

Hoist by My Own Petard

By Holly Lisle

“Petard” is such a juicy word. Medieval bomb, you know – one of those things they tossed out and kept low afterward so as to avoid catching the rebound.

My petard was Joy. Came back to me in a tag from Heather, and since I sent the damned thing out the first time, it would be low of me not to step up when hit by the shrapnel and bleed with the rest. I had about fifty-five entries that came back with the word “joy” in them. A couple of them were quotes, including this one, which is in my random quotes file, and which shows up in that little quote box from time to time:

*Know that joy is rarer, more difficult, and more beautiful than sadness. Once you make this all-important discovery, you must embrace joy as a moral obligation. “*André Gide

Some instances were encased in snippets that I’d written, so they don’t count. Some were facetious, but not as many as I’d feared. One was a tiny little poem that I still think is pretty good, called Epitaph of a Love – but again, that doesn’t count – it was a piece of character study, and not a personal poem.

The remainder were musings on the joy I find in writing, on little bits and pieces of personal sunlight, problems that, having been corrected, left me filled with happiness, exercise routines I’m succeeding at ... little things. The same things that give other people joy.

But the one entry that actually wins my vote for further explanation is the post that started this. Because you don’t know why I wrote it.

I started out intending to be funny with my tag, to have my

victims search for the word “pain” on their weblogs. I didn’t think it would be all that common a word – I mean, how often to people actually experience pain?

Just to give myself a rough estimate, I Googled myself. This weblog has 861 Googled links to “Pain”.

861.

That’s ludicrous. I thought, damn, I’ve had some challenges, and I’ve had my moments with migraines, but come **on** here.

Pain – 861

I looked up Hurt – 63.

Grief – 8

Agony – 8

Sorrow – 2

Misery – 2

Sad – 32

Sadness – 3

Unhappy – 8

Unhappiness – 5

992

992 links back to downer-ness.

Vastly irritated with myself, I thought, all right – maybe there are nearly a thousand mentions of joy and happiness and such, too.

Joy – 54

Cheer – 13

Happiness – 41

Exuberance – 0

Elation – 5

Wonder – 51

Delight – 13

Ecstasy – 0

Rejoicing – 2

Satisfaction – 19

198

16.6% of the entries I surveyed. [198 divided by (992+198)] Pain and gloom took 83.3% of the surveyed terrain. As of right now, I have 2072 total entries in this weblog. Assuming only one hit per entry (which is surely a false assumption, but I don't have time to go through entry by entry and hand-count), some form of pain is present in 47.8% of all entries here. Some form of joy? A meager 9.5% of all entries. And I didn't even **peek** into Anger and its family. Or Betrayal. Or Stress and kin. I ran through a simple **happy vs. sad** test, and my weblog failed miserably.

And I'm an optimist.

Right. I checked a few other weblogs. The stats weren't all that different from mine. Well, by comparison, most of the time it was clear I **was** an optimist, actually. But negative strongly outweighed positive throughout.

Norman Vincent Peale is rolling in his grave.

My life is a testament to the value of his theories about positive thinking and positive action. I'm an example of the American Dream – I started poor, I made do without money or a pricey education, I worked like hell for what I wanted and believed in myself, and I achieved my dreams.

And 16.6% positive focus was the best I could do? No, because my life is more than 17% good. That's nowhere near representative of me, or my life.

That's my story. That's where this tag came from.

If you want to take this challenge yourself, and look at your

weblog from a different perspective, you may consider yourself tagged. Here are the rules.

If you decide to answer this challenge, feel free to post the link to your entry below. And of course, you should still tag folks. Spread joy, you know.

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