

Objects We Keep: My Yes/No Medallion

A tiny object that I sometimes carry with me. Can I tell you how this object came to be and what this object means to me?

Jerry Weinberg from the computer software field was a much-loved contributor. He authored more than 40 books and inspired a lot of people. One of the persons he inspired was me.

One of his concepts was to build a consultant's toolkit, a metaphor for building the skills you need in order to function well especially if you work as an independent consultant. Some of my colleagues seem to favor one of the tools over the other tools, which I think indicates something about themselves, indicates what they want to improve and/or know its skill they need to work on. I actually cannot recall whether it was Jerry's suggestion or something colleagues of mine started, but some people I know would find a small symbolic object as a reminder of a "tool" and keep the object in a pocket, or bag to have nearby as a visual reminder.

My favorite tool was and still is the Yes/No medallion. Jerry's point about the medallion would be to develop your awareness of your right to say yes or no to a request. For those of us who sometimes struggle to say no to some requests, I know it's the tool I need to "carry" with me and the tool I need to work on the most. I wanted a symbol, an object. I wanted an object that could

represent this tool but there are no stores that sell Yes/No medallions! I knew I would have to invent something. My requirements were that an object be small and light. Here's my medallion and how I found the right medallion for me.

I went to a nearby gift shop, the type of shop that sells an assortment of items and is hard to describe other than "creative." I was poking along in the store when the person behind the counter said, can I help? I decided to just tell him the story of the medallion and what I was hoping to find - a symbol that would remind me that I can say yes or no to a request. I added that I was hoping for an object that would remind myself to take care of myself. I was surprised when the man behind the counter was enthusiastic about my "quest." He said hold on, I have a box of leftover earrings, lost buttons, small things - maybe something in the box will help. He brought back a box just as he described and let me rummage around. And I found my medallion.

The lone person depicted I thought I could use as a reminder to think about myself before I overcommit to yet something else. The happy background I thought could help me to remember balance in nature, balance for myself. The man behind the counter looked at the small object I was holding and said ah yes, that came from a bracelet, the piece itself was actually a nut, if you



turn it over, you might be able to see beneath the shiny surface it was a nut cut in half. Inside I

was amused thinking yes, a nut not even a whole nut just a half a nut. I said I'll choose this object - what could I pay you for it? And the man said, oh nothing at all - I hope it works for you, best of luck.

This tiny little object. I tuck it into the front pocket of my jeans. I carry it with me on all sorts of days, days when I expect or foresee a challenge. I carry it when I travel remembering to tuck it inside my backpack until I can put it back in my pocket after airport security. I've had it tucked inside jeans when I've stood up and delivered a keynote. I nearly always have it in a pocket on a day when I anticipate a difficulty ahead. Sometimes I fidget with it when no one is looking. In fact, only once have I shown this object to someone (until now). I've had this object, this symbol for more than a decade. Sometimes I laugh to myself that my medallion is "broken" when I find I've stumbled down the familiar path of being overcommitted.

My medallion also reminds me of Jerry. Once in a workshop that Jerry taught, I have to admit, I didn't like how he handled a certain situation. I was surprised, disappointed but eventually came to the realization to be careful about what I internally call "over hero-ing" someone. Jerry was human, he was inherently imperfect as we all are. Sometimes when I look at the lone figure, I remind myself no one is perfect, I am not either. Keep working towards balance. Don't expect to handle all things well all the time. Think about the balance of other people too and don't "over hero" someone else thinking someone else knows everything or always calls something right. We are human, we make mistakes, we make millions of decisions in life often in a moment's notice

and it can be a challenge - no it's not a challenge, it is just not possible to make the right decision every time. My Yes/No medallion is not broken, it is me sometimes making the wrong decision.

And after all, my medallion is a just a half a nut.

Thank you, Jerry.

Jerry Weinberg

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http://geraldmweinberg.com/Site/Consulting_Secrets.html