



The Still, Voice Small

Judith Pennington

LET THE JOY BEGIN

It's easy to be thankful, isn't it, when our tables are covered with delicious turkey and dressing, steaming vegetables and fresh fruit ambrosia? Many of us share our riches, aware that others are not as fortunate, and some help families feed themselves for generations through The Heifer Project and Save the Children.

With my grandson now in kindergarten, I am remembering Thanksgiving as a child. There was nothing strange about dressing up as little pilgrims, in those shiny buckles and stiff black hats, and laying aside our muskets to sit at the table with half-naked Indians. It

was comforting, this tableau of peaceful sharing, and we were happy, even joyful, in anticipating the coming holidays and the beginning of a new year.

What gives you joy?—that wonderful peak of happiness and bliss which erupts as a peal of laughter or as sparkling tears of thankfulness for what you have and for the riches waiting just ahead?

Watching my grandson at play the other day, I suddenly realized that the greatest pleasure of my childhood was more than its carefree innocence. It was the feeling of being uplifted, made light and whole, by joy.

I've always had a special love for children and the elderly, and I suspect it's because of their openness to experience: their ability to live in the present moment, anticipating new possibilities and the wonder of watching things change color and suddenly come to life. This is why, of course, joy so easily flows through them to work its magic.

Besides children, family and friends, I find my greatest joy in calm peacefulness and the spiritual work flowing out of it. Sometimes I am so joyful, so grateful for my beautiful life, that I could just burst into bloom. Do you ever feel like this? If not, what beliefs or attitudes are in your way? Because, after all, if a simple child and an elderly person facing death can be joyful, why not you?

I've recently reclaimed a pastime that always transported me into joy: singing and playing guitar. Now that my fears of inadequacy and unworthiness are gone—thank you, conscious evolution!—I find pent-up songs pouring into my mind like a waterfall: gospel tunes, a

healing song about 9/11, a tone poem with vocals that play and soar like Joni Mitchell's. I never dreamed, in writing a book to show others how to hear the voice of their souls, that I would end up *singing* this song! But I might have known, because soul's work is to give voice to its joy and in this to heal us all. I know that I am experiencing such a pinnacle of joy because I *want* to sit at the Thanksgiving table and share life's harvest with everyone.

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of what you love.*

Joy is really a choice, isn't it? We can deny our wants and needs, for whatever silly reasons, and live a

mediocre life of obscurity, or we can reach for the stars and revel in this adventure in consciousness—fearing nothing, expecting only fulfillment of our deepest and fondest dreams.

It is so easy to step into the dream of what you love. I hope that you will give yourself that gift in this holiday season. If you can't quite manage to care for yourself, then stoke the joy-filled flow of love by sharing your gifts, as Crosby, Stills & Nash did at a recent concert in the refrain of a new song: "Why not feed the people and let the peace begin?"

Leaving that concert, a friend commented that these three musicians—in sharing with us their compassion, wisdom and harmonies—have influenced the vibration of our planet.

So can you. Just be where you are and notice the beauty of autumn and winter. Look deeply into a loved one's smiling eyes for the reflection of your heart's desire. Listen deeply and hear what you are meant to be. Everything will support you if you listen to your heart, watch for doors to open, then walk through them. Your joy lies here, there and everywhere.

(Judith Pennington is a writer, spiritual teacher and the author of an acclaimed book on how to hear the voice of your soul. Visit her website, eaglelife.com, to sign up for her free e-newsletter, "The Still, Small Voice," and her subscription e-zine, "OneWorld.")