

Getting to that Stage of Equilibrium

By [Bill Corden](#) (February 2024)



Cyclist, Natalia Goncharova, 1913

I'm a big sissy when it comes to emotional control. I cry at the theater, I cry at the movies, I cry at a beautiful song. Me at 76 years old.

You'd think I would have toughened up by now but, no, I'm still a blubbering mess at Broadway shows. I still have trouble relating even mildly sad stories without crying. When

I was a young child, my Mum used to say that my bladder was too close to my tear ducts.

Strange then that I have hardly shed a tear in the terrible month that's just passed.

My younger brother passed away at 73 years old only hours after I'd finished a phone conversation with him, gone to join Mum and Dad and two more of my brothers. My sister relayed the news and, although I was very sad, I just took it as another episode of life. I did break down just a little once the reality set in but no real breakout of sobbing and heaving. A day or two after he was gone, I'd filed him away in a bank of happy memories. There wasn't going to be any sort of funeral service because he lived in the UK on his own and my sister told me there was nobody left alive who would remember me from the time I lived there.

Next, I was talking to a dear, dear friend of mine who I've known for over 35 years, on the phone on Saturday night. He was telling me that he was feeling fine but was going for a medical test on his heart functions the following day. He had to travel close to 75 miles to get to the testing facility but he wasn't doing the driving; a friend was taking him while his wife stayed at home.

11am the following Sunday morning, I get a text. George is in the hospital after a heart attack. 10 minutes later, I get another text— so succinct in these twitter days— “George died.” He was 75 years old.

Now I'm numb to losses. It's just a part of this existence that you get inured to. You just have to deal with the details, offer your help in any way you can, but you can't unring that bell.

My sister's on the phone again 2 weeks later, “Your cousin John has just passed away.” He was 82 years old. The last sibling of my Aunt's family and there, all of a sudden, I

realized that I am the oldest survivor of both families. Again I didn't cry, but there's an inner sense of impermanence that's developing some edges in my day to day life.

I'm not really expecting to die anytime soon myself. I'm not scared but you never know the moment, so I got to thinking what sort of life I've had and the things that I've yet got to do.

On reflection, I've been very lucky. I left school at 16 and no further scholastic education. God gifted me with a sunny personality and I think that's what's carried me through any hard times (and no mistake, there's been a few).

Since I got married some 23 years ago, I haven't really had one unhappy day. I've pretty much had easy jobs throughout my working life and made a modest living for my efforts, which has let me live comfortably (yet frugally) for the last 14 years of retirement. I've walked the great Wall of China, I've swum by the Great Barrier Reef, been through both the Suez and the Panama canals. I've been to Venice and Barcelona and Paris, and even spent 2 months in a bamboo hut in Papua New Guinea.

I've achieved everything I wanted to achieve in my sporting life: three holes in one, rode the Kettle Valley railroad on my bike (three times), rode the Seattle to Portland bike ride (three times), and even beat Lance Armstrong's time in the Marathon (with no drugs I might add).

I'm pretty good at all of the sports I turn my hand to. No champion, you'll have known that you've been in a game with me. Sports and writing have been my life.

So the things I've still got to do? Nothing ... I'm satisfied to be an ungulate for the rest of the time that's given to me. A trip here and there, an inspirational poem or song to be written out of thin air, a fabulous musical to attend and a life at peace. What more could a man ask for?

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