

Self-Empowerment

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Soul Purpose

Have you wondered what your soul purpose is? It certainly is not a one-size-fits-all! Your soul's current purpose may be to do a particular work, forgive a past event, embody a specific essence quality, or some other interesting life expression. Maybe your soul purpose changes at different times in your life, and you don't have merely one sole soul purpose.

In his last interview with Bill Moyers, Joseph Campbell said, "There is a dimension of the universe that is not available to our senses."

Deepak Chopra says we are a soul first, and a person second. He writes of a secular spirituality that is not dependent on religion yet offers all of us access to a higher perspective with solutions to any problem.

Gina Lake, in her book *Radical Happiness: A Guide to Awakening*, describes the soul this way: "The soul links the physical world with the nonphysical world and acts as a go-between."

I watched a Wayne Dyer PBS special where he introduced Anita Moorjani, a Hong Kong woman of Indian decent. Several years ago she was diagnosed with cancer. Her book *Dying To Be Me: My Journey From Cancer, To Near Death, To True Healing* describes the experience known as a Near Death Experience, or NDE. While her physical body was in a coma, Anita was in an expanded state of awareness, able to hear what her doctors were saying in another room, see into the minds of her close relatives, communicate with deceased loved ones, and receive a spiritual message about the true nature of her being. After awakening from the coma, her cancer had dramatically reduced in size, and shortly thereafter disappeared from her body without a trace. Anita's soul purpose at this time is to share her miracle of healing, inspiring others with the lessons she learned from her intense experience – mainly that each of us can experience our magnificence and be who we truly are.

*Make your life choices out of joy and passion,
rather than out of a fear of the consequences!*

Anita Moorjani

Throughout the ages people have fallen into the trap of thinking of the physical world as all that exists because that is all our five senses are able to experience. Nevertheless, mystics, people of faith, spiritual teachers, and artists often share a deeper connection to an intelligence beyond our physical senses, which may be known as Soul, Higher Self, Inner Wisdom, Angelic Realms, or Divinity.

The spiritual path is that which leads you to receive the wisdom and guidance that transcends mortal linear thinking. Each of us may be called in a different way, as there certainly are many approaches to fulfilling our Soul Purpose.

In this issue, Patricia Chiaffa shares the inspiration she found reflected in a home repair and her intention to apply it to expanding the practice of Christian Love to her relationships.

Karen Drucker was inspired to take action to meet a community need, and suggests that we can take small steps to make a difference.

Joseph Anthony's musings on life's mystery is a soulful dive into emotional depths.

Dawna Markova's inspiring words cut to the heart of our desire to live a life that is expansive.

May your Soul speak to you as you listen for the wisdom and guidance that will bring you fulfillment of your purpose.



Your fellow traveler,
Rev. Jill

Etching My Way Back to Love

by Patricia Chiaffa

In February, the repair guy delivered to me the news that it was time to replace the heater. It was outdated and the replacement parts were no longer available. I painfully winced because I knew there was much more involved than just replacing an oil burner. Previous owners of the house had built walls around the oil tank, boxing it into a tight space. If I were to have a problem with the old tank in the future, it would have to be cut out in pieces. There would be no easy way of replacing it. It made no sense to replace the old oil burner with a new oil burner because there was no replacing the oil tank with a new tank. Therefore, I decided to totally replace the heating system, a decision I delayed until May. Remove the old burner, cut out the tank, and have a new gas heating system installed. This conversion came with a high price tag. Further, city code required that such a renovation include installing a steel liner in the chimney to prevent poisonous fumes from seeping into the house. The project did not end there. Once the furnace and tank were removed, crumbling walls were exposed with debris all over the floors.

The floors bore the marks of decades of accumulated soot and rust, revealing cracks and holes and stains. What lay ahead for me were weeks and weeks of hard work. With the major blockages removed, I at least had some room within which to work. I scraped and patched the holes and cracks with appropriate filler materials, and waterproofed the walls. The foundation required several treatments including degreasing and *etching*. I'd never even heard of etching. It involved using a chemical solution to alter the surface texture. It took an entire afternoon to complete, as I could not use a hose to rinse after each etching procedure. I had to clear the surface with a mop, lifting the blackened material released by the process. Cleansing and preparation required hard work. Then I had to bond the etched surfaces before I could paint. I vowed never to etch again!

