

Soulful Living is Living From The Inside Out

by Suzanne W. Zoglio, Ph.D.

In reflecting on what it means to lead a soulful life, I find my thoughts turning to the source of one's direction, expression, and choices. When we pursue authentic desires, speak from the heart, and make choices based on inner wisdom, I believe we are living soulfully...from the inside out. When we chase after "sensible" goals, say what we think others want to hear, and make choices based on habit or fear, we are living from the outside in...and suffer the turmoil that comes from feeling out of step with our core being.

To live soulfully is to - not blindly, but courageously – follow our authentic desires, developing our unique gifts and applying them for the benefit of others, regardless of how many naysayers try to convince us that we do not have what it takes to "make it" or that our dreams are foolish, and our goals unattainable. It is in such single-minded pursuit of one's innermost burning desires that we find passion and direction and boundless energy. It is also when we feel the exhilaration of expending effort and yet feeling no fatigue, of investing hours that seem to pass in moments, of working hard, yet feeling as though we are at play. If we can trust our soul's desires, dare to dream our own dreams, and remain resilient when damaging winds threaten to blow us off course, we are finding our motivation from the inside out.

Speaking from the heart, it seems to me, is also a key element of soulful living, although it is not a skill that we learn in school, see reinforced in the workplace, or find encouraged in society. If we do not speak truthfully, compassionately, and with wisdom, we are not speaking from the inside out, and our lives will not feel soulful. Instead, we will live in the shadow of being found out, walk in the valley of regrets for having wounded others, or find ourselves stuck in the mud hanging on to what we know, but have failed to pass on. To connect with others means a touching of hearts, and that requires authentic communication, where we bravely share what we know for sure, humbly let others see us as we are, and lovingly embrace all beings without judgment.

From my perspective, a third critical element of soulful living is making choices based not on what others might say, think, or do –or even on our own fears - but instead on what feels right from the inside out. Training yourself to turn up the quiet and tune in to what's right for all concerned at any given crossroad is not always easy. Reacting out of fear is a far more seductive path. We are afraid we might look indecisive, be taken advantage of, or displease someone we care about. So, we often make knee-jerk reactions and then live with a decision that feels out of synch with our highest self. The more we stop to meditate, reflect, pray, or contemplate –even if only briefly- before choosing our actions, the more we are likely to live a soulful life.

To me, soulful living is when we base our direction on our soul's desire, connect with others by way of the heart, and choose our actions in light of our inner wisdom.