses. Become a guide, instead of a tourist!