



## **Illuminating the Backdrop**

***What have you forgotten about that is sapping your energy?***

by Elizabeth J. Agnew, MS, PE

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What has become part of your backdrop? You're probably not sure, because the nature of the backdrop is such that it sits behind everything and you tune out its existence.

Our backdrop is a foundational element in our physical domain, against which we live out our daily lives.

Try stirring up the dust – look around at your surroundings with new eyes. What has been sitting on your kitchen counter for months that you no longer notice because it's almost become a part of the counter or décor? Maybe it's a half-full bottle of wine that you excused with “oh, maybe I can use that for cooking one day”. Maybe it's a stack of coupons or pen and paper, or garlic that dried out months ago. You no longer notice it, unless you're looking for it explicitly.

These things zap our energy, nagging us until we take care of them. Letting them slip into the oblivion is a sub-conscious way for our minds to unleash the hold they have on us. We let them go because they were getting in our way. The problem is, *they continue to be in our way*, but because we've decided to ignore their existence, we've relinquished our control on doing anything about it. We let go of control by choosing to forget about the nagging things in the backdrop, and that disempowers us. The only way to get rid of the energy-sapping things in our backdrop is to notice the backdrop, take an inventory of what belongs there and what doesn't, and invest energy in revising it.

Look around where you're sitting with new eyes and let what you've ceased to notice reappear. You will find it invigorating simply to identify those things that have blended in with your kitchen counter, bulletin board, desktop, or floor. Partly why they blend in is because of our natural tendency to acclimate with our surroundings. Letting things slip can seem like the short-term path of least resistance. Don't let this fool you – the slow, long term energy leak from an unconscious, unproductive backdrop is far worse!

I recently moved into a new apartment and made a pact with myself that I would have no 'loose ends' – that the moment I found myself ignoring a loose end (something physically out of place or needing attention) that I would address it immediately. Well, the wind chimes I bought on a recent trip to Hawaii were lying on my floor, with no place to be. They were almost the same color as my carpet, and one day I walked by them and awoke to the fact that I hadn't noticed them in a while. “Those are slipping away” I thought, at risk for becoming part of my backdrop. This burst of awareness not only gifted me with the concept for this article, but allowed me to intentionally designate a place for the chimes so that they would no longer zap my energy – consciously or unconsciously.

We could stop here – with just the physical backdrop of your life. Instead, let's take it a step further and use the physical domain as an analogy for all that other stuff going on in your life. What has become a backdrop in your mind that you need to shine a light on? What needs tending to that you've gotten so used to living with that you don't even realize you're ignoring? I can help you out here: unanswered email from a long-time friend, apology you meant to give your sister or brother,

hand made card you thought to give your spouse, meeting you wanted to set up with your boss at work,

The backdrop of our metaphysical lives is the story we have made up about who we are, where we've come from, and what we can and cannot do for ourselves. It is expressed in the relationships we have and the nature of our interactions. What have you stopped noticing about the way you interact with people that is robbing you of your integrity, your richness, and your purpose?

At any given moment, we choose where to put our attention – our most powerful resource. We create a backdrop so that we have a constant stage in our daily, unpredictable lives. The backdrop creates the context within which we do the things we do. If we're not careful, our attention slips and things (and ideas) that don't belong there unconsciously fade into this screen. Be vigilant about keeping your backdrop clean, productive, and such that it supplies – not saps – you with energy.



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