



FIONA HOBAN

www.fionahoban.ie

The map is not the territory

There was once a traveller who explored rural France with nothing to guide him but an old map. He arrived at a particularly beautiful and remote spot and stayed there for a number of days.

Over the next 50 years he often revisited this place in his mind's eye and vowed that one day he would return to enjoy its beauty once more.

Sure enough, some 50 years later, he set off again on his travels with nothing to guide him but his old map. When he arrived he expected to see the same remote beauty but instead he found a thriving village lined with mature oak trees. He was very puzzled. He looked at the map, he looked at the village, and then said to himself: "No, that can't be right."

So often we want the definitive answer; we want to know what the "right" thing to do is; we want a clear-cut path; we want certainty. Various dogmas and religious creeds offer this to us.

A friend of mine once commented that these are all flawed because they are written in black and white for life's situations that are invariably grey.

I regard creeds and dogmas as pointers. It's folly to mistake the pointer for what is being pointed at. In other words, the menu's description of a succulent steak is not the steak – only a fool would eat the menu expecting to enjoy a succulent steak.

It reminds me of my cousin who got a recipe for homemade Baileys from my aunt. Unfortu-

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nately, my aunt's handwriting was not totally legible and she mistook the instruction "beat the eggs" for "boil the eggs".

No matter that this made no sense whatsoever, and that it resulted in lumpy egg Baileys, she was following the recipe regardless of common sense!

Haven't we all followed an awful lot of nonsense over the years? How many stupid rules, regulations and taboos have dictated how we live our lives for fear that we'd turn into horrendous monsters if we didn't obey? (And it's often those who obey the most that are the most horrendous monsters of all.)

I heard someone comment recently that SatNavs were a mighty invention. His friend disagreed: "They're a complete waste of time. Sure, you've to update them every couple of months." I thought to myself: "Maybe no harm!"

The map that served the traveller 50 years ago was clearly of little use to him today. How well does your map serve you today? Because if you're finding the terrain difficult and you're constantly getting lost, maybe you need to get an updated map!

TAOIST WISDOM

Right and wrong are situational. In the appropriate situation, nothing is wrong. Without the appropriate situation, nothing is right. What is right in one case is not what is right in another. What is wrong in one case is not what is wrong in another. **CL**



ABOUT QUEST

The National Learning Network's Quest brain injury service assists over 70 people and their families each year in rebuilding their lives following an acquired brain injury. It does this through a range of services including a rehabilitative training programme and outreach and aftercare services. People like Marie are supported to manage their injury, improve their cognitive (thinking) skills and resume independent lives.



with my porridge, for example, or the time that someone is to call. I wouldn't remember without that so I keep the diary with me all the time.

I also have to be organised around the house because if I don't leave everything in its proper place I won't be able to remember where it is.

Another change for me is that I now have time for things. I never had time before. If someone is going somewhere I go along and I have now joined the ICA, which I enjoy very much.

SUPPORT

My family, friends, neighbours and colleagues have all been fabulous through this and I appreciate all their support.

They helped with cooking and washing and ironing for a whole year and I remember all the wonderful cakes when I went home at weekends. Others drove me here and there to appointments and took

me out and about and I have several unexpected new friendships as well as strengthened older ones because of what happened. We've really experienced extraordinary kindness all round.

I am now a fundraiser for Quest and have also had support in that from family and friends from organising vintage days to card games to school events.

The most unusual idea was the Quest car. My brother bought an old white vintage Mercedes which is transported to shopping centres and events.

In return for a small donation, people get to write their names with permanent marker on the car. Everyone seems to enjoy the fun of doing that and it's covered in names now!

Taking on the task of fundraising was good for me, too, as I had to go out and do things and meet people.

At present I have regular check-ups but I should be okay if I stay stress-free. **”**

GET IN TOUCH



Fiona Hoban works as a counsellor in Westport, Co Mayo and also lectures with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland (NCPII). She delivers well-being and motivational talks at various conferences and workshops throughout Ireland. For more details go to www.fionahoban.ie. If you would like to get Fiona's advice or insight on a particular subject please email info@fionahoban.ie or write to Fiona Hoban, Irish Country Living, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.

WORDS OF LIFE

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Matthew ch.11 v 29.