

Success by Accident – The Kintsugi Path to a Fulfilling Life *By Andrea Jacques*

On January 29th, I published my first book, *Wabi-Sabi Wisdom: Inspiration for an Authentic Life*. In brainstorming ideas for the cover image, my husband recommended the idea of using a photo of kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, as perfect example of the celebration of imperfection. I loved the idea, and we set off on a search for the right image. After a long search, we fell in love with an image on the Lakeside Pottery website. Having found no other image that could compare, I decided to take a chance and call the owner, Morty Bachar, to ask if we could use it.

Not only did Morty graciously allow us to use the image for my book cover, our conversation about kintsugi, his business, and his philosophies of life and success inspired me. I knew the connection had much more to offer than a cover photo for my book on authentic living and soulful success, so I asked if I could interview him for my next Tokyo Families article. I got much more than I bargained for.



Morty Bachar with Patty Storms



So who is this guy – some hippy artist with a pottery studio by a lake? Not by a long shot! Bachar spent his early career – more than two decades – as an engineer and later as a product development manager with technologies such as voice recognition, web-based training, telecom, RF ID and artificial intelligence.

Fast-forward to the present day and Morty, along with his wife and fellow artist, Patty Storms, can lay claim to a website that gets thousands visitors a day using the many pottery, ceramic art and art restoration lessons and tutorials, and creating a business they can turn on and off at will – working as much or as little as they desire doing work that they both absolutely love – custom pottery and restoration.

Suffice it to say, Morty Bachar is the epitome of a creator. Whether creating pottery, businesses, or technology, he has proven his ability to build something of value from nothing many times over. How has he done this?

A PASSION FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

In addition to being fascinated with the metaphor of kintsugi, it was Bachar's passion for solving problems that cemented his love affair with kintsugi. When he began to experiment with making kintsugi pieces he quickly realized that the practice was nowhere near as simple as the concept. After many attempts that did not look right, he understood why his internet searches for information on the topic had so few good results – there is a financial risk to experimenting with an art form that wastes real gold!

Rather than giving up as many would have, Morty started asking how he could find a way to produce kintsugi without having to waste gold. "Perhaps this is what made me a decent engineer," he said. "When someone says that's impossible, then I have a desire to go for it." Using his engineering background and understanding of, polymers and bonding, the reflection of light, the properties of metals, and the techniques of grinding the brass particles for optimum light reflection, he perfected a method of kintsugi that looks almost indistinguishable from real gold but is affordable. For him, the benefits this has had for the growth of his business are secondary to the joy he gets from being able to make the beautiful Kintsugi art and it's metaphor accessible to more people. Eventually, we were also able to perfect the real gold (23.5K) process offered at a higher cost. "Everyone who buys it has a purpose of helping someone to love themselves or others despite of flaws." Whether because they love the philosophy of kintsugi and want a physical reminder of it, or because they want to restore a treasured object.

TAKE RISKS AND EMBRACE ACCIDENTS.

"I wouldn't change anything because if I did I wouldn't be here," replied Morty when I asked him what wisdom he would give to his younger self. "You've got to do many things to build up the building blocks that you will draw on later to construct your happiness. Life is chapters. What makes you happy when you are young won't make you happy when older. Every one of those things is building blocks that makes you who you are."

He is also a big believer in the power of mistakes and accidents as they have been instrumental in leading him to a life that provides his ideal mix of success and fulfillment. "Sometimes ignorance and accidents take a person to a path that is more successful. Mistakes move you forward. They make you who you are. They guide you to what is next."

Morty believes that you can't tap into the creative possibilities of accidents if you never take risks or make mistakes. For people who don't know what they want to do with their lives he advises, "You know if you are unhappy. It is scary to move from the known to the unknown, but if you don't like where you are (or who you are) you have to be willing to change something. If you don't, you will stay stagnant."

DON'T BE ATTACHED TO YOUR CREATIONS.

One of the characteristics that is most instrumental in Morty's ability to recover from "accidents" and embrace risks is his lack of attachment to the things that he creates. His focus is on the process of solving a problem and creating an outcome that is of value to others, rather than personal gain. When he realized, for example, that Patty was better at teaching and managing the classes and curriculum at Lakeside Pottery than he was, he stepped aside and she took over.

His philosophy of creating, letting go, and moving on to the next thing is another one of the ways he has "accidentally" become so successful as an artist. Despite the fact that initially their main source of income was pottery classes, their "adding value" philosophy led them to start posting free tutorials on various pottery techniques in response to the questions that their students were asking.

Over time, the library of numerous tutorials that are now available on their site turned into a powerful engine to drive traffic to their site and create a steady stream of customers for their business. Morty had so many inspirational stories and nuggets in our interview that I couldn't fit them all into one article, so check back next month to find out more, or contact me via my website and I will let you know as soon as the full podcast of my interview with him is available.

