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JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Two: “Follow Your Myth And Your Bliss” and relates to the place myths and your core values have in finding your path. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

Finding your path and right livelihood: The ageless source that guides us toward our bliss is more difficult to find than the sources that guide us to get paid. The universe is made of stories, the power of myth is that in the deepest reaches of our soul there is some story or passage that we connect too. Making these connections add purpose to our lives and help us do things that vitalize us. Exploring myths puts you in touch with this feeling of following your bliss. We need to understand our cultures story and also to tell our own stories; and make the one we tell and the one we live congruent. Identify the pursuit that makes you passionate, and give yourself absolutely to it then you’ll discover how to best serve your community. To help you identify your bliss constantly look to the core or to touchstones for signposts. There are many guides out there including mystical mentors, inner helpers and legendary heroes.

We need myths and sacred places because they help us do things that vitalize us rather than being drained by things required of us; they add purpose to our lives. Those who have a sense of purpose have endless energy, while those untrue to or unclear about their purpose become dissipated. Campbell points out that we all too often involve ourselves in doing things to achieve purposes of peripheral value and forget about our central values; we forget the rapture associated with being alive. He teaches that learning myths puts you in touch with this feeling of being alive.

Oren and the bluff: connecting with who we are:

In addition to place, we need to know *who* or *what* we connect with, and *when*. We may, for instance, connect with a historical event associated with an ancient ancestor. Finding your path does not mean seeking the meaning of life; it means feeling really good inside about relating to a poignant event, person and place. Author Huston Smith tells a story that illustrates this point beautifully: Upon Oren’s return to his Aboriginal tribe from college his uncle asked, “You are smart and have traveled far, tell me, Who are You?” Oren spent the rest of the afternoon fishing with his uncle and trying to answer this simple question, but to no avail. Finally his uncle offered, “Do you see that bluff over yonder? Do you see the pine under whose shade is giving us succor? Do you see the water we are perched upon?” Oren replied to each in the affirmative. His uncle then shared his wisdom saying, “You are that bluff and that pine and this lake. This is home. The bluff, the pine, and the lake trigger memories of legendary events that our ancestors have participated in and told us about, that we as a tribe are now and always have been a

part of. Our identity, your identity, does not exist separate from this place, indeed it is imbedded in it.”

Christina’s childhood reveals her touchstone:

Chris’ bliss: As a child, my wife Christina also had an affinity toward animals, the environment, and her favorite Catholic, Saint Francis. To her, the purr of a cat, wag of a tail, and the squeak of a chipmunk were the sounds of god. In solitude, young Chris walked through cornfields to the edge of a forest to climb her magnificent oak tree. From her lofty observation deck she overlooked the forest floor below: the jack-in-the-pulpits, jackrabbits, and deer so near she could touch them. She became lost in the sounds of the forest, the songs of birds, and the gleeful chatter of squirrels. Nothing seemed distant or untrusting about the relationship between Chris and the animals; butterflies would often land on her shoulders, deer would eat from her hand. The communication between her and the animals seemed as real to her as conversations with people.

Off in the distance stood grain fields where horses, cows and burros grazed. She observed their movements as closely as she had the wild creatures. One afternoon while Chris was daydreaming, she fell off the tree and landed hard. She then resolved to build a platform the following day. More than any other place this forest-place gave meaning to Chris’ otherwise deforested childhood. Because the strongest influence on a child is the un-lived lives of their parents, Chris did not want to continue the cycle of her hard-working relative’s unfulfilled dreams. Later in life Chris would recall her ‘forest-place’ afternoons, and use them for guidance in her search to understand the elemental truths of movement and animals.

When I asked her about following her bliss, “I’ve always loved animals and related to Saint Francis,” Chris answered, “from carrying road kill off in my little red wagon, to our scraggly family dogs, to every stray cat and wild rabbit that crossed through my neighborhood...And yoga is my other bliss.”

Along with her animals, the dance studio was Chris’ other sanctuary, and movement her other bliss. What the two had most in common was the ‘soft but strong’ principal. In yoga postures, you should be relaxed but agile, not judgmental but accepting, of where you are and of your environment. In working with animals, the same principal applies: firm correction does not seem to be the solution to Chris, being soft but strong with the dog or cat, and accepting their faults, does.

The Touchstone: To help identify her bliss, Chris constantly looked for signposts. She wanted to be a veterinarian but could not get past seeing the animals in pain. Also, it was not in the consciousness of her family to send a daughter off to college. She spent many years involved in various movement and animal modalities. Chris became a proficient teacher and/or practitioner of: Reiki, Dance, Body Recall, Water Aerobics, etc., and landed excellent jobs. With animals, she worked with the Delta Society, Animal Rescue and Shelters and Veterinarians. By following mainly those aspects of wellness that she was comfortable with, Chris found what Barbara Sher calls ‘the touchstone’ for her love of animals and movement. Sher says, “Your touchstone is the delicious core of all things you want--the part that makes them truly appealing to you. All the activities that recur in your fantasies or that you have continued since childhood and everything that you love doing that survived the cuts...are indicators of a true

touchstone.” Once Chris found her bliss, nature was ready to meet her half way and the partnership was formed.

Chris continued to improvise until research and chance encounters introduced her to the method of animal behavior/therapy that most suited her. Part trial and error and part destiny also led Chris to choose yoga as her preferred form of healthful exercise. Chris relied on her feminine intelligences of intuition, acceptance, and the wisdom of the body to guide her. When her cat Valentino was very sick and needed help, Chris looked into treating him holistically. She prepared her intuitive powers by observing and being at ease, and then she waited. As soon as she read about it she instinctively knew that Tellington Touch was the answer, both for her cat and for her own practice of right work.

Not long after that, the left side of her own body began to shut down. Within days her whole left side was numb and no doctors knew the cause or how to remedy the problem. She again listened to her body and her heart, and found yoga. Soon both sides of her body were balanced and healthy. Her training to become a yoga instructor was based on the teachings of Swami Kripalu, who encouraged his students to ask him or her self, “what is your inner gift?”

Quotes and Works Cited; Chapter Two: “Do you see that bluff over yonder? Do you see the pine under whose shade is giving us succor? Do you see the water we are perched upon?” (Smith, Huston. The Illustrated World’s Religions; Sher says, “Your touchstone is the delicious core of all things you want--the part that makes them truly appealing to you. All the activities that recur in your fantasies or that you have continued since childhood and everything that you love doing that survived the cuts...are indicators of a true touchstone.” (Sher, Barbara. I Could Do Anything if I Only Knew What It Was)