

FIND YOUR PASSION!

By Jeanne Strauss, LMSW-ACP

Are you living the life you want to be living? Does your life have all the passion, power and fulfillment you want? Do you know what your purpose is and do you act from that purpose every day? What moves you? What touches you? When do you experience the intensity of a life lived passionately? These are not easy questions to answer. I have met very few people who feel they are living the life they want to be living. Most of us have goals and desires that are as yet unmet. The irony is that the more we focus on the desires of the future, the less we are living with passion in the present. We put off living in the moment until the moment is perfect. Even though our idea of perfect is only fuzzy at best.

In the meantime, our thoughts live in the future while we sleep through our daily routines. We spend our day unaware and unfocused, or living in a fantasy world. We get out of bed but don't really wake up. We go off to do our work, but miss the big picture—how this moment affects the whole.

If we stay distracted by the numerous commitments, constant stress and fast pace of our lives we lose touch with our source, our purpose, and our passion. Even if we aren't lulled to sleep by too much television or drawn into the frantic pace of the corporate world, we can be unbalanced by other people's demands, and fill our days with meaningless tasks, and endless "to do" lists. We think about today's actions only in terms of fulfilling some future goal, not in terms of the quality that they give us today. Our culture encourages this "ends justifies means" kind of thinking. But how you get there is what you get. If you want passion and peace in your life you won't get there by working hard and saving money so you can vacation at an exciting place next July. Nor will you find it if you only approach it on Saturday morning when you have time to meditate. By then you're likely to be too exhausted, and the habit of your frenzied life will be too ingrained.

To have peace and flow and passion and fulfillment, you must begin living that way today, in the present. And the source of our passion is inside; if we don't find it there, we will never find it anywhere else. We can use valuable information, experience and insight from others, only if we are present in our own life. Otherwise we remain dissatisfied, restless, distracted and bored no matter what we learn, what we try, or who we consult.

Sometimes we think of passionate people as those who "make things happen". In fact, however, they are usually the ones who notice what is happening, allow things to happen, and ride the energy of momentum. They go with the flow. Most of us get stuck sometimes and forget to follow the flow of the moment. Most of us hold on to things from the past. Outdated ideas, beliefs and habits are often what we find ourselves clinging to so desperately when we take an honest look. Sometimes we even recognize that what we are holding is toxic and outdated, but we don't know how to let go because we've been holding it for so long.

I sometimes like to think of life as a river. We get ideas into our head about the way we should be going and we struggle upstream to get something or someone we passed long ago. Or we grab onto a tree limb and stay there too long. The longer we're still, the harder it is to let go and get back into the current. Or sometimes we end up in a stagnant pond while we're asleep. "Going with the flow" doesn't mean we can just lay back and relax. It also means that sometimes we have to ride the rapids, paddle around obstacles, and swim. Some of us believe that success means we have to "push the river". We paddle faster than the current because we are impatient. This is fun and even necessary at times but if we get into the habit of doing this all the time we are missing the process. Letting go is about allowing things to happen in their own time instead of fighting the current to make things happen that aren't happening naturally. It takes wisdom and self-knowledge to know where to put our efforts.

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Begin by slowing your steps. Begin by returning to your body. Your mind has the capacity to leap ahead. Your body, however, is always in the present moment. Turn your attention inward, as many times as it takes. Breathe deeply and act from your center. Whenever you notice yourself acting unconsciously, slow yourself down and become conscious. It's sometimes helpful to have a guide or a partner in learning to become present. To make the unconscious conscious sometimes requires assistance. As you begin the journey within and discover more passion in the present you may find that those around you are frightened or threatened by the changes. We live in a state of some equilibrium and when we begin to heal we upset that equilibrium temporarily. Others will want to re-establish the old balance by trying to get us to change back in order to feel safe themselves. Sometimes relationships end because they can't withstand the change. But we can help those around us understand and support our growth and healing, so they are working with us instead of against us.