MAKING COINCIDENCES MATTER

"Coincidences are opportunities to make something meaningful"

It likely comes as no surprise that coincidences intersect with a number of topics already discussed – especially with Perception, Managing Energy and here in Swimming with the Current.

Our exploration of coincidences coincides with practicing mindfulness and amplifying gratitude in connection with the Law of Attraction. By no coincidence, these phenomena all have their share of naysayers or at least skeptics. More to the point, coincidences are already a somewhat controversial topic. In fact, a substantial number of people believe that "There are no such thing as coincidences."

You've probably heard that one. Do you consider yourself among that group? Do you know anyone who holds that belief. You probably do.

It's true that science, more specifically – the empirical evidence about coincidences, is – in a word – inconclusive. It is however factual enough for Webster's to define: as a noun:

Coincidence (noun):

> *A striking occurrence of two or more events at one time, apparently by mere chance, often by time or place but seem to have some connection.*

At least this gives us a reliable point of origin. However, since coincidences are – by their very nature - unique to individual experiences and related perceptions, the true meaning may be within each one of us. Do you view coincidences any differently or might you expand on that supposed official definition?

What's most striking is where it says, "apparently by mere chance." Apparently to whom? What makes chance "mere?" Is that what you believe?

At what point does an occurrence or singular experience crossover from something random to something meaningful? We can chalk it up to perception to a degree. But it's more than that, right?

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Let's suppose you're among those who belief that there's no such thing as coincidences. Fair enough. Why is that? Here's where you might say, "because everything happens for a reason." Is that right?

It might make the following question somewhat rhetorical. If you do not believe in coincidences, in what do you believe?

For example, does everything of a coincidental nature occur because of divine intervention? Or, are coincidences purely a matter of quantum physics, which is to say they're proof of the Law of Attraction in action?

Even putting science and beliefs aside, there's no denying the fact that we encounter certain "striking occurrences." No matter how we question it, the phenomenon really comes back to what each of us experience, perceive and process.

Could coincidences be the random results within the undiscovered frontier of the human brain at work? Although – in case you didn't know – that saying about how we only use 10% of our brain, wherever that came from, is – in fact - a debunked myth.

However, there is one credible basis related to a well-established part of our brains called the Reticular Activating System – or RAS, which comprises certain neural connections that control how we filter whatever information does get into our brain as well as that channels between our conscious and unconscious mind.

While certainly fascinating, *it's an isolated topic but may have some relevance to what we think are coincidental experiences. For example, let's say you're thinking about* buying a new car and decide on the make and model and then suddenly it seems like every other car on the road is like the one you intend to buy? Is that a coincidence?

Well, it's fairly certain that they were always there, but now you've activated your RAS to identify that vehicle as important to you. And so, seemingly like magic, you start to notice more of what is relevant and in this case it's a car.

So it's something that you may feel and experience to be a coincidence, but the point here - is that it's not. It's just your Reticular Activating System.

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Other than about the RAS, there is a fair amount of science that's been conducted about coincidences by mathematicians, statisticians and data analysis experts. Much of it attributes to well-known psychologist Carl Jung and his work around synchronicity. It's easy to find and anything but easy to understand, which is to say it's unlikely to provide greater clarity.

Coincidences may be indicators of being in the flow. The more you experience life by making a conscious effort to be present, often by grounding with gratitude and maintaining that amplified awareness, the more you may encounter coincidental events.

If we are all - in fact - energy beings, then there's a certain vibration or frequency that, when in alignment, creates a certain magnetism. However, this is still somewhat random in contrast to being more intentional about setting expectations for what we may want to attract.

This energy is more often imperceptible or goes unnoticed but, like gravity, is always there. Another way to look at it is that The Flow is like an ocean while the Law of Attraction is about setting sail and charting a course. Here's where we move past quantum physics.

True coincidences are opportunities that are either pursued and converted or not, which requires taking action that – sometimes, to make them matter – may involve something effortful.

