



Stepping Stones for the Good Life

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NEXT! [Great Advice from “Coach Cal”]

From the Desk of Glenda Haskell, *Life Coach*

One day about a month ago, I was browsing the shelves of the Ann Arbor library looking for a book on CD. For years, I've been listening to books while riding our stationary bike or going through my strength workout routine at home. Despite a mostly repetitive routine, listening to books makes the time fly. Plus, at the end of the year, I'm amazed to take stock of the many books I've enjoyed, a mix of non-fiction and fiction.

About a month ago, I was surprised to find my eyes drawn to the book *Bounce Back* by basketball coach John Calipari. “Coach Cal” had successful runs as head coach at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at the University of Memphis en route to becoming, in the spring of 2009, head basketball coach at Kentucky, indisputably one of the finest college basketball programs in the country. (He also did a brief stint as the head coach of the New York Nets, with a respectful record in 1996-97. But halfway through the 1997-98 season, after winning only three games in the first 20, he was fired. This experience and its aftermath, plus an agonizing loss to Kansas in the final minutes of the NCAA basketball final in 2008 while Calipari was head coach at Memphis, is what gave him the bulk of his material for the book.)

Although sports are by no means my thing, I'm pulling together information on the topic of career transitions in preparations for offering a workshop on this topic. And my inner voice told me I simply had to listen to this book.

Coach Cal is one heck of a guy. He's smart, honest, extremely hardworking, heartfelt in a head coach kind of way, and the kind of man it would be an honor to meet. While listening to *Bounce Back*, I came to respect, admire, and like Coach Cal--a lot. (As I write this blog, Kentucky is ranked first in the country with a record of 24-1.) He's also a teacher at heart. And I'm here to tell you about a powerful coaching technique that I believe may be helpful to you whenever you make a mistake, head down the wrong fork in the road, or turn left when it would have been better to turn right.

At one point in *Bounce Back*, Calipari tells his reader that immediately after one of his players makes a mistake on the court or executes a play poorly, he yells just one word: NEXT! That's it: NEXT!

What's the message in that one powerful word? *Okay, we might have screwed up that one, but it's behind us. That moment is gone--forever. We've moved on already—to the next move, the next pass, the next basket, or the next rebound—the next whatever it is.*

Bringing this advice from the world of college basketball into everyday life, I invite you to think about the power of this single word. Your alarm clock malfunctions and you get a late start to the day. NEXT! You submit a short story for publication and receive yet another politely worded rejection letter. NEXT! You play your first chess game in an amateur tournament and in only five minutes your opponent announces, “Checkmate.” NEXT! You give your first speech at a meeting of Toastmaster's International and it falls flat. NEXT! A first date doesn't go well. NEXT! You give a sample session of life coaching and it seems to go well--but the person decides not to hire you. NEXT! You try a new recipe and your guests end up politely pushing it around their plates. NEXT!

So next time you make a wrong move or things don't go so well, be good to yourself and give yourself the gift of NEXT! There's a Coach Cal inside you, inside every one of us. (Thanks, Coach.) NEXT!