The results were transformative. Gone were the dark spaces I had previously hidden behind closed doors. The confined tight space that housed the old tank is now a clean storage closet. The smell of mildew was replaced with the freshness of the waterproofing paint. The rust and lime stains were removed and now a fresh, bright foundation is in place.

I was often exhausted from the physical work and energy that the job required. I remember asking the building maintenance guy (where I work) if I could skip either the etching or the bonding steps. He firmly told me that there is no easy way around it. If I failed to properly prepare the foundation, the paint would not adhere. I can now look back and say it was worth the effort. The finished product goes beyond aesthetics - the basement area is cleaner, healthier and a much warmer place to be - even without the heat being on!

As my basement project was winding down, I was asked to co-facilitate a Scripture study for young adults, with my spiritual buddy, Sister Annette. The Scripture study would run for six weeks during the summer, and was to be based on the book *40 Days of Love* by Rick Warren. After reading the first chapter of the book, I felt intense fear. I had a profound awareness that I was being called to a personal transformation which I knew as a "call from complacency to kindness" by God Himself.

Each weekly session of the program was designed to challenge participants to actively practice the relationship principles of Jesus. As I continued to prepare for the scripture study, I became aware that my basement project offered spiritual lessons which I would soon be putting into practice.

As I pondered that thought, I equated myself to the old oil burner which was no longer functioning efficiently. I was certainly operating on outdated values. For example, when my children were young, my time restrictions were very rigid. I always needed to be somewhere at a particular time. As a result, I placed a very high value on time. My youngest child just graduated from college, yet I continued to follow constrained behavior patterns that should no longer bind me. I no longer need to rush home to prepare dinner or brush off a conversation with a neighbor because of a pressing obligation. Being very task oriented, I had fallen into making tasks more important than people. The scary part of this realization is that my newfound freedom makes me more accountable for how loving towards others I choose to be.

40 Days of Love begins with the principle that love is the supreme value - the primary objective - in life. At a point in life when I'm anticipating lots of "me" time, I'm reading how Jesus always chose meeting the needs of others above following his schedule. As a single parent, working full-time and nurturing children, grandkids, and an aging parent, I really am busy; too busy perhaps to

notice the needs and the wounds of those around me. It is difficult to hear that for me to be a kinder person, I need to slow down, listen to others, and *be willing to be interrupted*.

I sighed a familiar painful wince because the work involved in this self-renovation project would not be a quick fix. Rather, it will be the project of a lifetime, involving a total giving of self. My old operating system is being etched to prepare me to open to love's presence.

As I mentioned earlier, etching the floor involved a lot of work because old corroded layers needed to be removed to prepare the foundation to receive the new fresh finish. In the same way, my "psychological etching" involves removing layers of defensive habits. For example, no more can I continue my practice of peeking outside to make sure it is clear before I open the door to avoid running into a neighbor whom I judge as not worth my time because she complains all the time. Nor shall I regard my caregiving duties to my mother as being a burden. Jesus' life illustrates that nothing is more important than relationships; they must be given the highest value because it is the only choice that will truly last. As with my basement, there are no short-cuts around this principle.

In another book, *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*, author Tom Holladay writes: "In the beginning, God created you for relationships. He made you to relate to Him and others. Miss out on relationships, and you're missing the core reason for which God put you on this planet."

It now seems to me that relationships are the basis upon which we should prioritize. Love is a choice in the sense that we have to decide to honor people above other things since we don't have enough time to do everything.

I sense that I have operated on a surface level, more or less, which leaves me feeling that I'm ok – but that is a far cry from living in the capacity that we were created to live, which is loving one another as Christ loved us. I think that I have taken the first step by becoming aware of that principle.

The walls of my current value system are crumbling with this powerful reading. It seems to me that the weakness was created by my own personal experiences of imperfect, broken, and limited love. I intend to fill the holes and cracks with faith for strength and support.

The challenge is in dealing with the messy part, the hard part, where we are roughed up (like sanding and etching) in preparation for the love to be fully and deeply received.

I feel a shift occurring in my heart. God's call requires me to replace my hardened self-protective lining with a new one - unconditional love - to allow His Spirit to flow freely through me. I don't want to miss God's priorities for my life. I pray that the dark places within me will be illumined with the love and light of Christ so that others will find a warm, safe haven in me.

