

# There's More To Life Than Gathering Nuts

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Flopsy was a high-achieving squirrel that had accomplished many feats...he left the family nest when it was time, survived a few run-ins with retrievers, and dodged more than one Hawk in his day. He also learned to gather his food supply first thing in the day...before any play...and build a good stash in case the oncoming winter were to turn severe.

He met and wooed a mate - her name was Nuggets - and they had three little squirrels that grew up healthy and agile. Well...all but one who had fallen out of the nest when he was young and didn't have the same sense of balance as the others. But - no matter - Flopsy loved them all equally...and he was a good provider. One by one the youngsters grew and left the nest, heading out across the wires to another part of town...taking a little piece of Flopsy's heart with them. Flopsy couldn't help wondering, "Did I teach them all that they needed to know...did I give them the confidence they'll need to survive? Did I spend enough time chasing them in spirals around the tree or just sitting side by side peacefully on the bank of the stream?" "Oh well," he thought, "I did the best I could...and they seem like good squirrels."

"So, on with life," he thought. He got up early every morning and scampered across a few backyards to gather nuts... as he had done for so many years before. But soon he noticed that he wasn't getting up with the same enthusiasm as he once had. Also, while he was foraging, his mind would wander. Sometimes he wondered if it would matter at all if he didn't gather nuts each morning. After all, he and Nuggets had a reasonable stash of food...more, he thought, than two hungry squirrels could go through in a lifetime. "Maybe I should just ...*whoa...wait a minute...whoops...yikkkkkkkkes.*" With all his daydreaming, Flopsy lost his footing and went crashing down through the branches of a hundred-year-old Copper Beech. He fell 10 feet, then another 25 feet. At 5 feet above the ground, he almost caught his grip, but alas, it wasn't to be. Flopsy crashed into the ground at a breakneck speed...except he didn't break his neck! He just got knocked out for a moment. When he came to, he was on his back looking up at the canopy of penny-colored leaves glistening in the morning sun...dancing in the wind.

Watching the swaying leaves reminded him of how he used to swing from branch to branch almost effortlessly. How he loved to hang from one paw, flip over to the other side, and even hang by his tail. That's how he got his name. Flopsy wasn't his birth name...he got it because from a very early age he would climb fearlessly to heights most squirrels would only dream of. He'd jump from one branch to another, flip his body over as if on a parallel bar...hang by his nails, secure himself with his tail...a regular Flying Wallenda of the squirrel world.

As he felt the old passion bubbling up, he noticed his pulse was racing and his little toes had begun to tap. How long it had been since he had done what he loved to do...what he knew he was so gifted at. He'd been busy doing what he was supposed to do...gathering nuts, providing shelter...becoming part of the Treetop community. But now, he thought, "Why not? What am I waiting for?"

So, he lingered under the tree a little longer, and thought about what he and Nuggets really needed to survive. He figured out that if he gathered in the morning each day, he'd have time to "fly" in the afternoon and still be home in time for dinner. He didn't really need to spend 24/7 in the "hunt."

So soon Flopsy was back practicing his high-branch act...stumbling at first but soon feeling just great. He wasn't as limber as he once was, but he found his years of experience had taught him patience and focus and now he really wanted to learn something new.

But after several high-flying months Flopsy sensed that something was still missing from his life. He enjoyed what he was doing, but he still wasn't sure if he was making a difference...for anyone but himself...and Nuggets, of course, whom he loved dearly.

So back to the tree where he'd had his "Aha" moment. In fact, it was exactly one year before. This time, however, he started at the BASE of the Copper Beech. Yup...just propped himself up, folded his little forelegs behind his head, and stared up under the penny-colored canopy of leaves. "How can I do what I love and make my time count in some way?" (He was a pretty philosophical squirrel.) He asked the question and watched the shimmering leaves, but no answer was forthcoming. Disappointed...and more than a little frustrated, he scrambled to his feet and headed home to Nuggets.

The next morning while he was out gathering nuts, Flopsy noticed an adolescent squirrel on a low branch of a tree staring up. Just staring...not moving. So he scurried up next to the youngster and asked, "What's up?" The younger squirrel replied, "I'm trying to figure out how to get to that cluster of mulberries hanging out at the end of that branch at the top of the tree. They look so delicious, but...I'm rather clumsy and I'm just not sure I can manage the climb."

"Well, would you like a suggestion?" Flopsy offered. "Sure," said the teenage squirrel...curious if this graying elder could REALLY teach him what he needed to know. So Flopsy proceeded to suggest a path that might be right for the young squirrel to take...given his capabilities and his destination. He even taught him a special way of using his claws so he wouldn't slip. Soon the young squirrel was nibbling on mulberries from the end of a branch and Flopsy went on with his gathering chores.

Then it hit him...right out of the blue. That was IT! He knew how to use what he loved to do to make a small difference in the world. He'd get even better, and then teach others what he knew. Soon Flopsy was running a school for high-flying squirrels. The days were long and the students were not always attentive, but the time just seemed to fly. One day, he turned to his mate and said, "You know, life doesn't get any better than this...I couldn't be more satisfied." "Nor could I," she said, "nor could I."

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### **3 Things We Can Learn From Flopsy About Moving Beyond Success To Satisfaction:**

1. Take time to *tune-in*...don't wait for a wake-up call.
  2. *Rev up* your passion...by doing what you love and developing your talent.
  3. Use what you're good at to *reach out* and make a difference.
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