

Adding Joy to the Soup of Life

Many of us who have chosen to actively pursue a healthier and more spiritual way of life have been quite serious in our approach, sometimes continuing old patterns of perfection and single-mindedness in our search. Our devotion and focus led us into rigidity, thinking, “I have to do this right and I need to do it now.” So rather than allowing the process to unfold and enjoy the path we were on, we were in a rush to get there – though we did not quite know where “there” was – but we knew we had to get “there” because it wasn’t “here”. And in our need to get “there” from “here”, we often forgot to take one important ingredient with us – and that was joy.

Whenever we embark on new journeys, we encounter different sets of challenges, sometimes minor and sometimes life-changing. But one of the quickest – and most deceiving – ways to get there is to put joy into our toolbox of life.

We can get so intent trying to succeed with our goals that we forget to have fun along the way. We may get up a half hour earlier to go for a walk, but since our focus is limited to thoughts of health, we don’t see the crystal dew on the grass or perhaps a beautiful sunrise. If we’re walking on a treadmill and pumping our arms to get our cardiovascular system going, we wouldn’t think of putting our arms down briefly to renew ourselves and make it a little easier. Instead, we keep rigidly pumping, denying the joy we could bring to our workout. When we’re watching our diet, we often become so inflexible that we deny ourselves (let’s face it!) the bliss we would feel by allowing ourselves a small piece of chocolate that might help us enjoy our diet path a little bit more. When we’re on our spiritual path we can get so caught up in doing what’s “right” that we deny others the joy of sharing their own paths because they are not the same as our own. Yet our joy shared would be greater.

No matter what we choose to do with our lives, one of the most important elements is joy. Without it life becomes a monotonous litany to do what’s “right”, denying light to shine where it would be most welcome. If you’ve ever watched children after the school day ends, you’ve seen them give way to the joy of being who they are, and allowing their joy to spread throughout their being as they run to their buses or homes.

We are still children in the school of life and need fun and joy to help us get through the challenges we all face. Life was never meant to be joy-less. Truth is full of joy, and to deny joy is to deny one of our most precious birthrights.

Next time you find yourself pushing beyond reasonable limits, try remembering that you can still get

“there” from “here” by adding joy, laughter and fun to the soup of life!