

Finding your Passion
~by Keri Coffman-Thiede, CPCC

Today, I start with sharing what I call, “A Scene from Childhood”:

My daughter Claire, 2 years, 9 months, was playing full out in the back yard, finding things that were funny, laughing, freely enjoying herself. I was soaking her in in all her radiance when she stops and looks at me and with a sense of awe and says...

"Mama, Isn't our world pretty?! "

"Yes it is, baby!"

She comes and sits next to me on the back steps, rests her head on my knee, arms crossed under her chin, contemplating with a gentle smile...

"Is it OUR world?"

"It's ours to be with while we're here. Aren't we lucky!"

She smiles like she knows she's the luckiest girl to be alive, then runs down the hill – delighted that she gets to!

Our passion exists in the space of awe and amazement that we so willingly stepped into as a child. We can not see our dreams, know our true calling, hear our true voice when we look with a sense of desperation, impatience or doubt. Only looking with Eyes of Awe will its radiance greet you and invite you to play with it.

Our passion is made known through the sparkles of brilliance exchanged in a conversation with a friend. It is felt in the excitement in your belly about the idea you want to pursue. It is seen in the bright pictures of possibilities that flash across your mind as you consider your life without the struggles you face now. It stops you flat with amazement when the right person comes along at the right time and offers you information that provides the answer to “how” you can bridge the gap between where you are and what you want. Through the Eyes of Awe we are able to notice the presence of our passion working it's magic in it's many varied forms.

Yet, as we grow up, we are duped into trading our Eyes of Awe to develop our mind of sensibility and logic. We are encouraged to distrust these moments of brilliance and view them as holding out a carrot of impracticality. “Ya, but THIS is reality!” becomes our response to these precious moments of inspiration. And so, we lose connection with the aspects of life that truly speak to us. Instead of feeling passion and purpose, we feel confused and lost.

If you are confused and lost, I'm so glad you are reading this. See, you still HAVE the capacity to see through the Eyes of Awe as you once again learn to trust your view through them you'll be able to recognize and follow the trail markers that will guide you along your path of passion. You'll live again a life that expresses your purpose. Your life of passion and purpose waits for you and only you can claim it! Here are trail markers to watch for to help you recognize and claim your path.

Trail Marker #1: Look with curiosity, appreciation, and trust!

This first step is really about waking up and deciding to go for a hike. It's time to step outside your house built of assumptions and ideas of "This is the way it is." The waking up process starts by being curious about ourselves and about what in the outside world makes us feel alive. Noticing your senses is a great place to begin waking up. Sight, sound, smell, taste, touch allow us to **FEEL** alive! What's so important about this? Consider this, what is passion? When we say we want to find our passion aren't we really saying we want to find what makes us feel ALIVE and thrilled to be here!? We don't just want a job, we want work that we love, that excites us, drives us, work that has us wake up with desire and enthusiasm in the morning. These are all feelings that enliven us! How do we find what enlivens us? Our senses inform us.

Our senses are pathways through which our passion speaks to us. When you wake up and start to recognize and savor the moments that enliven you, you connect back to the part of yourself that sees with Eyes of Awe and is somehow familiar with and undeterred by this unknown, wild landscape surrounding your passion. By bringing yourself into this landscape, you allow yourself the opportunity to meet the truths and substance that make up your passion. Gaze upon this landscape like you would a beautiful outlook on a trail. Look with curiosity, appreciation and especially trust- knowing something will be revealed simply by you being here.

Trail Warning: Do not brush this aside with – ya but, what am I supposed to DO with my life?!!! How are my senses going to come up with a statement like "My purpose is to save the whales off the coast of New Zealand."

Finding your purpose is a process of following your passion...following what enlivens you. As you have more experiences that allow you to feel passionate and alive, in this energized, awake state, you will have ideas will come to you and now you will have the energy and conviction to follow them. Trust that the things that enliven you form the whole picture of your life of passion and purpose. As you continue to recognize what enlivens you, you will notice the thread of purpose that holds them together. First, simply develop an appreciation, trust and commitment to live close to that which enlivens you.

Action Steps:

1) *Notice this week as you go through your daily life, what lights you up? What sings like harmony with your soul? What energizes you? Make a list. What's common among these things that enliven you?*

2) *Journal - When you find your passion how will you know? What do you imagine your life of passion to look like, feel like, and sound like to you?*

Trail Marker #2: Let logic and reason partner with you to find your passion.

We've been encouraged to favor reason OVER passion. This doesn't need to be an "either / or" set up. The mind is able to integrate the two and use logic in service of your passion. The mind is a terrible thing to waste and yet we often do by just assigning it the task of "figuring out how" the "right" way and the "proper" thing to do. This single minded task has us living a life full of "shoulds and shouldn'ts" devoid of aliveness and

passion. It's time to use our logic in favor of living the *passionate* life. Therefore, if our minds are going to support us in finding our passion, we need to assign it a new task...recognizing resonance and dissonance in our experiences.

