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HOST: In a world obsessed with instant gratification, Teva Harrison reminds us that there is potential in the quiet moments, the ones without goals or deadlines. She urges us to look at nature and appreciate the small successes of each day: the kindness of a stranger, a chance to do a good deed, a laugh shared with a friend—these are all achievements. Harrison compares the realization of our potential to flowers that grow after the snow melts away, our actions determining when we will blossom. Welcome to The Conversation Piece. This is Teva Harrison, award-winning writer and graphic artist.

TEVA HARRISON: Hello, I'm Teva Harrison, and I have laryngitis. So being here tonight, giving a talk, it's already a success. A seed is germinated the whole cracks under the swelling of the first small root. It pushes through the soil and gains purchase. Sending a shoot up up, up to the warmth of the sun. Baby is born it's tiny finger and curls as her gasping mouth takes the air into lungs for the first time, a tree falls in the forest, grubs and termites feast on the water, swollen timber, creating a loamy soil that will nurse a sapling the life part of the circle that is life, the ongoing cycle of potential potential. We're here to talk about success, but without potential, there can be no success. We need a seed of potential, a source of nourishment and the sheer source. The sheer force of will that equals survival.

And when I talk about potential, I don't only mean capital peak potential or life's great successes, but the potential inherent in everything around us, the potential of the small intimate potential in every interaction of your day, the potential of this moment, this moment right here, and this one too, inside each tiny intimate moment, there is infinite potential. If you choose to see it, it's up to you to seize the opportunity, their potential and its cousin success are all around us and you can see it and you can seize it to me, Nate sure is the ultimate expression of this equation as seed is both a universal symbol of potential and the species hope for continuation. And it doesn't take much seed can take root in the smallest bit of earth and realise its own germ of potential. I've been lucky enough to go to Canada's far North and see a firsthand example of this at its extreme, to see some of Canada's most difficult environments, but also some of its most compelling examples of potential real lives of success.

In summer, the Tundra is covered the with blooms, all winter they're covered with ice and snow, but when that ice melts, it exposes a thin layer of loamy earth and tenacious flowers put up an amazing act of optimism. And the Arctic bees come and do that work. And the landscape grows and blossoms potential realised, even in this most harsh environment, I'd like these tiny flowers and bees, little things can show us beauty and they can show us raw potential. Every action you take is like the soil where these seeds take root, where these flowers grow, where potential is nourished, small things can mean a lot. Small actions can nourish small things like a casual act of kindness. I've come to appreciate casual acts of kindness from friends and strangers. You see, I live with terminal cancer and because my potential has been cut short by this disease, I don't have the luxury of taking time for granted.

I have to choose where to expend my energy. I've been forced to find my own humility and grace in accepting help from others because sometimes I truly can't do it for myself. This has forced me to rethink the relationship between potential and success even to redefine success. Now, success can be as small as getting out of bed, walking around the neighbourhood to run my own errands, completing host work, or simply asking for help. My potential doesn't feel infinite anymore. So instead of finding the potential, always in myself, I have developed an appreciation for how the kindness of other people has to my potential. How an act of kindness is



a success. Cancer has slowed me down. I've learned patience from hospitals and I transfer this patience to the rest of my life. It takes patients to visit the same flowers on a walk every day, watching them burst in the bloom, then dry desiccate, and fall back to the earth.

The success of these plants is not just in a show of colour, but the completion of the cycle fulfilling their potential. This familiar arc defines a successful life. We can learn a lot from nature to achieve success. Plants need to be adaptable to manage their external and to be strong. We're no different success means we need to stop to consider it. It's an external environment. Hospitable, are we adaptable? And just how strong is our force of will? What is our potential? These are questions I ask myself constantly because frankly, when facing a diagnosis like mine force of will is important, but it really comes down to taking a hard look at what success really means. And what potential really is. It means trying to find a balance between what I want to be able to do and what I am able to do. And a fear of feeling sorry for me, don't, there's a beautiful side to taking things slowly.

I take in the beauty of the small, along the way. I notice things I would have raced past before I find more four-leaf clovers than anybody. I watched his flowers, bloom and fade I'm in tune with the cycle of life because I'm hyper aware of my place in it. And when I'm in nature amid the small successes of flowers and saplings, the improbability of the germination of the seed or the fertilisation of an egg, I see how the fairy stuff of life is potential realised. We are surrounded by potential and we are surrounded by success. If we just slow down enough to appreciate it, we can model our own lives. After nature, we can create success by nurturing the potential in our hearts and the potential in others. The successes you seek are already seeded under your skin, in your heart and in your mind, give yourself the space to see it and going slowly and paying attention and asking for help and lifting up the potential of others and seeing your own potential manifest. This is what success looks like to me. This is what it needs to be. Thank you.

HOST: Teva Harrison spoke at The Walrus Talks Success in 2018 and though we lost her to cancer in 2019, she continues to inspire with her words and her art, like the gorgeous illustration featured in her Conversation Piece graphic.

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