

Soul Matters, January 2014

What Does it Mean to Live a Life of Abundance?

This month we explore abundance. What does it mean to live a life of abundance? Does the word “abundance” provoke anxiety in you? It is not the same as living a life of luxury. Does it make you think of “*noblesse oblige*,” and come burdened by guilt over what you are not giving away to those more needy? As citizens of the United States we know that we are privileged. We have access to clean water, wholesome food. But privilege and utilizing more than our fair share of the world’s resources is not what abundance is about.

My grandmother Lorene was a single mother during the depression years. She never got over saving, reusing, repairing, recycling... She lived in voluntary simplicity long before it came into vogue. Yet for all her saving of fabric scraps and paper plates, she lived a life of abundance. When she retired from being a social worker for the city of San Francisco, she had enough money to build a little house in the mountains. She gave small checks to all her grandchildren on their birthdays. She left behind a modest estate to her daughter when she died. For Lorene, abundance was having enough. She had enough to eat, enough to wear, a comfortable home with a small guest room so her family could visit, books to read... This was abundance.

Having abundance in our lives is a wonderful thing, and doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with money. We can have an abundance of love, happiness, friendships, family, cleanliness and order in our households, good colleagues, birthday wishes on Facebook, good food, time for ourselves, sleep... An abundance of good books to read can come from the public library. An abundance of new clothing can come from a free clothing exchange. The list is endless.

Abundance is a state of mind. It is a glass-half-full way of thinking. It is about being able to set aside fear of what the future holds, and be grateful for what we have. Anthony Robbins said, “When you are grateful, fear disappears and abundance appears.”

Abundance begets generosity. When we are unafraid and grateful for what we have, it is natural to want to share. This can manifest through acts of caring for others, hospitality, contributing to charities, or in a hundred other ways. Let us all strive to live lives of abundance, knowing that we have enough, grateful for what we have, and generous to others.

With an abundance of love and affection,
Beatrice

Spiritual Exercise:

Gratitude List

The following is from the Rev. Scott Taylor, creator of the Soul Matters series.

My mentor told me a story about a member of his congregation who was confined to a wheelchair. Her therapist asked her, “What do you think upon awakening each morning, ‘Oh, another rotten day’” “Oh no,” she said, “I just think, ‘What’s for breakfast?’”

The art of living is largely about knowing how to look. Seems odd to say that a perfectly poached egg can overshadow a wheelchair, but it can—if only we let it. Or maybe it is better to say, if only we practice it. Noticing the abundance in our life is skill. It requires as much dedication and practice as learning to play the piano or paint a picture. So to help strengthen our abundance-noticing ability this month, we’ll construct a Gratitude List.

Find a notepad or journal. Write “Gratitude List” at the top of the page. Then number the page 1-10. Set it by your bed (or near your favorite chair). At the end of every day, for ten days, spend 5-10 minutes going back through the events of the day. Identify one experience or interaction that left you feeling grateful or “full,” that made life feel abundant and generous. Capture that experience or interaction in a phrase or short sentence, then add it to your list. Don’t try too hard. The items on your list don’t have to be life changing; they can be as simple as “My perfectly poached egg at breakfast.”

QUESTIONS TO WRESTLE WITH

When have you experienced abundance in your life? What was that about?

Is “looking on the bright side” as easy as we make it seem? Is “looking at the half-full part of the glass” a luxury of the privileged?

How vulnerable are we as humans to life’s less generous events and circumstances? Is “complete recovery” from them every really possible?

How do human beings overcome and persevere in the face of abundance’s absence?

How have you overcome and persevered in the face of an absence of abundance?

What can you do to become more aware of life’s abundance?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are not “required reading.” They are meant to get you started thinking , and perhaps to open you to new ways of thinking, about what it means to live a life of abundance.

WISE WORDS:

“Keep your best wishes, close to your heart and watch what happens”
— Tony DeLiso, *Legacy: The Power Within*

“Today expect something good to happen to you no matter what occurred yesterday. Realize the past no longer holds you captive. It can only continue to hurt you if you hold on to it. Let the past go. A simply abundant world awaits. (January 11)”
— Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*

“When you are grateful, fear disappears and abundance appears.”
— Anthony Robbins

“I was surrounded by friends, my work was immense, and pleasures were abundant. Life, now, was unfolding before me, constantly and visibly, like the flowers of summer that drop fanlike petals on eternal soil. Overall, I was happiest to be alone; for it was then I was most aware of what I possessed. Free to look out over the rooftops of the city. Happy to be alone in the company of friends, the company of lovers and strangers. Everything, I decided, in this life, was pure pleasure.”
— Roman Payne, *Rooftop Soliloquy*

"Abundance is not something we acquire. It is something we tune into."
Wayne Dyer

"I am open and receptive to all the good and abundance in the Universe."
Louise Hay

“May our effort, confidence and concern for others be the altar from which we pray for personal abundance.”
— Laura Teresa Marquez

“Abundance is like love. Everybody has it, but almost nobody sees it.”
— Xomphi

“Family was even a bigger word than I imagined, wide and without limitations, if you allowed it, defying easy definition. You had family that was supposed to be family and wasn't, family that wasn't family but was,

halves becoming whole, wholes splitting into two; it was possible to lack whole, honest love and connection from family in lead roles, yet to be filled to abundance by the unexpected supporting players.”

— Deb Caletti, *The Secret Life of Prince Charming*

“There is a lie that acts like a virus within the mind of humanity. And that lie is, ‘There’s not enough good to go around. There’s lack and there’s limitation and there’s just not enough.’

The truth is that there’s more than enough good to go around. There is more than enough creative ideas. There is more than enough power. There is more than enough love. There’s more than enough joy. All of this begins to come through a mind that is aware of its own infinite nature.

There is enough for everyone. If you believe it, if you can see it, if you act from it, it will show up for you. That's the truth.”

— Michael Beckwith

“Live from abundance;

Utilize with economy;

Share in advance.”

— Geoffrey M. Gluckman, *Deadly Exchange*

Online Resource:

TED Talk by Peter Diamandis, “Abundance Is Our Future”

http://www.ted.com/talks/peter_diamandis_abundance_is_our_future.html

Movie:

Crash (2004)

This is a complex film with a number of themes, but try to focus on the way it wrestles with what happens to people when they are faced with a lack of abundance. Be prepared, this is not always an easy film to watch, but well worth it. It depicts that way tragedy, fear, prejudice and poverty constrict life’s options and take a toll on one’s ability to have generosity of heart.