



JOY

Joy plays such an important part in our lives, don't you think? To have any kind of experience at all without joy is like looking at the world without color. Joy is what cushions our steps, with the lightness of fluffy clouds, as we travel the bumpy roads of our lives.

Yet many times we give someone else the power to drain our joy. We let others deflate our bubble of playfulness. Sometimes, all it takes is a pin prick of criticism and our joy seems somehow, stolen. It is wise to be alert to our own idle or thoughtless remarks that steal joy from others, as well. Simple, uncomplicated, kindness is our guide here. Kindness helps us do unto others as we would have others do unto us.

Everyone knows that Joy is precious, but most of us don't realize how strongly it must be guarded with resilience and determination. Awareness is the Great Protector. It is the sentry at the gate of our consciousness. To honor joy in our lives every moment, we have to be consciously aware of the direction in which we are going AND growing. It is necessary to have a clear picture of our path and the growth we really want to take place within us. For that which does not grow and change, dies.

When we are conscious and aware in our thoughts and actions, joy bubbles to the surface. In all that we do, even in our darkest hours, a kernel of joy will spring forth if our consciousness invites it. We must want it and search for it diligently. For there in that kernel of joy, lays our hope for the future. Joy is a gift to and from our souls and we need it to nurture and replenish us. A well fed soul reflects a life full of abundance and well being.

I believe there are three important ways to keep Joy alive and feed our souls at the same time:

1. Do what you love. What ever gives you amazing pleasure and fills your heart with joy, do it and do it often. Do one or more of these things on a daily basis.
2. Look for joy everywhere and in all that you do. Screen every thought, feeling and experience through the eyes of joy. See it everywhere. And remember that sometimes, it lies beneath and beyond appearances.
3. Give thanks for joy. Support others to find their own joy

Recently, I had the experience of finding joy in the last place I expected it. I live in snow country. It was the aftermath of a huge snow storm and I, snow shovel in hand, was in the process of laboriously digging out the snow plough truck. This truck was covered in snow up to the top of the windows. I grumbled and muttered to myself how hard this was, how I didn't have time for this, and so on. I was escalating the whole thing into a



really horrible experience when all of a sudden, I noticed over my shoulder, my black cat walking on a huge bank of snow towards me. His eyes were almost to my chest, bright green, with what I thought asked the question, “It was never like this in California. What were you thinking when you brought me here?” It made me laugh. And after putting down the shovel, I picked him up. While I was holding and stroking him, I began to notice the pristine whiteness of fallen snow as it lay all around me. I was surrounded by a pure, sheer, beauty of white covered pine trees, stretching up toward skies of azure blue. Caught up in this moment, I realized my dark brown stained log house, with the roof densely covered with snow, looked just like a gingerbread house. In fact, I could almost see myself running my finger along the edge of the roof where the snow hung thickly. It looked so much like frosting, that I could taste the sweetness on my tongue. Just then, it began to snow again. Soft, white, star like flakes, gently whirling around, giving me the feeling that I was standing in my very own snow globe. I thought, “This must be how Norman Rockwell felt when he was inspired to paint”.

Joyful feelings replaced my previously bad frame of mind. And although I had not, in this case, consciously made that choice to invite joy, I was aware of it, as a gift from my soul. Now I faced a new choice: I could go back to grumbling and muttering and in general, having a pity party. OR, I could keep the warm joyful feeling that had bubbled up from my depths. Sometimes all it takes is to stand back and take time out... to mentally place your self outside of a situation and allow the bigger picture to appear. This is what helped me make my choice. I finished digging out that truck with a smile on my face. I was filled with Joy, again.

It’s really pretty easy to be grateful and give thanks for joy; yours and others, when you are filled with joy. It radiates like an all encompassing glow, touching and engulfing everyone you meet. Others find you attractive and want to be around you. They want to find out how they can feel the same way. Joy begs us to share it with them, to model it for them. Our joy is like a seven course meal to those hungry for this essential experience.

We have the ability to make positive changes in the way we think and feel all the time. Because everything we do starts with a thought. It takes awareness and practice to consistently invite joy, but what great rewards there are...especially just to know we can choose the way we think and thus feel. Imagine how your life would look if, from the moment you awoke in the morning, until you went to sleep at night, every one of those moments were filled with joy. For most of us, that would mean huge shifts in perception with our jobs, chores, relationships, health, just to name a few. Can you imagine just singing for joy while you are washing dirty dishes, doing laundry, driving somewhere, getting caught in a traffic jam, not being able to find a parking spot, missing the last bus from work? If you have these challenges, it means: you have food that was on the dishes



you are washing. You have clothes and a means to launder them. You have an automobile in which to get caught up in traffic and not find a parking spot. And you have a job that gives you money to take a bus. Your life is blessed! Dear one.

So, if your life is blessed, please remember these three important things:

Do what you love

Look for joy everywhere

Give thanks for all that you have...Give thanks for Joy