

## Living Forward with New Eyes and Learning All the Way

He is not a Stoic, but I have been thinking about something Soren Kierkegaard said.

*Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.*

Kierkegaard wrote about existential issues – life, death, anxiety, despair, melancholy, and repetition. This might help understand why he was called “The Melancholy Dane.” How would you like him working on the console next to you? In control rooms and in life, we often look back and learn lessons from the past. That is a good thing, particularly if we take corrective actions based on past experiences to avoid accidents, errors, and mistakes in the future. Even if our work may be repetitious, we should view each day or shift as new, as an opportunity to live and work forwards and to do our best.

Our company had a meeting, and set some goals looking forward for the group and for individuals. We sought understanding from past events, but did not dwell on either the successes or failures. I had sent each person a New Year’s card with a quote from Nature, by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

*So shall we come to look at the world with new eyes.*

Do we ever take a different view of what we are doing and how we are doing it? Even though people may come to the same workplace endlessly, it could be good to get rid of any jaded viewpoints. I had a conversation with a controller a few weeks ago and he was telling me about a difficult situation with a manager, now long gone, 15 years in the past. That interaction is affecting his life and work in the present. He is not the only person I know who has difficulties living forwards and looking at the world afresh.

Could it be helpful for him to take a “new eyes” look? It might be helpful for any of us to look at our role and responsibilities and determine what could be done to improve our individual performance and our contribution to our work team. In most control rooms, there are “refresher” training programs and another improvement could be to actually evaluate and refresh the materials and approaches to learning. Another controller contacted me and asked for suggestions on different approaches to fatigue management training instead of the same, old learning materials they have to use every year. The trainer might benefit by using “new eyes” for providing training so that beneficial learning might occur.

That brings me back to the Stoics. Seneca, whom I read regularly, said this about living and learning.

*As long as you live, keep learning how to live.*

There is a concept called “strengths based leadership”\* that Craig Watson, our Training Consultant, introduced to me years ago. It helped me discover my strengths and the importance of using one’s strengths. One of my strengths is “Learner.” It is a strength that all of us should cultivate. Life has to be lived forwards, so let us look with new eyes. Keep learning not only how to live, but how to fulfill our responsibilities in control rooms and on pipelines following the requirements of our Control Room Management Plans.

\* <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/home/en-us>