

Life Is Short. Do What Matters.

Six words. A Lifetime of wisdom.



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Six words: Life is short. Do what matters—A lifetime of wisdom.

After the unexpected death of my vibrant sister and then my other sibling's serious battle with cancer—all within the last two years—I'm starting to think differently about life...and death. I don't mean to be morbid here, but, as they say, one out of every one person dies and no one can predict when our day will come. Reason enough to validate the statement *Life is short.*

Tragedy has a way of slicing away the frivolous and mindless routines of life and throwing questions in our face like, "What does this matter?" Leaning back into a striped lounge chair with a cold drink in my hand and the vast expanse of ocean stretching out before me usually evokes a "Life is good" comment, but lately it's tag-teamed with, "What does it matter?"

Of course, idea-makers like myself, band directors and the like, are eternal optimists and tend toward feeling virtually invincible. After all, we create winning performances, transforming average students into admirable young people with strong character and more, year after year. Doing the impossible with limited time, budgets and personnel; it's not long

before we take on the personae of a super hero.

Super heroes fearlessly face insurmountable challenges, which we all do. Unfortunately, that is as close to assimilating the superhero identity most of us will come. More likely, we will take on more than we can handle, get lost in the urgency of the present and become bogged down in the practical necessities—all the while losing sight of those things that really matter.

But what really matters? Do you remember why you pursued a career in teaching? Remember that desire to cultivate music to make a meaningful contribution in the lives of others? Or to help others find meaning and purpose through music performance like you did?

How do we stop muddling through and start doing what matters? How can we be sure our efforts will make a difference in the long run? Here are a few standards to hold up to our daily schedule.

1. Determine what really matters today. Make your expectations known. Don't clean out the uniform closet if you expect to hand out new music tomorrow and you haven't had a look at it yet.

2. Be intentional. Make deliberate and inspired choices about your work. Look at your schedule and intentionally filter out those things that are not relevant and focus on what is. Keep it simple, direct and to the point—don't overload.

3. Be positive. Be good at finding the good in others. Find ways to reinforce positive behavior. Honor commitment and validate strong character.

4. Learn to say "no." Sometimes we have to say "no" even to good opportunities and suggestions to stay focused on what is required at the moment to create the greatest impact in our current strategy or program. You may disappoint someone, but honesty and not overloading yourself and

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others is the key to increased productivity and satisfaction. Be courageous! Let go of what others think.

5. Make connections.

Don't confuse communication with connection. You have made a connection when others feel they have been seen, heard, and valued. Your students (and others) are wired for connection. This is what they remember. This is what changes them forever.

Remember you're leaving a legacy for these impressionable students. What do you want them to remember from your class or the marching band experience? Consider these questions and five points and you'll be well on your way to doing what matters. After all, there's no time to waste. Life is short. Focus on the big picture and impact your world with intentionality and significance. Do what matters!

Randy served ten years as a nationally recognized high school band director and assistant marching band director at West Chester University. For over 20 years Randy has developed Marching Show Concepts as a nationally known company for quality marching band products and exceptional one-to-one services. Randy exemplifies an expertise and standard of excellence that is well known and respected throughout the music industry. He is an accomplished clinician, adjudicator and drill designer who continues to display his talents in the MSC collection of products and services.