As we search for our passion, we hold up for inspection the information gathered from the outside world. It is essential that we tune our mind into the physical and emotional sensations that this information evokes in us so we can recognize what enlivens (resonates) or what constricts or creates dissonance for us. Our capacity to recognize this difference gives us the consciousness it take to continue to choose experiences that create passion in our lives!

Our bodies give us a true read on what is in line with our passion and what is not. Here's an example: When I was in my twenties, I came to the realization that if I wanted to go on in my field, I needed more than a BA in Psychology. I did the logical thing - I applied to graduate school for Social Work. I got accepted to the University of Minnesota and while I felt proud for being accepted, I had no enthusiasm for actually going to school or taking classes. While my mind could reason that this was a good and even necessary endeavor, information in my body gave me evidence that I didn't truly want this. I had a growing nervousness in my stomach as the first day of classes approached and had a hard time even envisioning myself in school again. In the end, I withdrew from the program before it began. As soon as I did this, I felt relief and relaxed again. I'm glad I listened to my true feelings and didn't waste time and money. Though at the time I didn't know why, I know now getting a MSW wasn't in line with my passion.

Our minds are for us to use as we direct in gathering us the information we need to make choices most in line with what matters to us. The mind eagerly steps up to the task - after all, supplying information is what it does best. It's up to us to direct our mind to check in with our bodies to know the degree of resonance or dissonance a choice offers. Most importantly, it's up to us to develop its capacity to look with Eyes of Awe to find the things in the outside world that shine, sparkle and bring us joy – things that resonate with our passion! These are like the arrows on trail signs that brazenly indicate your path of passion heads this way.

Action Step: Use your mind to gather all the information your body has to offer you when you ask "What am I passionate about? When you hold up various ideas for inspection, notice, is there a tightening in our shoulders, a knot in your stomach, or shallowness to your breath? Is there enthusiasm, excitement, curiosity, or interest? What does it feel like in your body when you consider this idea?"

Trail Marker #3: Let yourself Love what you Love

If you've ever hiked, or particularly if you've backpacked, into wild and less traveled territory you know how much energy goes into this endeavor. Yet, for some odd reason it is a large part of what makes it so rewarding. You are aware your feet hurt but you love the views around you and want to see more! Your muscles ache but you set your sights on exploring what is just over the next hill and your spirit of intrigue bolsters your energy to stave off fatigue.

Likewise, finding and following your path of passion isn't about working hard *and* it will involve effort. It isn't about forcing yourself *and* it does request your willingness to stretch. It isn't about sheer grit and determination *and* it does ask you for your commitment to let yourself love what you love.

In other words, let go of struggle. In your everyday life, quit tolerating the actions you take daily that feel against your own grain, that feel like meaningless hard work, drop the things you make yourself do out of habit. Replace these actions with ones that honor and love what you know is true. Replace them with actions that **feel good** for you.

The spirit of loving action shouts, "THIS is so me! It's who I am and what I'm up to in this world!" It moves us to act, not driven by sheer will but by a spirit of enthusiasm and purpose. This loving spirit within you will guide you to claim for yourself what is truly you and yours to be and do. Allow yourself to be moved by it's gentle coaxing that draws you toward the things in life that make your spirit shout, "YES! This is so me!" Act in alignment with this spirit. The life you desire and dream of is claimed in this way.

This alignment of action with spirit is the final step in reclaiming your passion for as you align your actions with what feels right and true for you, you will be living your passion and your purpose will be revealed in the results of your actions.

Action Steps:

- 1) *What are you tolerating? For one week, refuse to tolerate it. Do what is the loving thing to do, instead.*
- 2) *This week reorganize your schedule to align with this quote: "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least." ~ Goethe*
- 3) *What do you know about you? How will you honor this about yourself this week?*
- 4) *Make a list of your goals and priorities. Identify the commitment behind the goal. What about the goal makes you say, "This is SO me!" If there isn't anything, create a new goal that does excite your spirit and feels true to who you are.*

I acknowledge you for your courage to walk the path your passion calls you to. It is not a trail that comes with a map but one that you discover as you walk it. While it is yours and only yours to claim, synergy and co-activity will accompany you like the sweet singing of birds along the way. Do not be distracted by others who do not see the sparkle you see or do not hear the duet this path sings with your spirit. Do not expect others to feel the strength of knowing that you feel on your own path. No one else will know your path like you do. It will not look, feel or sound the same to anyone else. It is yours- your gift of life. Savor it!

About the Author

Keri Coffman-Thiede is a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach who specializes in helping people find and follow their passion. She has worked as a recruiter and staffing manager before creating her own career coaching practice, Amaze Yourself Coaching. Her coaching certification has been received from the prestigious Coaches Training Institute. Keri works with clients who are ready to go beyond making a living and coaches them to

make career choices that are personally meaningful and financially rewarding. Some of her clients include artists, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals, teachers, college students, and business professionals wanting to align their work with their passion. Keri's services include individual coaching, group tele-classes and freelance writing. To learn more, visit her website, <http://www.amazeyourself.net>. To schedule a complementary coaching consultation, contact Keri at amazingu@merr.com.