SKELETONS in the Closet

I grew up at a time where most people tried to conform to the norm. To be different was not as embraced nor as popular as it is today. It was particularly not good if you had some sort of abnormality or defect that made you different from the crowd. As an example, I had a cousin who was diagnosed with epilepsy as a young boy and he was segregated from the rest of the cousins. Today, his condition would not only be acknowledged, but he would be heralded for his ability to live with the disability. Times were indeed different.

When I was diagnosed with diabetes back in 1971, I tried not to be treated any differently by my friends or family. I did everything I could to hide the disease. I put up a good facade that I was like every other 17-year-old kid. I even ate poorly like many of my friends, but for me, this would only make my condition worse. The more I denied being abnormal, the reality was I was hiding my condition from myself and living in a denial state. As I later matured, I began to realize that no one was perfect. In fact, the truth was that everyone had skeletons in their closets. Mine had just occurred at a younger age. Once I realized that it was okay to be a diabetic and acknowledged that I had a disease, then my real healing could begin.

It was when I later opened up about my health in this newsletter that I began to realize how my messages resonated with my audience. Not only did they appreciate my message of hope, but they also wanted to share with me their stories. I hadn’t foreseen this at all. The truth is we are all dealing with something or will be one day. The sooner you can face the truth, the better off you’ll be. Because odds are the skeletons, they are here to stay.
I was recently invited to participate in a roundtable discussion in New York hosted by Morgan Stanley. The reason for the discussion had to do with the current state of the steel industry and what we anticipated in the future. I was the sole West Coast representative at this roundtable and what I realized was the fact that in California, we live with very different circumstances than the rest of the country. Many of the companies across the country have established themselves in regions and in markets for generations—for example, the auto and appliance industries are huge steel consumers. There are company towns located throughout the country where everyone in the town works for the same company. In California, we have more of a diverse manufacturing base as well as a workforce that is more transient. It is not generational. So when these companies back East or in the Midwest have to close or move their production processes overseas, the effect can be devastating on the entire region. When I was speaking at the roundtable, I was amazed at how much the rest of the country was impacted by the economic recession. The Morgan Stanley investors wanted to know “how long” we thought the downturn would last and how the steel industry would fare through it. Morgan Stanley knew that they must change with the times, or they will ultimately fail.

When I left the roundtable discussion, I thought there were far more questions raised than answers provided. I realized that this fourth industrial revolution of which we are on the forefront will come, ready or not. That brings me back to my original quote. It is essential to change, to learn and to be exposed. It’s the throwing myself out ready or not. That brings me back to my original quote. It is essential to change, to learn and to be exposed. It’s the throwing myself out into the open. Do it. Throw yourself out into the open that I struggle with. So I chose instead to just board a plane and return to sunny California.