

Straight From The Heart: Collected Articles to Uplift, Inspire and Transform Your Life

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About The Author

Kim Loftis is a certified life and spiritual coach, author, and singer songwriter, residing in the picturesque mountains of North Carolina. Kim is dedicated to assisting others in learning to lead happier, more peaceful and more fulfilled lives. She is totally convinced, as the client of a fantastic coach herself, of the transformative power that coaching can have on a person's life. Her philosophy is that we are all blessed with our own special talents, skills and gifts, and that we all must find our own way of sharing our gifts with others. Through the powerful and practical process of coaching, Kim teaches her clients to become empowered to discover and delight in their own wonderful qualities, abundant gifts and true individuality, while finding ways to share and express their own passions and potential. Kim is passionate about continuing her own growth and evolvment, both professionally and personally. Her faith in, and love for God and her spirituality is an absolutely essential part of her life. When not working with clients, writing or composing, you can usually find Kim avidly reading a good book, spending time in nature, listening to her vast collection of music, communing with God and her angels, spending quality time with family and friends, and finding ways to make the world a better place. To learn more about Kim, her coaching services and products, and to sign up for her inspirational, bi-weekly Newsletter, Heartsong, please visit her website:

<http://www.KimLoftis.com>

Introduction

This ebook contains some of my best loved and most powerful articles collected from the first twenty issues of my bi-weekly newsletter, Heartsong. I specifically chose these articles to give you a nice taste of what Heartsong is all about. When you read my newsletter, I want you to gain greater peace and joy, food for thought, and interesting tips with which you can bring greater happiness and productivity to your life. I also want you to gain some smiles and giggles along the way, along with plenty of inspiration to help your heart sing.

I hope these articles bring you all that I mentioned above, and lots of other wonderful things, as well. If they can help you in any way, then I'm achieving my purpose here on Earth. If you like what you read here, you can subscribe to Heartsong for a bi-weekly helping of inspiration, at: <http://www.KimLoftis.com/news/news.htm>

You can also read the Heartsong archive at that link, for even more articles from previous issues!

Thank you for checking out this little ebook... these articles are a great labor of love for me, and I hope you'll love them, too.

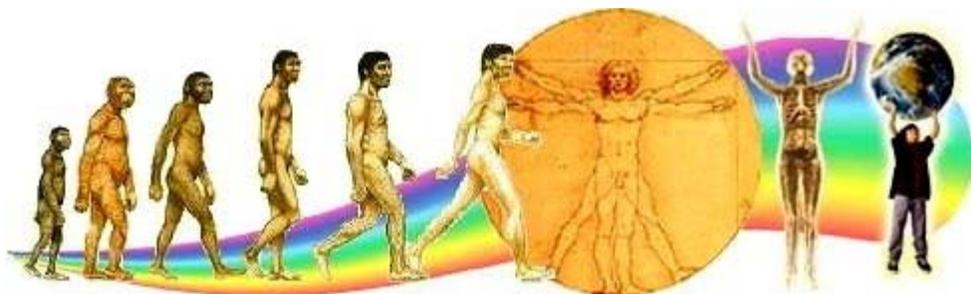
I always appreciate your feedback. You may email me directly, at: Kim@KimLoftis.com

I'd love to hear from you!

Enjoy the ebook, and let your heart be free to sing!

Many Blessings,
Kim Loftis
<http://www.KimLoftis.com>

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Why Do Personal Development?

Part of the nature of humans is to be constantly developing, growing and moving toward a balanced and mature way of being. Our present personality is determined by both who and what we have been and by the person we strive to become. The goal of personal development is to learn and apply that which enables us to attain emotional wellbeing, understanding and effectiveness, and to share this knowledge with others.

Personal development is the conscious evolution of human nature, and yet throughout history it has been sorely lacking! Although it is in our nature to learn and grow, we are held back by our culture, which is predominantly focused on survival needs, each of us in competition with others, and our spiritual inner nature is repressed. The animal rules. We make no room for unconditional love.

Even though the culture may have evolved with technological advancement and administrative complexity, human nature has not moved forward as it might. We are now paying the price for human selfishness and inconsideration. Going forward, the quality of our lives on this planet - even our survival - now depends on each of us taking responsibility for our personal growth.

The human being needs to awaken to the soul that inhabits each body and is our true self and source of inner knowing. Awaken through a process of self-discovery, leading to one's own, self-directed spirituality. We need to become mindfully conscious instead of ruled by the dictates of instincts, past habits and fixed beliefs. We need to throw away dogma, open our minds and reconsider. Instead of fear about our survival and competitive angst, we will then be motivated by compassionate understanding and creative love.

For those that do move forward, the next epoch - that is almost upon us as we move into 2012 - will be a celebration of human cooperation and shared love. It's our best hope for the future - and it's in our hands.

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Scaling The Walls: Five Tips to Create a More Confident You

Has this ever happened to you? You're beginning a new project, or considering beginning a new project. It may be a trip you're planning to take, a purchase you're considering, or a relationship that you'd like to embark upon. Just when you've nearly made up your mind to begin this new project, you hear a distinct, and far too familiar little voice inside your head.

"What? You, do this? Are you serious? You can't do that! You're not good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, popular enough, etc, etc."

Suddenly, that niggling doubt has shattered your hope, your dream, your idea, and you don't have enough self-confidence to reclaim your enthusiasm. So... you give up.

It happens to all of us... there are plenty of situations where I simply can't find the self-confidence to follow through. This lack of follow-through, in turn, often leads me down the road of anger, frustration, and even depression.

So what steps can we take to gain, restore, and / or enhance our self-confidence, and silence that nagging voice of doubt and derision? Here are five tips that I use in my own life, that I hope will be helpful to you, as well.

1. Find a creative outlet. Is there a hobby you'd like to take up... perhaps a sport, a musical instrument, sewing, cooking, etc? Even if you aren't good at it now, the more time and effort you invest in something you enjoy, the better you're likely to become at doing it well! And, the better you become at doing the thing you love, the more your self-confidence grows! For instance, when I was a little girl, I desperately wanted to learn to whistle. It was something I enjoyed doing, but I couldn't do it well at all, to begin with. But, with practice, I eventually mastered whistling, and became very confident in doing it. It's a simple example, but the idea can be applied to many other situations, also.
2. Find a support group. It often helps to have a supportive group of friends and/or family members to talk to and confide in. There's nothing more special than a kind or encouraging word to boost one's self-confidence. Another example from my childhood can apply here. Once, as a kid of about eight or nine, I was asked to sing at a church gathering. There were several other singers scheduled to sing before me, and it was very late before my turn came. I was sleepy and distracted, and... I forgot the words to one of the verses of my song. I felt very disappointed, but people told me afterwards that, despite my memory slip, they still greatly enjoyed my song. This made me feel a little better, and served as an encouragement to me. The words of a kind and supportive person can do wonders to lift one's spirits, and build one's confidence.
3. Fill your life with inspiration! Watching the news can be very grim, indeed, and reading the newspapers can be just as grim. Instead of devoting every night to the news, why not bring a little inspiration into your evenings? Find a book that looks particularly

inspiring, watch an inspiring movie like "Field of Dreams" or "It's a Wonderful Life", or another one that warms your heart. Listen to some uplifting music, or find an inspiring documentary on TV. I've devoured lots of inspiring material that made me want to reach for my dreams, and have found it a great way to build my confidence.

