

News for Life after 55

Follow Your Bliss Says Joseph Campbell

Hello. I have been captivated by "Finding Your Life's Work" since my 30's. I decided to read through Joseph Campbell's The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers identifying all the passages that resonated. In some cases I simply replaced the word "myths" with "follow your bliss." This is what I found.

What we long for?

Many of us are searching for purpose and meaning, but Joseph Campbell says that what we really are searching for is the *experience of being alive*. Campbell believes that what we are looking for is a way of experiencing the world that will open us to the transcendent that informs it and at the same time forms ourselves within it. That is what people want, says Joseph Campbell, that is what the soul asks for.

Campbell goes on to say that we are seeking some kind of instruction that will enable us to experience the divine presence. We seek, says Campbell, to be in accord with the grand symphony that the world is, to put the harmony of our body in accord with that harmony.

Follow your bliss

Campbell encourages us to see life as a poem with yourself participating in it and teaches us how to unite the field of nature with our own nature in a harmonizing way. You can do this, says Campbell, by *following your bliss*. He tells his students go where your body and soul want to go. When you have that feeling stay with it and don't let anyone throw you off.

He goes on to say that our life is much deeper and broader than we conceive it to be. What we are living is but a fractional inkling of what is within us, what gives us life, breadth, and depth. But we can live in terms of that depth, shares Joseph Campbell. And when we can experience it, we can suddenly see what all the religions are talking about.

Find where your bliss is and don't be afraid to follow it. This is the song of your imagination inspired by the energies of your body, says Campbell. Following your bliss opens your world to the dimension of the mystery.

No one can tell you what your bliss is going to be, says Campbell. You have



to learn to recognize your own depth. Ask yourself, what is it that makes me happy, then stay with it no matter what people tell you. If you have the guts to stay with the things you really love no matter what happens, you are *following your bliss*. You discover that you are enjoying the refreshment of new life stirring in you all the time.

Joseph Campbell says that we must say yes to this miracle of life as it is, not on the condition that it follow your rules...otherwise we'll never get through to the metaphysical dimension.

Campbell notes that it can be a very grim thing to be a modern human being—the drudgery of living an inauthentic stagnate life that evokes nothing of our spiritual life, our potentialities, or even our physical courage. T.S. Elliot says, *the waste land is a land where everybody is living an inauthentic life, doing as other people do, doing as you are told without having the courage to live your own life*.

According to Campbell, following your bliss is breaking through into the mystery dimensions. It pushes us into the sphere that myths talk about. It's coming to the edge of yourself allowing you to experience the ultimate mystery of your own being. It allows you to experience the wonder and sheer beauty of existence.

More about following your bliss

According to Joseph Campbell, we have to rely on our intuition, our true being, in order to come to know ourselves more deeply.

One of the ways you can do that is to ask yourself: *What excites me? What lights me up inside? What activates my imagination?* These are all clues.

Campbell shares that each incarnation has potentialities and the mission of life is to live these potentialities. We can do this by following our bliss, says Campbell. There's

something inside you that knows when you're in the center that knows when you're on the beam or off. And if you stay in the center and even if you don't get any money, you still have your bliss. It is a way of living where you see through the fragments of time to the full power of original being.

What gives you joy?

One of my retired students started a small reverse mortgage business, is learning all about baking sour dough bread, and hikes a favorite trail through Capitola each day. I love teaching, exploring topics for the newsletters seeing where they take me, and am strengthening my muscles after losing 20 lbs. so I can do Hatha yoga again. Georgia O'Keeffe's daily rhythm in later life included early morning walks in the desert with her two dogs, followed by painting in her studio, then spending time in her garden. If you're not sure what you love, what your bliss is, do any book in *The Artist's Way* trilogy or get my *Crafting Your Life After 55* workbook or take my workshop.

Another essential practice is to have a sacred place or *bliss station*. According to Joseph Campbell, you must have a room or certain hour or so a day where you don't know what's in the news, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, or what anybody owes you. You simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of *creative incubation*, says Campbell. At first you may find that nothing happens. But if you have a sacred place and use it something will begin to happen. In your sacred place, you get the *thou* feeling of life turning it into a place of *spiritual relevance*. It could be your garden, your favorite café (mine is Verve), your kitchen, your favorite walking trail in nature, your garage, at your piano, or in your art studio. Where is your bliss station?

