

Using Our Gifts...Realizing Our Dreams

By Barbara Ashcroft B.A. M.ED.

Each and every one of us is born with a special gift or talent. Some of us discover this gift very early in life and instinctively know that the use of this gift will be the source of our fulfillment and joy. When we are truly being our authentic selves, we focus on developing and using our unique talents, and thus we feel excited to greet each day. We also bring our own uniqueness to the lives of others.

Valuing Our Differences

"Each of us is someone who has never existed before and who will never exist again. Our value is in our difference." Thomas Ryan

We are not all alike, nor do we all have the same aspirations. You are you. And you bring your special gift to others. Jean Vanier tells us that, "even the littlest and weakest person has a gift for the community, and that gift must be honored." He goes on to say that, "each one of us is very different from the other. But all together we are like a symphony, an orchestra; all together we make up a beautiful bouquet of flowers." When we begin to discover our special gifts, we can acknowledge that these gifts were given to us to use for our own pleasure and also for the good of others. We are all part of a larger whole. To deny using our gifts is also to deny their benefit to others. Isn't it wonderful that we don't all have to have the same talent? When we become comfortable with our own gifts, we are free to compliment others on theirs. When we understand that we are each a unique piece of the larger jigsaw puzzle, we realize that we are all necessary and we value the smallest edge to complete the picture. Where do you fit in? What gift do you bring? Where will you share this gift?

Four out of five people are not passionate about what they are doing in life. Are you engaged in work that motivates you and touches your soul? Many have chosen a life of compliance and mediocrity which has stifled their inner spirit. Sometimes we get so caught up in the same old, same old, that we lose sight of what truly matters to us. We go through our daily routines, but we know that something is missing from our lives. Do you feel that you live a purposeful life? Are you passionate about what you do? Are you in touch with what really makes your heart sing?

What Are My Gifts and Dreams?

If you find that you seem to be in a state of apathy and somewhat restless, this is a sure sign that you are beginning to search for something more meaningful and authentic in your life. Your dreams already exist. They are just waiting for you to find them. We are all called to use our unique God-given abilities, whatever they may be. Have you buried your gifts and dreams? Do you even remember what your hopes and passions were as a young child or adolescent? Have you left your aspirations behind or exchanged them for other options deemed more acceptable by others. Often parents, educational systems or society set out their expectations for us and we become so busy meeting others' requirements for us that we lose our original selves in the process. Moreover, in our consumer-driven society we are all tempted to seek out a job or career that pays extremely well. In just going for the dollar alone we may neglect our true passions or inner calling. There are many young adults today who have completed

university, but really have no idea where their heart lies in the world of work. Do you have a special talent or interest that needs to be rekindled?

Use the following questions to help you get back in touch with what's really in your heart.

1. What hopes and dreams did you have as young child/adolescent?
2. When are you enthusiastic? What makes you feel fully alive?
3. What activity makes the time fly when you are doing it?
4. What kind of environment do you love to be in?
5. What truly gives you meaning and fulfillment? When are you the happiest?
6. What do people notice that you seem to do better than others?
7. If today were your last day to live what would not be fulfilled in you?

When you feel that spark inside of you ignite as you reflect on these questions, your mind and body are telling you that you need to listen to your heart and reawaken some of these long forgotten dreams and passions. We often lose ourselves little by little day by day settling for a passive rather than a passionate life. When we suppress our authentic gifts and dreams, our body will tell us that we are out of balance. Physical symptoms often appear. We were meant to use our gifts and when we go against this flow we usually pay a price. Do you remember a time when you truly believed that you would use your personal gifts to their fullest? We need to go back to our youthful ideals. There are many clues there as to what really feeds our soul. It is here that we will get reacquainted with who we really are. When we get clear on what it is that stirs and motivates us, we begin to see how our life might become more fulfilling if we start to pursue this calling. We may not be able to abandon our current jobs completely, but at least we will know what it is that we need to begin to include in our lives to feel a sense of fulfillment. It may be just the beginning of an exciting renewal process.

"There are two great days in a person's life-the day we are born and the day we discover why."
Wm. Barclay

Watch Out For That Some Day Syndrome

What are you waiting for? Once you realize what it is that truly inspires you, you may still get side-tracked. That 'someday syndrome' may creep in. Some day I'll write a book. Some day I'll start a business. Some day I'll help the less fortunate. Elizabeth Kubler Ross points out, "when you live as if you'll live forever, it becomes too easy to postpone the things you know you must do." Pay attention to what is stopping you from using your gifts and following your dreams. Why are you placing your most precious projects on the back burner? Busyness and daily routine eat up our days until we realize on our death beds that we never got around to our most fulfilling and meaningful endeavors. Life has a way of happening with or without our consent. There are no reruns. How long do you want to stay on 'pause'?

Feeling Fully Alive

"If you love what you do you will never work another day in your life." Confucius

Our lives really become fulfilled if we can connect our true passion and purpose in life to our livelihood. This may not always be easy, but it can be something that we can work toward. Why would you waste your whole life spending your valuable time doing what is not feeding your

soul? Begin to think about ways that you can realize some of your hopes and aspirations in what you are currently doing now. Bring your special gifts to the workplace. Find creative ways to incorporate your special spark into that environment. Eventually, however, you may decide to pursue other career paths that will allow your light to shine. Or you may set out on your own. Your heart knows what you really need to feel fulfilled. When you embrace your authentic self, your body begins to feel lighter. You feel content, and joyful. Others around you begin to benefit from your sense of well being. When you are using your gifts, and living out your passions, your physical and mental health flourish, your family benefits and your life becomes productive and rewarding. Go for what truly inspires you. You are then truly, fully alive.

Permission for reprint of this article is given with the inclusion of this statement:

Barb Ashcroft offers JOURNEY TO JOY SEMINARS and private consultation for those who wish to develop personally and spiritually.

Contact Barb at 905 814-6434 barb@barbashcroft.com. <http://www.barbashcroft.com> .