

Academic Dispatch

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Lobo in winter. Credit: University Communication and Marketing.

It's in Your Hands

I was watching a YouTube video recently, featuring a talk by astrophysicist [Neil deGrasse Tyson](#). His comments focused on purpose – finding it, sharing it – and on supporting others in pursuing theirs. He spoke also of the need for resilience, to surmount, go around, or burrow under the obstacles that are placed in our way. Tyson reflected on the need to not let obstacles define us or to give power over us to others, quoting MLK in saying “you cannot be ridden unless your back is bent.” Of course the world throws obstacles in our path, our fellow humans are sometimes disinterested, and the barriers may seek to bend our backs. Yet each of us controls only ourselves, and no other. So, if we are each to own our destiny, it can only be through controlling ourselves, making our choices on how to influence the world.

The world is certainly throwing challenges our way – I will not say unprecedented challenges, because a study of history clearly shows our current troubles are not unique, having arisen many times not only across the world but also for the peoples living in the lands now called New Mexico. In a time when the world is throwing so many barriers our way, this lesson is central: we can, each of us, influence the outcomes of these times. We can let the times buffet us and drive our choices and outcomes, or we can look for those alternatives and actions that let us go over, around, or burrow under the obstacles that have fallen in our path. I believe it important to find a way to continue the journey, because the learning, the growth, the personal development, is in the journey itself. We usually come to appreciate the growth, after the barricades are overcome.

It matters little that this is not the journey that any of us desired or planned. The universe has little care for our plans. But we can still make choices.

Today our choices mean we can continue to learn and grow in strength to act on the world, or we can shrink back and wait, losing time that none of us will ever recover. Today our choices mean we can help others remain hale, or we can put them at risk of losing the precious time we cherish in our own lives. Few of us have been fully prepared to make the consequential choices placed in front of us today. But here we are. Let's each make our choice to move forward on the journey, and achieve something of consequence.

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