4. Smile. Yes, I'm serious. Studies have shown that the very act of putting a smile on your face brightens not only the moods of those with whom you come into contact, but lifts your own spirit, as well. I've been faced with many situations, which scared me or made me nervous, and the very act of plastering on a smile before facing my fear, has proven extremely helpful in making me more confident.

5. Prayer. Each morning before I start my day, and each evening before I drift off to sleep, I pray for God's loving assistance in helping me to be the best person I can be. It is my personal belief that we are always watched, embraced and loved by a benevolent higher power, whether we call that power God, Goddess, Spirit, etc. When I release my niggling doubts, fears and anxieties to God's care, I always feel that a great burden has been lifted from my shoulders. This process of release helps to restore my confidence, and encourages me that I am never alone, and always loved and supported.

When we are bogged down by a lack of confidence in ourselves and our abilities, it is as if we've built a huge wall around ourselves, which keeps us feeling scared, unworthy and embittered. In order to gain confidence in ourselves, we must first scale that wall we've built. Just the act of scaling the walls of doubt and despair is a huge step in proving to ourselves that we are, in fact, worthy, empowered, powerful, and lovable! Kim, I wish you much love and joy as you scale your own wall, and continue upon your journey towards a more confident you!

Overflowing Joy: How To Fill Your Life with Joy, Each and Every Day

When I think of the times in my life when I was completely and totally filled to the brim with joy, I always smile and thank God for such joyful moments. I'm sure those of you reading this article can relate to that. When we are joyful, we feel as if we've got the world on a string, so to speak. We know that life is great, that things can only get better, and that others will pick up on our joy and begin to feel great, too!

Unfortunately, most of us have trouble hanging on to those joyful moments. They're there one minute, and the next... poof, we feel rotten and depressed, and are left wondering, "Where did my joy go?"

The good news is, there are tools we can use to assist us in staying more joyous, more often! Staying in joy all the time is a process and it takes work and practice. But the more we can live in joy, the happier, healthier and more abundant our lives will be. Here are some tips to help you learn to live life from a place of overflowing joy.

Remember your joyful moments. I already mentioned this tip earlier in passing. When we remember past experiences or circumstances that put us in a place of joy, just the memory of that joy draws more joy to us. When we are thinking of a joyful situation, we open ourselves to feel that joy again. Remembering past joys is like turning on a faucet that pours more joy into our present lives. Thank about your joyful moments often, and feel what a great difference it makes in the joy you experience right now.

Find joyful companions. If you constantly spend time with people who are complaining about how bad, empty and unproductive their lives are their negativity will bring you down and make you feel unhappy, as well. In contrast, if you choose to spend time with people who are always looking at the positive, who see their glass as half-full, and who are striving to make their lives more fulfilled, their enthusiasm and positive attitudes will raise your spirits and bring you more joy, just by association. Joy is contagious! If you're open to receive the joy of others, you will become more joyful.

Do things that bring you joy. Find joyful activities to engage in during your spare time. If you don't have any spare time... make some! We all need to take a few minutes each day to do things that bring us joy. Read a chapter of a beloved book, watch a favorite show on TV, indulge in a favorite food, or go for a walk and enjoy the beauty around you. If you take some time to think about it, you can find an activity that will bring more joy into your days.

Find joy in the activities that aren't so joyful. This one can be tough. However, if you want to be more joyous more often, it's important to find joy in all that we do. If you're doing laundry, for instance, think of the joy found in the ability to wear fresh clean clothes. If you have a job you don't find joy in, find something about your work that can bring you happiness, such as that you're able to help others in some way, etc. Find what works for you.

Laugh as often as possible. Laughter is a fantastic time of joy! Children laugh hundreds of times each day, but as adults, it's often something we don't do enough in our lives. Allow yourself to laugh openly, fully and often. The joy that laughter will bring you is immense!

I wish you days filled with overflowing joy!

My Last Day On Earth: How to Discover a Treasure In Each and Every Moment

On the evening of Wednesday, October 25, 2006, I was watching the popular TV program, Dancing with The Stars, when I discovered that I'd missed a phone call from a woman whose name I immediately recognized, but whom I'd never met. I was immediately concerned, as this woman, who I'll call Lara (not her real name), was a dear friend and mentor to a very close friend of mine. I wondered why on Earth Lara was contacting me, unless of course, something was wrong with my close friend, Sarah. With these anxious thoughts rushing through my head, my body beginning to tremble like a leaf, and my heart racing, I wasn't really able to enjoy the rest of the Dancing with The Stars results show.

As soon as the show ended, I picked up the phone with trembling hands and called Lara. In calm tones, Lara informed me that my beloved friend, Sarah, had drowned in the early morning hours of October 20. She was only twenty-five.

Grief is a funny thing... I think I intuitively knew that Sarah was dead when I received Lara's call, and when my body reacted so suddenly and violently. After hearing Lara's pronouncement, my body began experiencing even more intense symptoms... moments of tremendous heat, and then terrible cold followed by violent chills. I told friends afterwards that I felt as if I'd experienced some sort of nervous breakdown. To know that my friend was so tragically and unexpectedly gone from this plain, was an enormous shock to my system... to my very soul.

Mentioning Sarah's sudden death is a necessary, if sad preface to the primary topic of this article. After learning of her transition, I was forced to reflect on my own life... my thoughts, deeds, words, and my very mortality. Why was I here? Was I making a difference in the lives of others? Had I showed my love enough to my beloveds?

Death can be sobering and devastating, as this experience has proven for me. And yet, death can also serve as a much-needed reminder to cherish each and every moment we have on God's Earth. Sure, life can be frustrating, trying and difficult at times. But what can we learn from our trials, struggles and difficulties? Can we find ways to find the treasures, even in these? I'd like to share some tips that I use to remain present in the moment, and find the treasure that lies just below the surface of every precious moment.

1. Take a little time first thing in the morning, upon awakening, and just before drifting off to sleep at night, to reflect on the things that are most important to you. During these times, our bodies are usually quite relaxed, and our minds are more languid and calm than at other times during our busy days. Think about those people whom you cherish most, how much they mean to you, and how they have shaped the person you are today. This is a wonderful activity with which to begin and end your day, as it helps us to remember the truly important things in our lives.

2. Look, listen and observe. What sights and sounds surround you as you go about your day? What can you discover about these sights and sounds that make you thankful and grateful? For example, when I hear a bird or cricket sing outside my window, I thank God for the wonder and beauty of nature's bounty all around me. When I put clothes in my washing machine and dryer, and listen to the sounds these appliances make, I am grateful for the convenience of modern technology, so that I don't have to wash everything by hand. When sitting in a car going from one location to another, I am thankful for the fact that I don't have to walk many miles a day, as my ancestors did, to get to where I needed to go. Observing these sights and sounds, along with tastes, smells and emotions we experience, helps us to not take as much for granted, and treasure all that surrounds us.

