



Bart Cannon: Pay attention and don't get goosed

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— Remember “The Goose that laid the Golden Egg?”

For many, Aesop’s ancient goose fable conjures up a fairly tight group of images — money-grubbing business people selling their souls for unrighteous mammon or politicians with palms greased by the long green of lobbyists and special interest groups.

Right? Wrong.

You’ve just been goosed. There’s always another side to every story.

Historians credit Aesop, a Greek slave and savvy storyteller, who lived about 620-560 B.C., with popularizing hundreds of animal stories that spotlight human flaws and virtues.

Aesop spun the goose tale about a farmer who discovered a glittering golden egg nestled in the straw underneath his prized honker. The farmer pulled this strange egg out of the nest and surmised that someone must have played a trick on him.

After conferring with his wife and investment broker, the farmer submitted his mystery egg to television producer Jerry Bruckheimer for analysis. Bruckheimer summoned CSI Chief Gil Grissom’s Las Vegas crime scene investigators to cordon off the farm, perform DNA testing on the goose, and subject the egg to chemical analysis. Grissom’s lab techs certified that the egg was no prank. It was made of pure gold.

From that day forth, the farmer harvested one golden egg every morning. In a few short weeks, the farmer and his wife became ridiculously wealthy. Their thoughts soon shifted from raising crops to finding ways to flaunt their newfound prosperity.

“We could hunt moose in Alaska with Sarah Palin, get backstage passes to an Eagles concert, and buy the Dallas Cowboys franchise,” said the farmer.

“Yes,” said the farmer’s wife, “And I could hang with Paris Hilton and be her new BFF [Best Friend Forever].”

As their dreams escalated, the well-heeled couple grew impatient with the present level of egg production and conspired to sacrifice the unsuspecting goose on the altar of opulence. Rather than harvesting a mother lode of golden eggs from inside the slaughtered goose, the farmer came up empty-handed.

CSI Grissom’s autopsy revealed that the dead goose’s innards were no different from other geese.

As Aesop would say, “The moral of the story is: Much wants more and loses all.” In other words, the farmer and his wife got goosed.

The natural reaction is to point a boney finger at the farmer, his wife and other members of the greed-gone-to-seed crowd and shout a condescending “Shame on you!”

The Rev. Elbert Willis warned that when you point a finger at someone else, three fingers point back at you. You’ve just been goosed.

In his bestseller, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” Stephen R. Covey suggested another way of looking at Aesop’s goose tale. He calls it Habit Seven: Sharpen the Saw, the principle of balanced self-renewal. Live by habit seven, and we avoid the ultimate goosing.

We may not think of ourselves as owning geese capable of laying golden eggs, but we’ve all been given one life to live — that’s the goose.

According to Covey, “True effectiveness is a function of two things: what is produced (golden eggs) and the producing asset (the goose).”

If you want a golden egg producing life, you’ve got to take care of your goose. Covey calls it maintaining

P/PC balance.

None of us live in a world that's exempt from stress, and when a crisis comes, humans tend to sacrifice themselves on the altar of expediency.

"I'll just work longer and harder, take a second or third job, or try to get by with less sleep, recreation, or family time," we reason.

Dr. Nancy D. O'Reilly, a researcher and clinical psychologist, said, "Stress has been called an equal opportunity destroyer. No one is immune from its effects." An Optum Research study published by Instructor revealed that "36 percent of Midwestern educators believed work-related stress harmed their mental health, while 46 percent said it harmed their physical health."

Balanced self-renewal, in Covey's view, is one of those things we can control in an otherwise out of control world. Further, he suggests protecting and enhancing our production capacity by devoting regular time to renewal in four critical areas: physical, mental, spiritual, and social.

In America's wacky world of materialism, Covey's principle of balanced self-renewal may seem more like fiction than Aesop's golden egg fable.

Whether you think Aesop's goose tale applies to greed or balanced self-renewal, pay attention — and don't get goosed.

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