

DAY 14: YOUR TRUE SELF

We all feel the call of our authentic, true selves some time in our lives. The person we were created to be. We may not even know exactly what that means. Most of us can't recall a time when we "knew" our self-identity outside the context of our relationships with family or friends. It's gotten all caught up in our experiences, our performance culture, constant decision-making and the frantic pace of everyday life. In every way, we are forced by life to take a journey away from ourselves and then back again. But the good news is we can get back again, if we are willing to do the inner, emotional work. Likely we have felt unexplained whispers, nudges, or desires to follow a call toward our authentic self throughout our lifetime. We just may not have recognized it alongside the many other voices in our lives.

Gerald May refers to this inner spiritual voice as "the longing". It is a deep awareness of ourselves, much deeper than a call to a certain career or project or creative task. It's a sense of who we are, stripped down from all the ways that we describe ourselves or others perceive us. Richard Rohr calls it the "immortal diamond", that hard to find inner nugget of who we are. The part of us that is more connected to the divine than to being human. It is always there. It has been there from the start, and it is God in us and we in God. Our lifetime task is to re-discover it and hold onto it.

It is often a crisis like a life-threatening disease that allows us to be more open to that distant inner voice that tells us life is so much bigger than we really understand. In the previous chapters, we've talked about making meaning out of our suffering, of finding purpose, of recalibrating our lives to stop wasting time. But often we still put those ideas in the context of "doing" something...like starting a job, leaving a job, spending more time with others, pursuing a hobby, being more creative, taking better care of ourselves, learning a new skill.

But perhaps the best thing that we can do for ourselves first is to let the rawness of this moment expose our beautiful and untouched inner core. To slow down and ask the burning question, who am I outside all of this? Outside my

experiences, outside my successes, my setbacks, my struggles, my roles? Sometimes it helps to just picture yourself as an infant, yourself as totally innocent and infinitely curious about the world. This is who you still are, deep down. If we can re-find our true selves, it will anchor us through all the storms of life. This is the time to reclaim yourself.

DAY 15: THE CREATIVE SELF

The world we live in is an amazingly complex, colorful and fascinating place. It reflects the creative energy and genius that made it. It tells us something about the infinite amount of new ideas just waiting to be birthed. Just thinking about a creator that can make the earth and the universe gives me hope. If that is possible, anything is possible.

That same creative energy flows through us. After all, we are part of this amazing place! Why is this important now, in the face of something like a cancer diagnosis? Because you are on a journey that holds so much possibility, to reclaim your true self and reclaim your creative life. It all comes back to hope. Creating is hope.

Most of us have quieted our creative selves because we have narrowed the definition of creative to something very small and limiting. We think we must be a painter or be able to draw or make music. We forget that there are many ways to live creatively. Being creative means finding new solutions, new perspectives, new processes. Julia Cameron says, "Creativity is an experience—to my eye, a spiritual experience. It does not matter which way you think of it: creativity leading to spirituality or spirituality leading to creativity. In fact, I do not make a distinction between the two." (2)

Our true selves and our creative selves are one in the same. If we can reclaim one, we reclaim the other. There is urgency now to reflect on what needs to happen in our lives to get there. Sharing our life story with others is a

great start. We start to make sense of our experiences and find connection in our human condition. What else do we need to do? Perhaps it is more inner reflective work. Perhaps it is a spiritual practice or direction. Maybe we need to self-care and create a different rhythm in our lives. Or we can find simple ways to unblock our creative spirit by journaling, writing, drawing, painting, photography, scrapbooking, gardening or whatever brings us joy. The point is to form a deeper connection with the flow in the universe that connects us all and to open your life to its most potential.