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Final Word: Advice gleaned on the path of life

By [Craig Wilson](#), USA TODAY

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Most of us know by now that good advice can show up in the oddest of places.



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By [Craig Wilson](#)

I was visiting friends on the coast of Maine the other day — York Harbor —and I decided to take a walk along the ocean. By myself. That's the good thing about the ocean. You don't need anyone else. In fact, you don't want anyone else.

There's a quirky little path that leads from the town's tiny beach — the Cliff Walk — and winds its way above the ocean, taking you up and down rocks and across stretches of pebbles. When you walk it, you understand what a billy goat must feel like. I have been doing such exercises lately to exercise my bum leg that was injured in my encounter with a car last year.

The Cliff Walk is not well-worn this time of year, and it had rained the night before, so the path was overgrown, the rocks slippery. In short it wasn't the stroll along the beach I had hoped. It was work.

I had gotten quite a ways down the path when it hit me that maybe I should turn back. Call it a day, return to the beach, sit on a rock and watch the solitary surfer who was wisely dressed in a wet suit, waiting for that perfect wave.

It was then I came upon a couple walking toward me. The path is so narrow you can't avoid oncoming traffic. They stepped aside, into a bush, and waved me on.

Had I even made it to the halfway point, I wondered aloud? Should I turn around, I asked?

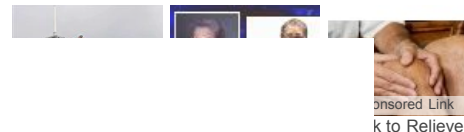
It was then the man spoke his wisdom.

"You can't turn back now. You've come too far."

And he was right. There are times in life we all want to turn back. Sometimes we do, only to realize later it was a mistake. We didn't force on. We retreated.

For years I've had a quote from poet Annie Johnson Flint pinned over my desk. For

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some reason it speaks to me, just as the man on the path spoke to me the other day.

Have you come to the [Red Sea](#) place in your life,

Where, in spite of all you can do,

There is no way out, there is no way back,

There is no other way but through?

Getting down that path isn't always easy. We stumble. We fall. But we get up and march on.

A couple of years ago, Brian H. Peterson came out with a moving memoir, *The Smile at the Heart of Things: Essays and Life Stories*. He's back with more: *The Blossoming of the World*. He understands life's paths.

"If there's no wanting, chances are there won't be much growing and certainly no arriving," he writes.

You can't turn back now. You've come too far.

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