

Some Thoughts On Life From Michael J. Fox...

We first came to know him as a TV actor on “Family Ties” and “Spin City” and later in feature films including the “Back to the Future” trilogy and “Doc Hollywood.” But as the keynote speaker at this year’s annual conference of the Society for Human Resources Management, Michael J. Fox came to speak about **life**. And the only certainty in life is uncertainty. One of the most valuable life lessons he has learned from acting is not to “play the result.” That is, you can’t act like you know what’s coming or how the scene is going to end. “You have to behave as if you don’t know what’s going to happen. You have to live in that moment.” Not a bad way to approach one’s life!

- **Sometimes life gets amazingly better:** As a high school dropout, he had no life plan – only unrealistic dreams about becoming a hockey star, despite his small stature, or a rock star, despite a decided lack of musical talent. The future looked bleak. But a decision to journey to Hollywood and try his hand at acting resulted in landing the role of Alex Keaton.
- **Sometimes success has a downside:** “Sudden success, money and fame is like having Miracle-Gro (fertilizer) thrown onto your character defects. The fun house sounds great, but it can quickly turn into a carnival house of mirrors that warps your perspective.” “As the prince of Hollywood, I got away with whatever I wanted to get away with.”
- **Sometimes life sends you a message:** It was during the filming of “Doc Hollywood” that he “got the message.” “I woke up to find it in my

left hand. It wasn’t a fax or a telegraph or a memo – my hand held nothing at all. I was just trembling. That was the message. It was a slight but constant tremor in my pinky finger.” After a battery of tests, Fox finally had to face the reality that at age 29 he had early onset Parkinson’s – a life changing disorder of the brain that leads to body tremors as well as difficulty with walking, movement and coordination. The message was that maybe his destiny was a higher calling.



- **Sometimes adversity uplifts you:** At first, he hid his disease “because I didn’t think audiences could laugh at someone who was sick.” Though the resulting publicity that followed his eventual announcement first led Fox to think he had made a terrible mistake, he eventually began to study the disease and realized there was a need for an organization that would focus on research. “I often say that Parkinson’s is a gift – the gift that keeps on taking.” Yet he acknowledges that the illness has helped form the true passion in his life, the Michael J. Fox Foundation.

His take-away lesson: “The more complicated life gets, the more it seems to bring out the best in us – whatever you do, never play the result!”