3. Say "I love you." I was blessed to grow up in a household where we all told one another how much we loved each other. Sometimes, it's hard to tell those we love how much they mean to us. We all grow frustrated with our friends and family members, and we may disagree with them on some things, but showing our love can truly make all the difference in bettering our relationships. Expressing our love in our words and actions is a way to make everyone feel good, and deep down inside, people truly do appreciate knowing that they are loved and cherished, even if they don't know how to show their love themselves.

4. Perform kind acts. Sometimes, we forget how rewarding it can be to witness the smile or "thank you" of a stranger when we do something kind for them. Yet, this is another fabulous way to help make every moment count, and find the treasure that lies within each moment. Volunteer your time, give to a charity you appreciate, mentor kids or teens, beautify your community in some way... the possibilities are endless!

5. Find the lesson. Even as my heart goes through its process of healing after Sarah's death, I look for the lessons I have learned from having this experience. In my case, I am learning to be more gentle, to say "I love you" more, to show my affection more often, and, as this article shows, to cherish each moment as much as possible. I often ask myself, "If this was my last day on Earth, how would I live it to the fullest? What would I say and do?" At first, this might seem rather morbid, but I have found it helpful in that it reminds me to cherish all the experiences that occur in my life, and assists me in being the kindest, most compassionate and most loving person I can be, no matter the circumstances. What lessons can you learn from your own current life situations and circumstances?

To close, I'd like to give you an affirmation, which I often use to get centered in the present moment. "I cherish this present moment, no matter its difficulties. I seek to find the treasures that lie beneath the surface of this moment. I am at peace, and God loves me and is with me, now and in all moments to come."

May you find peace and joy in your present moment. I wish you courage, strength and fortitude. I love you.

Dancing Through Life: Taking Steps with Skill and Grace

When I was about eight or nine, I was taught to waltz. I've never forgotten how much fun I had learning the steps, and then putting those steps into practice with a partner. I found waltzing to be such a flowing lyrical dance, despite the fact that I wasn't then, nor am I now, a very lyrical dancer. Nevertheless, I learned as a little girl to revel in the freedom and liberation that dancing brought into my life.

Okay, so I'm far from a star status dancer... I'm not even very graceful. But my philosophy is that, for most of us, it isn't so much about the technique we employ in a dance, but about giving it our all and having fun with it. I consider life to be similar to dancing in that way... sometimes mastering our problems and reaching our goals can be pretty difficult. And yet, when we give life our all and learn to have fun along the way, the results can be truly amazing.

As in life itself, in order to master certain types of dances, we must first perfect the necessary steps. But we don't have to learn all the steps in a dance in one day. We may choose to learn one step one day, another a few days after that, and yet another the following week. Eventually, as we build on what we learned previously, we'll learn the entire dance. In life, as in dancing, we can't always master a goal in a day, a week, or even a year of taking steps. But each and every day, we can do one or two small actions, take a few baby steps, or learn one new skill, that will, over time, add up in a very big way towards helping us reach our original goal. Time can be a friend in our lives, as well as on the dance floor, on our way to mastery.

Another important skill in dancing through life is practice, practice, practice! Because I enjoyed learning the waltz as a child, I practiced the steps often. When we enjoy a project we're working on or an activity we're doing, it's much easier to practice it on our way to completing it. Yet, not everything in life is so fun or so easy. During these times, and during the not so fun projects or activities, practice is even more important. The more we work, the more we strive for quality and completion, the better the project or activity will turn out, and the better we will feel about the results! They say that "practice makes perfect." However, we are human beings, and by our very nature we aren't perfect. But even if we can't strive for perfection all the time, we can strive to do our very best at all times. This is where practice can serve as a wonderful ally!

I already mentioned that, on our way to mastering any skill, it's important to have fun. We live in a fast-paced society, and it's easy to get bogged down by taking ourselves too seriously. Sometimes lightening up and having a little fun makes life far easier for us. Even the professional dancer knows that having fun is an important part of dancing.

Finally, throughout the good times and the bad, it's always easier when we have a partner with whom to dance through life. Life is always an easier dance when there's someone to share it with, laugh with, dream with, and endure with. Whether your partner is a spouse, a beloved pet or a child, this ability

to share the dance of life can be of great value in assisting you to learn the difficult steps, have fun in the free style places, and hold the hand of a beloved through it all. If you don't have a "physical" partner, remember that God and your angels are always there, willing and eager to partner with you throughout all portions of life's dance.

Life, like dancing, can sometimes be a rigorous process. Our steps may falter on occasion, we may miss a step here and there, and we may even trip and fall at times along the way. Some of us are more graceful than others, and some of us may be more accomplished at some steps than others. But through it all, there are always things we can do to make our dance of life a little easier, a little more graceful, and a little more fun. I hope my suggestions are helpful as you dance through your own life, and that you'll think of other suggestions to help you with life's dance, as well. I wish you a wonderful and beautiful dance through this journey called life!

An Opportunity Just Waiting To Happen

"Is this really happening?", I thought, as I sat listening to my dear friend inform me of a situation which made my world spin on it's axis. Though I was hearing his words, I was unable to comprehend what he was telling me. Why had he not told me about this before? Why was I seemingly the last to know about this situation? Emotions coursed through me like a tidal wave. I felt anger, frustration and exasperation. How could my friend dare to burden me with this problem? And how was I supposed to deal with this problem now that I knew about the situation?

Later in the day, when I had cooled off and was thinking more rationally about the situation, I came to realize that my friend had not burdened me with a "problem" at all! In fact, in telling me of his situation, he had blessed me with a new and glorious opportunity for learning, and, yes, even enlightenment.

If you were shaking your head and questioning my sanity as you read the preceding paragraph, I can certainly understand why. How did I, as angry and disconcerted as I was earlier in the day, go from seeing my friend's situation as a problem, to an enlightening learning experience? In actuality, I used several tools, which I'm honored to share with you in this article.

First, I allowed my anger to evaporate. This took some patience on my part, but, as you may well know, it's impossible to think rationally about any situation if your anger is bubbling like a volcano at the surface of your mind. Breathe through the anger, allowing it to slowly decrease with each exhalation. With each inhalation, breathe in peace and calmness. It may sound silly, but with practice, this technique can help you grow calmer in a quicker amount of time.

Second, when I felt more grounded and less angry, I again reflected on the supposed problem. As I went back over the situation, I asked myself the following questions:

- * What is it about this that makes it a problem?
- * Was I angry with my friend because of what he supposedly burdened me with, or did my anger evolve from something entirely different?
- * What can I find that is positive in this situation?
- * How did my friend see this from his perspective?
- * What can I do, right now, to improve this situation?

Asking these, or similar questions about any problem in your life, helps you to consider the supposed problem from a number of different angles and perspectives. This line of questioning also allows you to take action steps to turn the problem into something positive. When looked upon from a positive perspective, and when worthwhile aspects of the problem are discovered and explored, then voila! You've just turned your supposed problem into an opportunity for growth, exploration and evolvment.

These steps work with any problem to one degree or another. If the problem is larger, it may take longer to find anything about it from which you can learn, or any positive aspects that may result from this problem coming into your life. However, with some practice and determination on your part, by following these steps, you can begin to transform your life's supposed problems into rich opportunities for growth.