Leaving the familiar landscape

As you follow your bliss, says Campbell, you are moving out of the familiar landscape into the dark forest of original experience where you have to work out your life experiences for yourself. One has to go in quest of the seed idea, a germinal idea that will have the potential of bringing forth new life. This is represented in the mystery religions, where an



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Events & Services

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workshop — Come explore creative ways to recognize and align with your life's direction after retirement. One participant said: *Outstanding! Amazing! Inspiring!*

Saturday, Aug. 16th and 23rd, 10:30 am to 1:00 pm, Capitola Recreation
\$73 Resident/\$93 Non-resident. Call (831) 475-5935 to register.

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workbook Release 4.0 Is Available

With Release 4.0, the workbook contains a number of stories about people living fulfilling retirement lives. One participant said: *This was one of the best things I've done for myself since retiring. So valuable.*

\$19.95 plus 6.74 tax and shipping. (Unbound budget version \$8.95 plus \$5.95 t/s)

Pay using PayPal or send a check to Robin Everest

1555 Merrill St. #72, Santa Cruz, CA 55062. Please include your shipping address.

Robin Everest is teaching a nine-week *Artist's Way for those 55+* class and a seven-week *Power of Myth in Retirement* class with the PBS book and DVDs, this fall at Capitola Recreation.

individual goes through a series of initiations, acts, and adventures opening themselves into a deeper depth within themselves.

How do we embark on this journey? Listen to your intuition and inner guidance. Ask yourself, what is the next step I could take and see what ideas arise, what ideas occurs to you, then discern the next steps to take. As you take those steps, things open up and you get more ideas and guidance about how to proceed. As you continue to listen and take the next steps, you are diminishing your ego and expanding our consciousness, says Campbell. As you listen intuitively and take each step, you are opening your ears so you can begin to hear metaphorically instead of concretely. With each step, your path unfolds organically and you begin to penetrate the labyrinth of life in such a way that its spiritual values come through.

Joseph Campbell's early life shows us the way

Joseph Campbell came back from Europe as a student in 1929, just three weeks

before the Wall Street crash, so he didn't have a job for five years—there weren't any jobs. Campbell says he didn't feel poor, he just didn't have any money. He discovered Frobenius and it suddenly hit him that he wanted to read everything Frobenius had written. So he wrote a bookseller he had known in New York City and they sent him the books and told him he didn't have to pay for them until he got a job—four years later. He went up to Woodstock and found a man who rented little cabins without running water for \$20 a year to young people he thought might have a future in the arts. The man wouldn't install running water because he didn't like the kinds of people who came. That was where Campbell did most of his reading and work. It was a great time, says Campbell, I was following my bliss.

A thousand helping hands

Bill Moyers asked him, do you ever have this sense when you are following your bliss of being helped by hidden hands? Campbell replied, all the time—it's a miracle. He went on to say, if you follow your

bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you. When you see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss and they open doors for you. Doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be. C. G. Jung called these meaningful coincidences *synchronicity*. Goethe says, *the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sort of things occur to help one that never otherwise would have occurred.*

What are we discovering?

As we follow our bliss, according to Joseph Campbell, we discover there is a consciousness in the body that opens us to the mystery that underlies all forms. We discover that it is not a mechanical world in which we move, but a world alive and responsive to our openness and readiness. We discover that we belong to something ancient that is still very much alive.

When a spider makes a beautiful web, says Campbell, the beauty comes out of the spider's nature. When we come from our aliveness, we again experience this joy of life's beauty and excellence. Joseph Campbell encourages all of us whether we are just starting out, in mid-life, or in retirement to find in your own case where life is and become alive to it. Melvina Reynolds started singing and songwriting in her mid-forties, C. G. Jung published his book on synchronicity at 77, and Mrs. Sees and her son opened their first candy store using her recipes when she was 65.

In conclusion, Joseph Campbell considered it to be the great truth in the Western World—that each of us is a completely unique character and that if we are ever to give any gift to the world (and to ourselves), it will have to come out of our own experience and fulfillment of our own potentialities no matter what our age.