

January, 2010 Newsletter

## Clearing Away the Clutter

When you let go of the demands on your time that do not serve your highest purpose, freedom is at your beck and call.

Do you remember when you were a child, awakening to the sunshine making its way through your window, inviting you to join the day? Flying out of bed, barely taking time to eat, you could hardly wait to see what life had to offer!

There were balls to kick, games to play and ants to watch as they crossed the sidewalk single file. There were silly made-up jokes shared with friends, all of you roaring with laughter at how witty you were! Do you recall those solitary moments lying on the grass, staring at the summer clouds in the vast blue expanse overhead? You became a sculptor carving out creations in the shapes that materialized in the white fluffy stuff. Entering into a conversation with yourself, you marveled at what appeared, "Look, there's a bear! Its head is on the left and its body down lower, to the right. I can even make out its tail!" You watched the bear shift with the breeze until it finally disappeared, to leave you searching for your next great discovery. Shaking the grass out of your clothes as you finally stood up to leave, you delighted in your own creative brilliance, there for the taking amidst the tapestry of nature's bounty.

Reflecting upon those memories, can you feel your body relaxing, the urge to grin twitching at the corners of your mouth? Good! Welcome back to Spirit's world – a world where the simplicity of life connects you with the uncomplicated, down-to-earth treasures found in living a life filled with your own beauty, potential and happiness. Spirit is on a great adventure as you. It is forever seeking your attention so that you might awaken to the brilliance of what is in front of you in every moment and the magnificence of who you are in it.

Living Life Fully

You may be thinking, "That was a long time ago; there's a lot of difference between then and now!" Really, there is less difference than you realize. Sure, we have work to accomplish, bills to pay, families to support and appointments to keep. Our days are very full! With that in mind, ask yourself some question: Just how are my days being filled? Do I see life as a great adventure? Did I notice the clouds, the trees or any other aspect of nature today? Do I take time for quiet reflection every day? Have I laughed out loud lately? Have I paid attention to what makes me happy? Do I even know what makes me happy? Living fully is not meant to be complicated. Gandhi said, "Live as if you were to die tomorrow," a reminder to experience daily the deliciousness life has to offer. Pretend that each day is a lifetime. When you go to bed at night, what makes you feel fulfilled? The answers may help you understand what is most significant to you. Is it your stylish new furniture or the contentment you feel as you walk through the door of your home after work? Will your new job promotion be at the top of your list, or your relationships with your coworkers? Is it important that you accomplished the things that made others happy, or nurtured the self-love in your own heart fed by a relationship with God?

We are masters of our own perspective, choosing where to put our focus in every situation. There is nothing preventing us from shifting our focus right now as we become aware of our options. We can opt to spend more of our time and energy on what gives our lives meaning. It is possible to have the time to lie on our backs and watch the clouds go by. It's all about choice. Freedom comes from realizing that in every single moment we get to choose which path to take. Listening to our own inner wisdom, we can decide to use the courage residing within us, which brings us to our highest good. Peace and joy are calling to us this very minute, luring us back to the beauty that life has to offer.

Knowing that this is true, what stops us from living lives of bliss? As we grow older, we sometimes forget the simple things. You may have noticed that we human adults are rather preoccupied with the physical aspects of our lives. We like our stuff, tending to buy what we don't really need and then holding on to it long past its prime. We are busy at unsatisfying jobs because we need them on order to pay for the things we just bought. We load up our calendars with events that we don't want to attend but think we should. We fill our lives with all manner of clutter.

## Simplifying Your Stuff

The definition of clutter is “to fill or litter with things in a disorderly manner.” Many of us do just that, burying our true nature and the happiness that comes with it under piles of acquisitions. Some of it is very expensive. We lock it up and insure it, worrying about the possibility of theft. Another item might not cost as much, but we sure hold on to it as if it were the most valuable possession on earth! Think about what’s in your closet and ask yourself a few questions: How long has it been since I wore that jacket? What about the shirt that’s too small but I’m sure will fit when I lose a few pounds? Open the kitchen cupboards and ask: How many coffee cups do I really need: When did I last use the handcrafted vase I picked up on vacation ten years ago? Peer into the refrigerator: Just what is behind that jar of pickles? Is anything growing in there? Peek into your desks and files: Do I need the receipts from the washer/dryer that I left in my old house? Turn your attention to the junk drawer: What vital treasures have worked their way to the back corner? Then there’s the garage: What really is in all those boxes? If they contain personal items that are so essential I can’t part with them, then why are they in a box in the garage instead of out where I can enjoy them? Yes, we humans like our stuff!