The Practical Magic of Fairy Tales

As a child, nothing delighted me more than being told a fairy tale. I adored imagining those enchanted castles, dashing princes on their snow-white chargers, and the ever so evil witches who tried so hard to destroy the beautiful damsel, but always failed. I use to make up my own fairy tales to complement the ones I knew and loved so well, and I can't express how much I enjoyed living in that world of magic and fantasy that those beloved stories created for me.

But we don't have to be children to still enjoy the wonders of a fairy tale. They can lift our spirits, bring us hope, and even help to mend our broken hearts. When in doubt of finding true love, why not remember Cinderella, who rose above adversity to eventually live happily ever after. When you're having a particularly strange or confusing day, think about dear Alice, who was more than a little baffled by her adventures in Wonderland. Or, on those days when you can't seem to look at yourself in the mirror, think of our friend the ugly duckling, who turned into a beautiful swan, and discovered his true beauty.

You may be scoffing at this suggestion. Life isn't a fairy tale, after all. But think about it for a moment. These scenarios above make us smile, bring us hope, and remind us of innocent bliss. Fairy tales help us to keep our sense of childlike wonder. Through remembering and telling these stories, we keep our imaginations alive and well. They assist us in remembering that there is happiness in the world, and if we have enough courage, dream enough, pray enough, and believe, then we can find true happiness. Fairy tales remind us that love not only exists, but also thrives. Love is within each and every one of us, just waiting to be shared with others. Like in Cinderella, we can act as someone's fairy godmother or fairy godfather, assisting him or her in growing and teaching them that they are truly worthy of love and blessings. Imagine how delightful it could be to watch someone blossom through your gift of love? Is that not a blessing? Kim, all of us can make such a difference! All of us can help others to discover happiness.

Fairy tales can remind us of the magic that is all around us. They help us to gaze in awe at nature's beauty, and smile upon seeing the playfulness of the children and animals around us. These wonderful stories help us to sustain and maintain balance. They encourage us to have fun, to love for the sake of loving, and to believe in our dreams! They help our inner child to come out and play.

What are your favorite fairy tales? How might they begin to inspire you in your life at this very moment? Listen to your heart, and never give up on your hopes and dreams. Like Cinderella, love awaits you. But you don't need a magic wand to turn your pumpkin into a glorious coach. Simply ask God, Spirit, your inner self, to assist you in whatever way you need, and then take the steps you are guided in taking, to begin to make your happily ever after, a reality.

The Sweetness of Victory

Let's face it, there are days when we'd simply prefer to pull the covers firmly over our heads and snuggle up all day, free from the world and the craziness involved in taking it on. We'd much rather stay in bed with a good book, our trusty remote, a cup of coffee and a couple of doughnuts for company. Having emotions and thoughts such as these are quite normal, as long as they aren't a daily or nearly daily occurrence. Plain and simple, there are times when we just don't want to get out there and do what society says we're supposed to do.

When we battle feelings such as these, consider a few points. Are you in your current job, relationship, or location because society says that's where you should be? Are you plastering a smile on your face because you are supposed to do so? Are you making a point to find happiness and fulfillment within your current life and circumstances?

Kim, it is so vitally important for each of us to honor ourselves and our thoughts and feelings. If you have a day once in a while when you just want to pull the covers back up to your chin and stay in bed, ask yourself why you want to do so? Can you afford to do this? If you can, why not honor that emotion and do it? If you can't, at least take a moment to honor the feeling. Say, "Okay, I don't want to get up. I recognize that." If you're in a job, relationship or other situation, which causes you unhappiness, seek ways to bring more fulfillment into your life. For instance, if you wake up and don't want to leave your cozy bed to go to a job you dislike, think of a way you can reward yourself at the end of the day for getting out and facing the world. Find a hobby, make some new friends, or go out and do something fun. Above all, remember that there are such things as small victories. Though they may be small, they are victories nonetheless. Perhaps facing your day is a victory. Perhaps lying in bed is a victory. Or maybe finding a new passion is your personal victory. These victories can serve as very sweet spots in the fabric of life. Recognize and celebrate them!

How are you being victorious in your life today?

Speaking Our Heart's Truth

We've all experienced situations in which we've been nervous to speak our own personal truth. Perhaps it's a conversation about politics, and we are shy about giving our opinion, feeling it somehow insignificant or trivial. Or maybe we're involved in a discussion of religion or spirituality, and we don't feel comfortable sharing our beliefs for whatever reason.

Speaking our own truths can sometimes be difficult. We may fear that others will laugh at us, ignore us, or, worst of all, reject us. We want our opinions and our truths to be respected, if not appreciated. How can we speak our truths from a place of love and confidence instead of a place of fear and anxiety?

I heard somewhere once that, "If God didn't want us to speak, we wouldn't have been given the faculty to do so." It's certainly a point worth our consideration. We humans are the only creatures who can use words to articulate our needs, emotions, wishes and dreams. Because God bestowed this gift upon us, shouldn't we use it to try to make the world a better, more loving place for all God's creatures?

It is also important to remember that sometimes, we must break our silence once in order to gain confidence in our words. Sometimes, when beginning to speak from our hearts, we may feel fearful or intimidated. But often, as we continue to speak, this allows our confidence to grow and our voice and conviction to strengthen. Those first few words are often the hardest part. But after that first sentence is uttered, we are anxious to continue our dialog. If we can speak from our heart once, doing it a second, third and fourth time is often a good deal easier.

When speaking about something which we hold near and dear to our hearts, it is often simply a matter of plucking up our courage before we open our mouths. Ask God, in whatever way you worship God, or your angels, to assist you in finding the courage and confidence to speak your truth with conviction and clarity. You may want to call upon Archangel Gabriel, the messenger angel, for assistance, as well. Speak lovingly and passionately, allowing that love and passion to radiate throughout your words and your conversations. This will most likely be noticed and appreciated by your listeners.

Finally, remember that, by speaking your truth, you may be the catalyst for motivating another to do the same. Saying your truth with passion, whether others agree with you or not, often inspires your listeners into sharing even more of themselves, thereby strengthening the bonds of friendship and sharing gifts of knowledge. If people like Gandhi and Martin Luther King hadn't stood up for causes they considered to be true and just, imagine how different the world might be today?

You may feel that your truth isn't as important or emboldened as that of Gandhi, but it can still spread knowledge and love, give hope, and maybe even change lives. So, Kim,

what are you waiting for... raise your voice and speak your heart's truth boldly, fervently, and with love. By sharing from your heart, you touch the hearts of others.

The Wisdom of The Heart

We each are confronted with moments in our lives in which we are faced with difficult choices that need to be made. Perhaps these moments involve a change of location, a job transition, a divorce, or some other circumstance which forces us to make hard decisions that deeply affect us. Such periods often make us feel like lone trees being lashed by a violent wind. Just as a heavy wind bends a tree, we, too, waver as we struggle with the difficulty of choice. What is right and necessary for us? What will make us happy? What will benefit us in the long run? Can't we please put this awful choice off a little longer?