The work has begun.

Patricia Chiaffa is both a practicing Catholic and an Interfaith Minister. While she works in the corporate world fulltime to pay the bills, she participates in many volunteer opportunities to expand her capacity to give and receive love.

*I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance,
to live
so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me
as blossom,
goes on as fruit.*

Dawna Markova

Right now, I feel I am home. I have no desire to be anywhere else. It makes no difference now whether I am "here" or "on the other side." It's all just different parts of the experience of our greater, expanded self. I have found my true home within me, and it will follow me wherever I go.

Anita Moorjani
www.anitamoorjani.com

One Small Step by Karen Drucker

I had a big thrill this week. Did I get a major record deal? Win the lottery? Get an all expenses paid trip to my heaven on earth: Hawaii? No, I had a validation that I had made a difference. A small one - but a difference nonetheless, and it felt really good.

I live in an area where there are all these one way streets separated by a median that is filled with lots of plants and trees. On every street where there is this divide, there is a sign with an arrow that says "Keep Right." I never really noticed these signs until recently. While driving around a corner near my house I almost had a head on collision with a car that clearly didn't even know this was a one-way street. When I checked at the end of the street, sure enough it was one of the only places where there was no sign letting someone know to "Keep Right."

I did the typical thing that most of us do, I said, "Someone should really let the city know that there needs to be sign there." I mumbled that to myself every time I drove by that intersection, thinking that just because I was thinking it, that somehow it would magically appear. I am sure other people thought the same thing, and as time passed by I wondered if there were any other head-on near misses.

So as the universe would have it, I was doing a concert recently and one of the songs I sang that night is my tune, "We Are The Ones That We've Been Waiting For." In the middle of the song I got it - no one else is going to make that call. If I want something to be done about the sign, I need to take the initiative. My friend Alan Cohen says it best: "You spot it, you got it," meaning I was the one who saw that something needed to be done and it was up to me - not "someone out there" - to do whatever I could to handle the situation. I got on the phone the very next day, went through all the various offices, people passing the buck and saying it's not their department...and on and on...but I kept calling until I got someone who said that they would come out and look at it.

Some time passed by and I thought I would have to go for round two of my pursuit. However, just last week while driving home I was amazed - it was there. A simple sign saying "Keep Right" with a big arrow. I was thrilled! Did anyone know I helped create that sign being there? Did anyone care? Probably not, but I was excited. It was a really small thing, but it gave me the feeling of doing something instead of just talking about it.

In all of my workshops and retreats, I always talk about starting with even the smallest thing to bring you closer to your goal. When we look at a project or goal and get overwhelmed, it can lead to a paralyzation of our ideas, creativity and energy. The smallest step will start us on the track of doing something that will lead to the next step, and then the next step. Sometimes all we need is one small step to feel like we have accomplished something.

We hear so much about being involved with huge projects like curing cancer, saving the oceans, wiping out hunger. These ideas all need our support, but allowing yourself to do one small thing each day or once a week to make the world a better place might be enough. I know a woman who loves baking cookies, and each week she brings two dozen to the shelter near her house. Another friend walks the dog of a friend who just broke her leg; another friend puts on a show where she sings and tap dances each month for the convalescent home nearby. Small things, but these people are making a difference.

So I got a sign put up on my street...



What is the one small step that you might want to do?

Karen Drucker is a singer, songwriter, workshop & retreat leader, and the author of "Let Go of the Shore: Stories and Songs that Set the Spirit Free". Sign up for Karen's email newsletter at www.KarenDrucker.com

Musings on the Mystery, in Two Parts

Blog Post 6/7/12 by Joseph Anthony

I. The Searching

I have been following the Mystery for years. Every now and again I catch a glimpse of it in unexpected places: the patterns of roots spreading through the ground, the swirl of milk in a cup of coffee. Of course I discern the Mystery in the places one would figure it resides: your eyes, for example, reflect luminous aspects of the Mystery; the faces of the flowers nodding as you pass, reveal the reverence the Mystery feels for all things; and the voices of children singing rings out the Mystery clearer perhaps than anything else—for me, that is.

There have been, however, exquisitely surprising and terrible moments when the Mystery sneaks up on me when I least expect it and blankets me with wonder. Exquisite because the warmth of being held in the Mystery is like being surrounded by the softest glow of the kindest hands; terrible because the light it brings exposes my frailties and my hypocrisies and I am forced to rethink, relive, and once again, allow myself to be reborn, which is rarely easy.