Coincidences also seem to happen on a broad spectrum.

On the low end, in their simplest form, they often relate to those with whom we share a certain connection. It could be that we text or email one another at the exact same time or along the lines of just thinking of someone, maybe for the first time in quite a while, and then you hear from them that day. Everyone experiences this at one point or another. So what is that? Could it have anything to do with intuition? Hold that thought for the moment.

Another basic, more mainstream version of coincidences is when we experience something a minimum of three times. Have you ever heard that one? These coincidences are unexpected and more strikingly noticeable, which puts them somewhere closer to the mid-spectrum.

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When some sort of event, person, topic and the like comes up for you three or more times, especially in rapid succession, there is nothing wrong with exploring why. It may be something to pay more attention or go and do … or go and get. Have you ever followed through to see where that leads?

Even higher on the spectrum might be a chance encounter of some sort. You could be traveling in another city or country and run into someone you know. Maybe you're taking a train and it just so happens that you're riding in the very same car as someone you were just thinking about, or maybe they just arose in conversation in recent days. Weird, right?

And, THEN there are those coincidences that are just way beyond explanation - the ones that are truly mathematically astronomical and fall just short of impossibility. These are those that are nothing less than true coincidences that inspire us to ponder more credibly.

In fact, you may recognize a certain pattern to them. These are often borne out of conversations with others you barely know, typically in that first encounter. And, whatever the purpose of your main topic, at some point, most likely toward the very end of the conversation, it veers off about something that had no reason for coming up. In other words, the coincidence was only uncovered because of that unlikely tangent. Is this ringing any bells?

As you hear this and consider your own experiences with coincidences, are you picking up on there being certain patterns to them or even the frequency and degree to which they happen? My sense is that I encounter more coincidences than most others. And I did notice this point was documented in the research I saw that certain people have them happen more but it mostly only speculated as to why.

There are at least five things anyone can do to make coincidences matter:

1) Pay attention. When you go about your daily activities, keep your senses open and be mindful to notice things. That experience of being in the flow can make coincidences more frequent, increasingly unusual and significant.

2) Talk to strangers. This makes sense given that coincidences often arise out of conversations with someone you don't know. For example, if you don't introduce yourself to your neighbor, you can't possibly discover how both of you were born in the same hospital, on the same day, in a city several hundred miles away from your current homes – or something along those lines.

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3) Seek meaning. Whether you hear a song on the radio, see a string of numbers on a license plate or whatever you encounter, ask yourself if you can make meaning out of the experience. The more you notice coincidences, the more likely they are to happen to you.

4) Keep track. Writing it down is especially important at the onset. Maybe even start a "Coincidence Journal." Some people do something like this to study their dreams. Try keeping a log of related events and see what unfolds.

5) Adjust your mindset. It's essential to view coincidences as opportunities and decide which ones inspire you to follow through. You may experience something that makes a certain bell go off or even one that hits you over the head. Or it may be something more subtle on the lower end of the spectrum that you may decide to tune in and act on or not. Or, it's the relevance of the coincidence in how it intersects with whatever it is that's important to you.

Rather than expecting it to involve a specific answer, it may be more like trying to solve something by taking the hint to experience a life adventure. All of that could lead to something meaningful that is beyond ourselves.

If you have yet to discover, you may find that the best coincidences involve some action that leads to a more meaningful experience, connection with someone or creates a new path to achieve something.

We're all familiar with the sentiment that it only takes one encounter with the right person to alter the course of your life for the better. Then again, it may be as simple as it being the spark for a conversation and the icebreaker that helps forge the bond of a valued friendship or business partnership.

Now that we've that cleared up, the real question is more about what you believe - and have experienced. One dimension about coincidences is the extent to which they occur independently from ourselves versus our role and, beyond that, our ability to cause them.

If some people experience more and odder coincidences than others, it stands to reason that we are, at the very least, some part of the equation. Could the differential be a simple factor of varying degrees of mindfulness?

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