About Andrea Jacques



Andrea Jacques is the founder of Kyosei Consulting and the author of *Wabi-Sabi Wisdom: Inspiration for an Authentic Life* (available on Amazon.com). She has spent more than 30 years developing the potential of people and businesses worldwide, five of which were in Japan. A dynamic speaker, coach, and facilitator, her work integrates spiritual insight with top-tier leadership, wellness and sustainability consulting to help individuals and organizations build thriving, purpose-driven cultures where employees know their work truly matters. She can be contacted through her website at www.kyoseiconsulting.com



Success by Accident: The Kintsugi Path to Soulful Success (part 2) *By Andrea Jacques*



Last month you learned three of the three keys to which artist and entrepreneur Morty Bachar his ability to go from pottery beginner to assist building several successful pottery studios across the country and growing Lakesidepottery.com to thousands unique visitors per day in just a few years. His story, however, also illustrates one of the best kept secrets to achieving success on your own terms: radical authenticity. Over more than two decades of helping leaders, entrepreneurs and individuals to thrive in their lives and work, I have come to believe that this skill is at the heart of any person's ability to achieve personal and business success that energizes rather than depletes them.

Morty gave a great example of this in our interview. Before he and his wife, Patty Storms, got married, they consciously sat down to tell each other who they really were. This included not only their hopes and dreams, but their secrets, flaws, and regrets. Why? To create a place where they could feel safe to be completely authentic and honest not only with each other, but with themselves.

This approach might seem radical in a society that commonly advocates the “fake it ‘til you make it” approach to achieving success that teaches people to hide their flaws (at least until they have managed to overcome them), but it demonstrates a wisdom that all too few leaders possess: the knowledge that hiding your flaws weakens rather than strengthens you over time.

Trying to hide mistakes and flaws is particularly dangerous for those in leadership positions. For starters, you’re not fooling anyone – except possibly yourself. While your employees would love it if you were infallible and never made mistakes, at a certain level they know this is not realistic. It’s not the fact that you have weaknesses that frustrates them, however, it’s the fact that you dismiss or defend against any attempts they might make to enlighten you about it.

Morty and Patty’s practice of radical authenticity mirrors the following habits of the most effective, beloved, and truly inspirational leaders:

- **Listening:** They don’t just listen to respond, they listen to truly understand. Hint: this type of listening tends to require that you let the other person do most of the talking. If your lips are moving, it is a pretty safe bet that you are not listening. Don’t just listen with your ears. Learn to listen with your eyes as well. Research shows that 70% of communication is done through body language and tone. If you are only paying attention to their words – and your own – you are missing the majority of the message.

- **Curiosity:** Use any talking time you have to ask questions instead. Most leaders are impatient with this part of the process. If you are listening to their body language and tone as well as their words, it will be obvious whether or not they feel understood and that a solution they can buy into has been identified.

- **Awareness & Responsibility:** Let the feedback and frustrations of others truly seep into your awareness. Resist the urge to deflect responsibility back to them. Radical authenticity is not possible in a vacuum. You can’t practice it effectively on your own. You need to have others in your life that you are willing to listen to, especially when they are telling you something you don’t really want to hear.

- **Action & Follow-Through:** All of the above must ultimately end up with a commitment to some type of action and the willingness to follow through on that commitment. Your efforts, and results, will be inconsistent. As a leader your attempts and failures all feel very public. This is where radical authenticity is truly a saving grace. When you openly state what you are trying to do, admit when you have fallen short, and re-commit to try again, you set an example for your team and are more likely to earn both their support and their respect.

So what is the payoff of all of this authenticity? Authenticity ultimately fuels business (and personal) success in several ways:

- **It frees up energy.** Most people aren’t conscious of how much energy they waste trying to keep their secrets both from others and themselves. The little games that you play trying to appear more competent than you really are, trying to hide the fact that you feel like a fraud (even though you may be very accomplished), avoiding conflict, or ignoring all of the big and little ways that you are not acting in integrity with your own values and principles take a toll on your energy, confidence and self-esteem.

- **It is a pre-requisite for good strategy.** Think of it this way. If you want to get from point A to point B, the time, budget and itinerary you plan will be much different depending on whether you are driving a car or riding a bicycle. Imagine how frustrating it would be if you were making the trip under the delusion that you were driving a car when you were actually on a bicycle. Your inability to see what kind of vehicle you were actually in would make it impossible to understand – and to effectively address – your failure to hit your travel targets each day.

- **It is essential to innovation.** It is a myth that innovation comes from a flash of insight out of nowhere. All innovation comes out of trying to address a problem, gap or weakness. Where there is an unwillingness to acknowledge problems, weaknesses and gaps there can be no innovation because the essential spark that drives all innovation is missing.

If all of this authenticity feels a bit daunting, remember that it is not only about weaknesses. Being authentic also requires recognizing your strengths. Morty and other enlightened leaders are also able to acknowledge their strengths openly without needing to be apologetic. This true confidence comes from being at peace with all of who they are. When you accept that you have both strengths and weaknesses and can evaluate both objectively you are in a better position to design a strategy to get from where you are to where you want to go.



About Andrea Jacques

Andrea Jacques is the founder of Kyosei Consulting and the author of *Wabi-Sabi Wisdom: Inspiration for an Authentic Life* (available on Amazon.com). She has spent more than 30 years developing the potential of people and businesses worldwide, five of which were in Japan. A dynamic speaker, coach, and facilitator, her work integrates spiritual insight with top-tier leadership, wellness and sustainability consulting to help individuals and organizations build thriving, purpose-driven cultures where employees know their work truly matters. She can be contacted through her website at www.kyoseiconsulting.com