The Mystery also swathes me in darkness. When I am open, the Mystery descends (or rises, depending on where it is traveling from) and surrounds me like a moon-lit night, where the darkness is deep, yet tinged silver with the light of the moon and the encouraging faces of the stars. It is then, when I am able to sink into the mystery and let it enfold me. And I needn't worry about the opinions of others. I can just be myself.

Some would say this vision stems from a mother-hunger, a yearning to return to the womb, and I wouldn't argue. The Mystery is the Divine Mother—Mother Nature, Mother Moon, Mother of God, Mother Lakshmi, Mother Ocean, Mother of All Flowers and Wings. And so the Mystery seeks to enshroud me with soul-nourishing darkness, not to smother or possess me, but to set me free—to allow me to be born into the freedom that the owl enjoys, that the manta ray enjoys, that the tiger enjoys, that the frog enjoys—the Mystery wants me drenched with bliss, like morning grass kissed with dew. It wants me cleansed of all fear and rage and prejudices. It wants me free to explore the dark waters that it pours unceasingly and graciously into my being—for many gifts and provisions are gathered in the folds of these night waters.

And yes, the Mystery is the Father of Light. It radiates the dawn when I am most lost and unsure of myself. It ignites fires in my mind and heart and stories flood

across the page. The Father-hunger that rumbles through my insides is also filled by the Mystery. For the Mystery is Father Sky, Father Sun, Father God, Father Mountain, Father Buffalo, and Father Whale.

And the Mystery is the Holy Child roaming through the fields of my soul hiding treasures for me to discover, healing each bud and leaf with the touch of His hand. The best is when I let Him find me; let Him sidle up beside me unannounced and slip His hand in mine; let Him appear in my dreams, like an angel and tell me secrets; let His faith burrow into my doubts and upturn them like soil needing to be tilled; let His singing thread through my fears like golden light. He loves to visit mostly when I am creating (playing) writing, chanting, or playing with children. Sometimes He appears while I'm sweeping the floor or driving the kids to one thing or another and suddenly the road floods with gratitude because He has seen a marvelous sunset through my eyes.

And so I seek the Mystery... I seek it because it gives me joy—this adventure of spirit and of bones, fossils and of flowers. It awakens things within me; a yearning to be born, to blossom, to be ignited, and to shine.

II. The Sharing

So when the Mystery comes, let us walk from our places of worship or rise from reading our holy books, and walk gently, for we hold within the cup of our hands the tiniest flame, the littlest mustard seed...and it is ours, and it is real. Share it with the awesome responsibility of being truly loving, truly kind, and truly compassionate. Let us turn to our neighbor and offer the fruits of the Mystery that we have gathered, the ones given to us, the ones we've discovered after years of searching. Let us offer them with patience, the patience of the night, the patience of the horizon, the patience of the lighthouse. And since our eyes are mirrors, when we share our gifts, let us look for ourselves in the eyes of the other, look for how we would like to be treated—look for the dignity and the gentleness; the unyielding, fierce wisdom; truly see each other, see each other's suffering and pain, see each other's little (and grand) victories, so when we offer our cup of revelations, it may be welcomed and nurturing, sweet, and refreshing. Let the Mystery speak through us so that all beings may live freely and securely, nestled in the endlessly spreading wings of the Divine.

Joseph Anthony is a musician, songwriter, storyteller, life-coach, mentor, self-esteem coach for kids, and the author of the inspirational book "Following Your Heart's Desire". Follow his motivational and creative writings at blog.thewonderchildblog.com.

Daily Word

*I am renewed and refreshed
through my awareness of God.*

Taking a dip in a refreshing pool ... sipping an ice cold drink on a hot day ... enjoying a brisk, energizing walk These experiences rejuvenate me in mind and body. What rejuvenates me spiritually? What helps me connect in oneness with God?

I feel spiritually rejuvenated when I read inspirational material, spend time in the Silence, attend a worship service, and celebrate my faith with others. These experiences and more help me feel connected to God within. They renew and refresh my mind, body and spirit. Becoming aware of my oneness with God is perhaps the most rejuvenating experience I can have, and today I embrace that experience fully.

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Love

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Love & Blessings

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