I was recently faced with just such a difficult choice. I was very torn, because my head was trying to remain logical and rational, and telling me that I was overreacting to a difficult situation. However, my heart was gently encouraging me in a totally different direction. I spent many restless hours contemplating the contrasting views of my head and my heart. Which was I to obey? What should I do?

As I struggled with my difficult choice, I thought about the roles of our heads and hearts within our lives. The head, the mind, is the center of rational, logical thought processes. Our head helps us in negotiating contracts, deciphering difficult reading material, and dissecting scientific theories. It is no nonsense, practical and pragmatic. It is of tremendous value in day-to-day life. Yet, the stiff logic of the mind often leaves no room for dreams, emotions and the blooming of enlightening ideas.

The heart, in contrast, centers on love and compassion, dreams, ideas and gentle intuitive guidance. It asks for comfort in times of tragedy, yet it is amazingly resilient. The heart is the realm of our own personal and unique truths. Some say that our heart is the place where the spark of God within each of us, resides to guide and teach us. The heart is never a harsh critic. In the face of adversity, it remains optimistic. And in the face of difficult choices, its voice speaks softly but firmly.

As I spent restless nights wrestling with my choice, the clamor of that logical voice in my head seemed to dim in comparison to the gentle, yet annoyingly persistent voice of my heart. As I continued to consider my choice, I slowly began to realize that my heart was leading me on the correct path for me to follow. Ironically, it would have been far easier to give into the logic of my head. Yet, through its wise and gentle counsel, the guidance of my heart won out in the end. The choice it helped me to make was the more difficult choice, but it was also the path that led to the peace, which I was so desperately seeking.

As you struggle with the choices in your own life, I encourage you not to forget about that soft voice in your heart. It speaks with love and compassion, and it has an inordinate amount of knowledge and wisdom to share with you, should you choose to hear it. Often times, this wisdom you will learn about yourself, when listening to your heart, will surprise you. Ego does not play a part in the heart's plan, and this is one reason why listening to the heart often leads to such important truths. Give your heart its say when making decisions, and allow it to assist you in discovering more peace, abundance and

fulfillment. The heart's advice is not always the smoother road, but finding the treasures that await you at the road's end, is well worth the journey.

Answers In Unexpected Places

Whether or not we happen to find ourselves in a period of Mercury retrograde, there are usually frustrating times in all of our lives when our favorite or most necessary electrical appliances simply refuse to cooperate with us. Such was the case with me earlier this week, when I was unsuccessfully attempting to install some software on my trusty HP laptop. I read extensively in order to try to figure out what I was doing wrong. I tried talking sweetly to my computer in hopes of making it cooperate more fully with me, to no avail. I then changed tactics and tried screaming at it, with similar results. Of course, by this point my frustration level, not to mention my blood pressure, was probably sky high. I managed to find a customer service email address and typed up an email replete with *s and exclamation points, I guess in an attempt to put my frustration on a more physical level for the world to see.

After this burst of "physical frustration", there was nothing I could do but wait and hope for results. Irrational behavior is a funny thing, in that it often seems to hamper one's connection with the Divine. When one is too frustrated, angry or upset, it is often less likely that we pray, reflect, or bring our problems to God/Goddess/Spirit to handle for us.

This was certainly the case in my situation. I went to sleep frustrated, without giving the situation over to the loving care of Creator. But despite this, Spirit helped me to discover a resolution to the problem, in a very humorous way.

On awakening the next morning, I immediately had the solution to the problem in my mind's grasp. I already had a copy of the necessary serial number with which to install the software, and had forgotten in my anger that I had it! Needless to say, I had a great laugh at my own expense, and thanked God for the gentle and humorous reminder that solved my computer problem!

So what is the moral of this humorous tale? In moments of anger and frustration, no matter how upset we are, it is always helpful to remember to turn our situations over to the loving hands of Spirit. When we do this, and often, as in my situation, even when we don't, God helps us in discovering answers in surprising ways and in unexpected places. By allowing God to handle our problems and giving over our anger and fear, we can find the answers we seek, and often be pleased, surprised, and tickled, as I was, in the process.

Three Crucial Keys To Unlocking Your Heart's Desires

Over the period of time during which I have been practicing manifesting techniques, I have gone through quite a learning process. I've learned, (often through the frustrations and annoyances of "good old experience," that I must be detached from whatever it is that I am trying to manifest into my life. This complete release is, of course, much easier said than done. But often, as I recently gently reminded a client, the journey is in the learning process itself. And I'd like to share in this article, what I believe to be three primary and crucial keys to manifesting all that your beautiful heart desires. Let me state in advance that we all find our own keys that help us during the process of attracting what we desire. These are simply three that I find crucial for me, and which I firmly believe would be of tremendous assistance to anyone who is trying to make his or her dreams a physical reality. Why not try using them, and see what they may unlock in your life?

Key number one to unlocking your heart's desires is "knowing." Now, by knowing, I don't mean you think you know or you hope you know what will happen or what will manifest. I mean you know you know! There's a big difference between the two. The knowing of which I speak is a complete surrender to the knowledge in your innermost heart. It is the allowing of that gentle inner heart's voice, (see Lighthouse article in the previous issue), to lead you safely and securely to your dreams and desires. It is the act of releasing everything you desire to the wisdom of your heart, and allowing yourself to be completely confident of receiving the outcome that is for the highest good of all parties involved.

The second key walks hand in hand with the first key, and it is "belief." Whereas I consider knowing to be something that is felt with the emotions, I consider belief to be something held by one's practical mind. It is difficult to explain the difference in writing, rather, it is a difference that simply must be experienced for oneself. Believe in yourself and in your ability to attract the things that are for your highest good. Believe that you are a beloved and precious individual, and that the universe is working just as it should be in this moment, and in all moments. In my case, I have to believe that all will be taken care of in Divine Timing. Patience is not my greatest virtue, and so I must believe that all will happen how, and when, it is supposed to happen.

The third key is perhaps the most difficult of the three to implement, and that is "faith." If knowing is an emotional state of being, and belief is logical in its orientation, then faith is certainly the spiritually oriented component of these three keys. This not only involves having faith in oneself, but faith that God/Goddess/the universe is in control, and is assisting you, right now in this moment, to manifest your highest and greatest potentials and purposes. Over the last few weeks, I have been in the process of manifesting a very big dream, and the hardest part about it for me has been releasing my control of the situation over to the love and compassion of Spirit. I think whenever we are involved in manifestation, that this is an important element to keep in mind. We need to have faith that God / Spirit is handling things in the best way possible. By giving over the reigns of

control, we are allowing God to steer our lives in the perfect direction for us. It may be a direction that is beyond our wildest hopes and dreams! But we'll never know that unless we have faith in the process, and let God take control in our manifestations.

When using these three keys in combination, and allowing myself to remain open to God's loving and all-knowing guidance, I am more easily able to reach higher and go further towards achieving my greatest hopes and desires. It isn't an overnight process, and it takes practice, but as I earlier stated, the learning is a necessary part of this amazing journey towards manifesting your desires. I hope that these three keys will be helpful in unlocking the abundance, love and fulfillment that you desire, and deserve. I wish you tremendous love and joy upon your journey!

