

What do you think about when you think about the building blocks of a life? If we're thinking about the beginning of life, that might be DNA. Once we're grown up, however, it might be something different.

I was recently at a long weekend on Orcas Island with 100 or so people, billed as a "do-it-ourselves" camp, with dancing at night. During the day, a person could structure their time as they wished. People napped, played music, hiked, swam, canoed, read, helped cook our communal meals, sat around chatting with friends, played croquet, dancing, or anything they wanted.

It struck me that for those of us who are at liberty to choose how we spend our days and our evenings, we craft our own lives in this way. Just as dances are composed of different steps or sections in different rhythms, so are our lives.

We make many choices about how we live our lives, who to include among our friends, what to eat, what to read, what events and organizations to participate in, what to learn, what to practice, what we do for entertainment, for exercise, for hobbies, what dances to attend and to do. Some of these choices are made more consciously than others. We can think of these as the building blocks of a life.

How do we make these choices?

One friend has built his life around five things: nature, family, spirituality, music and dance. He has come to the realization that more important than how long he lives is the quality of his life, how well he lives. His is a full life. This guides his choices.

Our choices could be based on convenience, what fits our life right now. We used to have weekly dinners and watch movies with a friend, then drive together to go folkdancing. This worked well as it expanded a friendship and provided a carpool opportunity. I chose to study programming at North Seattle Community College. It was close by and I could work it into my life while my children were young and I was working half time.

We might choose something in pursuit of a particular goal. For example, I choose to take clarinet lessons and practice so that I will be a better musician and have fun. In my son Raffi's case, he is pushing through school to increase his earning potential so that he will have more choices down the road.

What choices get made for you by others or inattention? Sometimes we fall into a choice because it is the only option we see. Other times we choose unintentionally due to an unexamined habit. To change a habit, of course, first we have to become aware of it.

It can be good to evaluate our actions and choices by asking the question: does this choice improve our lives? Another friend asks, "If I make the same choice in the same circumstance 100 times, will I like the result?"

There are many options for us in the dancing realm. You could run for the NFDI board (really! Just let any board member know you are interested. Now is the time.), you could participate in folk dance clubs, dance at regular and special events, attend workshops and dance camps, learn a dance and bring it home to teach, just to name a few.

How are you choosing the building blocks of your life?