At what point does stuff become clutter? The truth of our “stuff” can be found in our gut reaction when we think about our many personal assets. Are they really assets, or are they deterrents to delight? Listening from the inside out, you will have your answer. Knowing that you always have options, you get to consciously choose; you can follow your own inner wisdom or not. Spirit loves you without reservation, no matter which avenue you take; what does matter is how you feel about it. You might find that in cleaning out just one closet your entire attitude changes! You are creating a space whereby physical possessions that are no longer needed are replaced with freedom, hopefulness, and maybe even the impulse to laugh out loud!

## Uncover Your Patterns

Frequently we operate from old, hidden beliefs and patterns of behavior that guide our life and yet may have never been true about us. For instance, if our parents or

grandparents came through the Depression, they might have adopted the belief that there isn't enough money. This idea gets passed down through each generation and it becomes the succeeding generation's belief too. Because you never know when you might need the thing you are hanging on to, hoarding becomes a habit. You rationalize buying three jars of peanut butter instead of one because it was such a good sale price, although it's liable to turn bad before you eat it all. Our physical space is filled with "extras" we might never use but can't bear to part with, as that old thought about scarcity tugs at us. On the other end of the spectrum, the belief in limitation often leads to credit card debt, cluttering our mind with anxiety, fear and guilt. We think we need *that thing* to be happy, and when it's out of our financial reach our credit card becomes our best friend – for the moment. Most of the time, such pleasure is short-lived. Later, as we question our actions, regret, worry and self-blame intrude upon the spiritual space where joy, contentment and creativity once resided.

### Master Your Time

Now that you are paying attention to the physical clutter in your life, take a look at how you spend your time. Knowing that at any given moment you are choosing peace and happiness, what does your calendar look like? Do you really want to attend the family barbeque and cocktail party with business associates or to go see that new horror movie on Friday night? It may be a good idea to list your commitments so that you can make conscious decisions. If you aren't quite ready to say no to an entire event, you are free to say something like, "I am happy to come and stay thirty minutes." You now have a perfect opportunity to generate some pure, unadulterated free time, scheduled just for you! When asked, you don't need to defend or explain – your spiritual time is your own. The big question is, now that you have free time, what do you want to do with it? Try contemplating the question, "What makes me happy?" If being in nature energizes you, where can you take a walk, notice the vegetation, smell the fresh air? How long has it been since you took a bubble bath or waded barefoot in a stream? How about volunteering an hour a week? Perhaps you long for an hour of quiet to just sit and be still. Then do it! When you let go of the demands on your time that do not serve your highest purpose, freedom is at your beck and call.

## Move Into Freedom

Family-centered values may have instructed us to put others before ourselves, so we strive to please those around us. For a while we can fool ourselves into thinking we are happy until we discover that in pleasing everyone else, we have lost ourselves. While keeping others content, we realize we don't even know what brings us joy! We were not meant to play small – we are here to bring our gift to the world. When are we going to allow our light to shine? We have the potential to shine in every second of our life. It's our job to stay on the path that allows that to happen. Removing the emotional clutter that causes us to be someone we're not, we become open to life's beauty.

Mental clutter can be removed with grace and ease when we are willing to take action. Ask yourself, "What am I putting off?" Going to the dentist, starting that new exercise plan, taking the car in to be serviced, paying bills or making that phone call you said you would make? The only moment in time you have is now. What will you do with it? What do you want for yourself: accomplishment or procrastination, cheerfulness or resentment, tranquility or despair? Today, opt to live your life consciously. What will you choose?

You are not walking this new path alone. Your soul, that part of you that only knows joy and possibility, is your constant resource, your forever guide, leading you back to the path of living your purpose here on earth. The glory of being off the path is that it gets so unpleasant that we finally notice and make a conscious decision to do something about it. Again the question arises: "What have I been putting off that I am willing to take care of right now?" It's amazing how good it feels to actually do it! You'll find yourself smiling.

Take time to notice and nurture the sweetness that comes from each success. Congratulate yourself for every tiny step. You weren't born with clutter; you acquired it over time. Un-cluttering also takes time, and each step is a golden opportunity to fill your life with delight – instead of stuff.

When you make a conscious decision to let go of the clutter you've accumulated, you remove the turmoil that accompanies it. The natural orderliness of the universe rights your untidy world, and there you are, with the time and space to live Spirit's limitless freedom – as you! Enjoy!