"The Courage to Keep On Singing"

Like most Americans, I can vividly remember almost every detail of the day the twin towers fell. That evening, I wept uncontrollably, unable to fathom the tragedy that had befallen my beloved country. I felt afraid, helpless, and, most of all, totally hopeless.

Yet, in the face of such an unspeakable tragedy, the American people stood together in order to rebuild our lives and mend our broken hearts. Once again, we were able to find our voice as a nation, and raise it Heavenward.

This morning, it was again demonstrated to me just how wonderful and downright tenacious nature, and the human spirit, is! I was awakened by a tremendous storm. Lightning streaked madly across a blackened sky, thunder rattled the windows, and the rain gushed in torrents. The wind picked up, snapping off limbs and branches and causing general chaos.

As the storm cleared and the sun began to peek over the horizon, the birds began their lovely morning chorus, lifting their sweet voices heavenward in joyous song. When the huge gusts of wind seemed to threaten to blow them straight off of their perches, they still sang as joyously as ever before. The wind and weather wasn't a deterrent to their song, and didn't dampen their joy in the slightest.

We can take a lesson from these birds, and from the Sept. 11 tragedy. No matter which way the wind blows us in life, no matter the violence of the storms or the fierceness of the lightning strikes, no matter what burning buildings we are forced to walk out of, let us always remember that we, like those precious birds, were put here with a song to sing. Our road may not be smooth all the time, but let us not forget the importance of singing our song, of discovering and fulfilling our life's purpose, and of brightening our world in whatever way we can. God placed us here to raise our voices in joyous song... let us sing for all we're worth!

Where Two or More Are Gathered: The Inordinate Value of Support Systems In Our Lives

I saw a statistic recently that startled and saddened me. It stated that more than 25% of Americans feel lonely. When I saw this, I thought to myself, "No wonder there are so many feelings of sadness, hopelessness and depression in the world!"

When we don't have friends with whom to share our joys, our woes, our hopes and dreams, we tend to isolate ourselves in shells of deep oppression and withdrawal. We begin to feel useless, unworthy and unneeded. Having no friends to talk to makes us embittered, angry and often fills us with self-loathing or loathing for others.

But I don't want to dwell on the negative effects so often caused by loneliness and the resultant isolation. Rather, I'd like to address the positive effects... the joy and blessings that are found when one is able to implement a strong and loving support system into his or her daily life.

When we have people around us who love and respect us, with whom we can share, vent, laugh and confide, this increases our confidence levels, raises our self-esteem, and helps us to love and appreciate others and ourselves more deeply. When we have a good support system, we have people around us who will listen deeply, love unconditionally, and "support" completely.

So how can we find this support system, or strengthen the one we already have in place? Why not get in touch with some old friends with whom you share common interests and deep bonds? "But," you may be thinking, "I haven't talked to Joe in five, ten, thirty years." Get in touch anyway. There's a good chance that your old friend will be delighted to hear from you and rekindle your friendship.

Talk to your colleagues. By having lunch or coffee with someone you work with, you may discover that you have far more in common than just work! If you're unsure whether you have any other common interests or personality traits, then work, the one thing you already have in common, is a good starting place. It's likely that other topics of conversation will spring up as you talk. And who knows? A wonderful friendship may result!

Join groups of like-minded individuals with similar interests. If you like to cook, find a group of others who like to cook as well. If you like to garden, find a horticulture society to join. If you're a bookworm like me, join a book club. It's extremely likely that cooking, gardening and reading won't be the only interests you share in common with other group members.

I'd like to add that these groups can be via the internet, or telephone bridge lines, as well as face to face. Obviously, when meeting people online, use caution and good common

sense, but I know from first-hand experience that wonderful friendships and support systems can be forged in these ways.

Of course, it's unlikely that every single individual you meet will become part of your support system. Rarely are support systems huge. I probably have no more than a dozen dear ones who I would readily include as part of my close-knit support system. But by following even one of the methods I listed above, you may very well connect with someone who becomes dear to you, who may become invaluable as a loving friend and ally.

As for those of you who want to strengthen your existing support system, three things that might prove helpful are: stay in touch, reconnect, and do both the previous with love and respect. Showing gratitude to members of your support system, along with love and respect, is also exceedingly important.

Finally, remember that it is a support "system", and therefore, you must be supportive while being supported. It isn't a one-way street. In order for a support system to stay strong, all of its members must be active participants.

Kim, it is my great hope that you find the loving support system that you are seeking. Also remember, I'd be proud to act as a part of your support system, if you feel that my coaching, counseling, or other services may be of assistance to you. Feel free to call or email me with any questions you may have.

I send you all my love.

Gifts of The Season

Now that December is here once again, many of us find ourselves completely absorbed in preparing for our various holiday festivities and celebrations to come. This is a time of tree cutting and trimming, hunting down last-minute holiday bargains, traveling across the state or country, scrumptious aromas and fluffy blankets of pristine snow. It's a chaotic time, and it's easy to become overwhelmed, overworked, and dare I say jaded at times?

During this crazy period of the year, it's important to remember that the presents, delicious foods and delightful décor, as wonderful as they are, are only material possessions to be treasured for a short time. The new sweater you receive will keep you warm and fashionable, but it will eventually grow worn and tattered. You'll gorge on fantastic dinners and holiday favorites, but those too will only last for a short time.

Yes, all these gifts are precious, and they should be treasured as such. But, for me, there are more important, subtler gifts that we give and receive this time of year. One of these does relate to the physical things... the gifts, presents and décor, and that's the spirit involved in the preparations and giving and receiving of these material possessions. When we prepare the tasty holiday meals, decorate our homes and give our gifts to our beloveds, we do this with a cheerful spirit, and hearts filled with love and joy. So, in essence, we're giving much more than material things... we're also sharing our love, our joy, and our whole hearts as well. Because we give and receive love and joy as we make these exchanges, the season is truly made sweeter and more precious.

Another gift of the season is the family, friends and fellowship involved in our celebrations. No matter what religion or spiritual path we follow this is, for many of us, a time of sharing our spirituality and celebrating the bonds of family and friendship. Our homes and hearts ring with the sounds of playful arguments, laughter and happy chatter. We are blessed this time of year with the ability to reconnect with our loved ones, and given the chance to truly express our feelings to those we care about. What better gift can there be than that?

Finally, when the final gift has been opened, the last leftover eaten and the last decorations carefully tucked away, we will have the gifts of our memories of this wonderful holiday season. We can't go back and physically relive holidays past, but we can always revisit them in our minds... laugh at the fun times, smile at the memory of the dinners, and delight in the remembrance of the expressions on our loved ones' faces as they opened a cherished gift. Oh yes... these are indeed precious memories, to be treasured always.

May you find great joy in all the wonderful gifts of this beautiful holiday season... both the material gifts and those that tuck themselves into your hearts, spirits and memories.

"The Gift of Laughter: Advice From an Amazing Gentleman"

I'd like to tell you about a man who was a profound inspiration in my life... I never even had the pleasure of speaking with him, but the imprint he has left on my heart and life is truly awesome.

This gentleman was in his middle seventies when I had the honor of being in his presence. He was a retired college professor, and was taking part in talking to my Developmental Psychology class about the aging process. He was very frail, and yet he had a heart and spirit, which were so infectious that they dominated the room. I remember him telling us, "I have over half a dozen different types of cancer, and I know that laughter is the best medicine, because what can I do except to laugh and go on!" He was actually laughing as he made this statement.

I was profoundly moved by this man's attitude. Despite all the pain he dealt with on a daily basis, he still managed to be happy, and even laugh about it all! "Wow," I thought, "if he can laugh about life, who am I to complain? I should be laughing, too!"

I only crossed paths with him on one other occasion... I sang at his church one Sunday about a year later. Again, I didn't take the opportunity to thank him for the vital lesson he stamped on my heart. He went to be with God about a month later, and I've always regretted not finding a way to talk with him. Yet, his words, and amazing spirit of fun and joy, have forever stayed with me.

When life gets you down, and you feel too hopeless to go on, try giving yourself a good dose of laughter... even if you can only laugh at how incredibly bad things seem right then, it may be enough to give you a little hope for the future. Like the amazing gentleman of my story said, sometimes we just have to laugh at our situation, and go on in spite of it all. And somehow, some way, that ability to laugh, along with a little faith, will see us through to a new day of promise.

"The Answer to Fear: How to Shift from Fear and Anxiety Into Contentment and Peace"

It can sometimes be quite easy to allow our fears to consume our lives. Almost daily, many of us find ourselves in situations where there's something or someone we could fear. Whether they are very trivial things or more logical in nature, many of us find ourselves often lapsing into a mindset of fear, anxiety and negativity. We travel on the highway and worry that we might get into a car wreck. We fear for our children as they attend school. Or we fear that we may become ill and not be able to support our families.

Though some fears are certainly grounded in solid fact, more often than not, we fear silly things that really aren't worth bothering with in the first place. When fear takes over our lives, it's easy to feel helpless and trapped. So how do we eliminate fear based thinking and discover contentment and peace for ourselves?

When I was just beginning to seriously consider establishing myself as an entrepreneur with my own practice, I had a lot of fear and anxiety. Did I really have anything unique to offer? Would people respect and like me? Did I really think I could ever become truly successful? What the heck was wrong with me, anyway? Fortunately for me, I had a wonderful teacher at that time, who was herself a successful entrepreneur, and who had experienced similar anxieties when she began her own business. Her answer to eliminating fear was this. "The answer to fear is love."

It sounds so simple, doesn't it? And in truth, it is quite simple indeed. Like everything else in life, however, it does take practice to get into the habit of loving instead of fearing. Yet, love is such a positive way of being, and so much more powerful than fear, that I'm sure you'll welcome the experience of learning to live from a place of love rather than a place of fear and anxiety, right?

For me, there are three vital components to learning to live from love. You may find other components that are important to you, and I would encourage you to explore and discover what works best for you. But just as a guideline, here is my own three-part formula for living in love while greatly lessening fear.

Part One: Loving God. I worship God as an all-powerful, all-knowing and eternally loving parent, confidant and friend. When I find myself thinking from a place of anxiety, I pray to God to replace my fear with peace and love. As I pray this prayer, I allow myself to relax and open myself to allow God's perfect love and peace to enter all parts of my body, mind and spirit. On doing this, my fear and anxiety is greatly lessened or disappears completely. You may want to try this for yourself. Sincerely ask God to assist you in living from love, and open yourself to receive God's peace. You may wish to repeat this several times daily to enjoy greater love and peace.

Part Two: Loving Others. I've found it very important to keep a loving support system of friends and family around me to bolster my confidence and give me strength and

encouragement. Find two or three loved ones to confide in, pray with, cry with, laugh with and talk to openly and honestly. Help one another to see the good and the positive things in life, and assist one another through love, support and open communication. With loving and trusted friends around you to support and love you, you'll find it much easier to express yourself completely, and thereby discover ways to live from love rather than fear.

Part Three: Loving Self. This can sometimes be the hardest part of the formula. And yet, I find that loving myself is of vital importance. When you find yourself trapped in fear based thinking, try not to scold yourself or beat yourself up. Rather, try to find ways to nurture yourself through the place of fear. Read an inspirational poem or story, cuddle a child or puppy, indulge in a piece of chocolate, a nourishing cup of tea or a hot shower. Remember that you truly are a gift to humanity, and that nobody else on Earth is quite like you. Find ways to love yourself, and this will be of great help as you discover how to live from love.

Love truly can set you free from a life plagued by fear and anxiety. Take courage, Kim! The journey towards living life in love can be challenging at times, and like most things worth pursuing, it's a process, so be patient with yourself. But I promise you, the challenges are nothing compared to the rewards of lessening your fear and increasing peace, love and contentment in your life. I wish you much happiness and love on this exciting journey! If you'd like some extra help in learning to live from love, I'd be honored to be your partner and coach. Please contact me for more information.

Baking Up Abundance: My Personal Recipe For Increased Abundance In All Areas of Your Life

For a tasty flow of increased abundance in your life, you'll need to first gather the following ingredients:

1. A large helping of vision. In other words, think about your dreams, your hopes, your needs and desires. Imagine all the good things that you're currently lacking. In what areas would you appreciate having more? Would you like to have increased financial stability, greater fulfillment in your work, or more loving relationships? Dream! Imagine! Hope! Really get your vision firmly implanted in your mind and in your heart. A seed must first be gently planted before it can germinate. It's the same with vision.
2. Several large cups of intention. Intend to make your vision, your dreams, your hopes, your desires, reality! Take action steps to help your vision to come to physical fruition. If you want more fulfillment in your work, for instance, ask yourself what steps you can take right now to make your job more satisfactory. Maybe you could brighten up your work space, get to know your co-workers better, or engage in more marketing efforts to bring in more customers or clients. Or maybe, you may decide to find a new job or career that you find more to your liking. Take small steps at first if that's more comfortable for you, but definitely take sincere and committed action steps, and INTEND to increase your abundance.
3. A healthy sprinkling of patience. Abundance doesn't always come all at once in a giant rush. Sometimes, you'll get your abundance in small showers at first instead of a big flood. Remember to express sincere gratitude for the abundance you receive, and that gratitude will serve as a magnet to draw more abundance to you.
4. Lots and lots of faith and certainty! KNOW that your abundance will arrive. Don't worry about the "how" aspect... just have 100% certainty that you will receive. It may be in a different way or context than you expected, or you may receive different things than what you thought was best for you, but hold the intention to receive what's in the highest good, and then fully accept that it will happen.
5. Tons of prayer and communion time with God. Talk to God about your hopes, dreams and desires. Know that you are heard, and that you are loved. God will give you what's in your best interest, and in the perfect time and the perfect way. Have faith!

Stir all your ingredients well, bake in the most passionate and sincere part of your innermost heart, and voila!!! You'll receive a super-sized serving of abundance!!!
Enjoy!!!

A Personal Journey: How to Gain More Self-Empowerment In Your Everyday Life

There are times for each of us when life seems to just drag us down and make us feel pretty terrible. We may experience feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and despair. We may say to ourselves, "I just can't get anything right", or, "I guess it really isn't worth trying anymore."

Well, I have important news for you. I've had experiences like that, too, and I'm here to gently remind you that it is worth it, and, more importantly, you're worth it!

Giving up can certainly feel like the only way sometimes. But when life gets us down, and we feel like just allowing it to drag us into the depths of despair, there is another option. That option is self-empowerment. Now, empowerment means different things to different people, and you may have your own unique definition of what it means to you. But, in my personal opinion, there are a few important qualities that self-empowered people exude. They're confident, and unafraid to face their fears, challenges and obstacles. They know what they want, and take action steps to reach and exceed their goals, dreams and aspirations. They're also at peace... they may even seem to glow with serenity, passion and love from within themselves.

So how can we become more self-empowered, and exude more of these qualities ourselves in our own lives? Well, there really isn't a universal answer to this question. We're each special and unique individuals, each with our own gifts, skills and ways of moving around in the world. However, I can give you a personal tip that I recently discovered for becoming more self-empowered, and I hope you'll find it helpful and useful in your own life.

I'm fortunate in that I've always had a good idea of what I want in life, and I'm pretty good at taking action steps to assist me in achieving my goals. However, until recently there was one huge obstacle holding me back, and I didn't even realize it was there! Up until very recently, I had this idea that in order to get where I wanted to go, I had to be in complete and total control of my life and circumstances. I felt that if I loosened my grip on my life the slightest bit that everything would fall apart right before my eyes. But, ironically enough, I've recently discovered that just the opposite is true for me. Trying to control everything in my life began to take a serious toll on me, both physically, emotionally and spiritually. I began to feel very tired all the time, I kept running into obstacles that I couldn't find ways to overcome, and I was no longer hearing God's guidance very clearly. I felt anxious, confused and scared. What was I doing wrong?

I finally figured out that trying to control everything was causing me an inordinate amount of stress, anxiety and emotional upheaval. Finally, one night in desperation I cried out to God, "Okay, I get it. I can't do this by myself anymore. Show me how to proceed. I place my life and myself in your more than capable hands." It took a lot of prayer and emotional purging, as it were, to completely give God all the control, but I'm

delighted to say that the act of doing that, and learning to live in the precious and sacred present moment, has made me a far more serene, confident and, yes, empowered person.

It's an irony that I actually gained empowerment through giving up a lot of control, but this ongoing lesson and process has transformed my life in fascinating and truly awesome ways! I hope my own experience helps you in some way as you experience your own unique journey towards greater self-empowerment. Good luck!

Enjoying The Season

Ah, Spring has finally arrived! At last we can open our windows wide to the sun's warmth, get out in nature without wearing half a dozen layers of clothes, and breathe in the fresh and fragrant Spring air. This can prove to be a busy time for many of us. After Winter's chill, many of us long to get out, get moving and stay active. Spring is a time of rebirth, rejuvenation and new beginnings!

What is trying to be born within you in this new season? Is there a dream you've been putting on the back burner for years that you want to bring out, dust off and see where it may take you? Now would be an excellent time to do that! This is a joyous season, and I encourage you to channel that joy of Spring into all of your dreams, and give them the opportunity to come true for you! Have fun dreaming and creating, and I'd love to celebrate your successes with you!

Life In The Here And Now: Living In The Present Moment

You've probably heard people talk about how they "live life in the here and now," or "live in the moment." Upon hearing phrases such as these, what thoughts come to mind for you? Do you think the whole idea of living in the here and now, or in the present moment is too unrealistic, impossible or downright ridiculous? Does the idea baffle, astonish or intrigue you?

Up until quite recently, when I heard others discussing the empowerment and confidence that living in the present moment brought them, I found myself thinking, "Well, that's great for them, but that philosophy could never work for me." Somehow, in my own mind, I'd equated life in the present moment as some sort of cop out or get out of jail free card. I considered it to be irresponsible or careless to simply live for the moment. Have you ever seen it in that way?

A few months ago, I had a very disturbing encounter with someone, which left me fearful, and on edge. I dreaded having another brutal confrontation with this person. I became pretty paranoid over the incident, and had a desperate wish not to ever hear from the other person ever again.

Sometime after this encounter, I was again reminded of the "life in the present moment" philosophy. This time, given my fear and paranoia, I began to wonder if it really had some merit after all. So I tried a little experiment. I wanted to see if I could attempt to live life in the here and now for a whole day, just going with the flow, and taking life's circumstances as they came. I learned a lot from my experiment. Though it was not a total success, I was able to discover a number of extremely wonderful benefits from focusing on the present moment. Here are a few of my discoveries.

Living in the present moment assisted me in decreasing my worry and anxiety. When I focused on the present moment, without dwelling on my past or envisioning my future, I discovered that my anxiety level lessened considerably, and my worries seemed minimal. I was able to focus on the tasks, situations and circumstances at hand instead of dwelling on yesterday's mistakes or tomorrow's issues.

I became more motivated. As I concentrated all of my energies on the here and now, I became motivated to give one hundred percent of my attention to what I was currently working on. I finished tasks more easily, with less effort and in a way that made me very content. My work was really up to my standards, since I was giving it complete and total concentration. That was a terrific discovery, indeed.

Life's lessons had a greater impact. For instance, while concentrating on the here and now, if I experienced an inspirational thought, an intuitive nudge or an "ah ha" moment, I found it easy to pay attention to whatever that God, Spirit, my higher self, was trying to tell me. Because that moment had just occurred, and I was so intensely focused on my present, I couldn't simply shrug it off or come back to it for later pondering! I learned that

each special inspiration was there to teach me something, and I was able to learn and integrate these great little lessons more easily and effectively through being in the present moment. And since I was focused on, and grateful for these inspirational, intuitive and thought-provoking moments, I received more and more similar experiences - the law of attraction in action!

Finally, focusing on the present moment allowed me to enjoy life's little pleasures all the more. The happy songs of birds outside my window, the chatter of a squirrel in a nearby tree, the lilt of classical music pouring from my stereo speakers, became all the sweeter when I gave them my full attention. The sweetness of life's simple beauties became more and more evident to me. I grew to appreciate life more, and to cherish its wonder.

My experiment lasted only 24 hours, so just imagine the results that can occur if we attempt to live in the present moment all the time? Needless to say, I'm no longer skeptical about the "here and now" philosophy, and make it a point to cherish each golden moment with which I am presented. May you, too, learn to enjoy the magic and wonder of each moment of your life, may they teach you all they have to teach, and may you be richly blessed by life's precious little discoveries!

The Glass Overflowing

I took a class about a year ago, which focused on ways to bring greater abundance into our lives. Our instructor, Sharon, used the example of the glass half full or the glass half empty. She discussed how some people think negatively, and always see the glass of their lives as half empty, while more positive people may try to look at their glass of life as half full. Sharon shared that she looked at her own glass of life as being overflowing. I really admire this attitude, and since hearing her use that phrase, have tried to emulate it in my own life.

One thing that always brings the "glass overflowing" image to mind for me is when I literally fill a glass to the top with liquid. When I do this, I always think of my glass of life as being overflowing with love, abundance, wonder and goodness. It's a concrete physical image that helps me to keep an optimistic attitude about my life circumstances.

How full is your glass of life? What steps can you take to fill your life's glass to the brim with greater love, peace and contentment?