

Legacy Tips & Tools

Purpose -- Spring, 2007

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Transitions and Rebirth: A Spring Reflection

Legacy activities address our needs to belong, to be known, to be remembered, to have our lives make a difference, and to know we're blessed and to bless others. In this Tips & Tools we focus on our need to be known to ourselves and then to others, and our need to use our lives to make a difference.

At this time of year we witness all around us the transition from winter to spring, from "death" to rebirth, to renewal. Icy waters become the waters of spring. Seeds are planted. Nature cleanses and nourishes everything with rain and warm sunshine. Flowers push up their first leaves and stems. Trees and bushes bud out, and babies of all species are born. Our religious calendars mark this transition too, as we celebrate resurrection, and the exodus from slavery to freedom.

This is a time for us to celebrate the miracle of new beginnings. No longer in our youth, Martin Buber assures us, "To be old is a glorious thing when one has not unlearned what it means to begin." We may not yet be old, but we're old enough to appreciate the new beginnings all around us, and to sense that light, that movement, that hopefulness in ourselves. This Tips & Tools is designed to stimulate your reflection on what is being born or reborn from within and how that can help you know and live your purpose.

Draw a spiral: Put your birth date at the bottom point, and mark the moments/years of major transitions in your life as you follow the spiral up to this time in your life. Note what each transition was, and next to each any learning you brought forward with you. Then reflect on ways that you have grown and know yourself better because of your transition experiences. See if there are threads of continuity that help you to recognize and define your unique purpose.

Caution: Don't let the word "purpose" scare you. Purpose needn't be sublime or out of reach; more likely your purpose is earthy and achievable. You probably knew very well who you were and why you were here as a child and you can reclaim that knowing now. Remember, acorns grow up to be oak trees. People who've had near death experiences understand that they were returned to life to complete their purpose, often defined as "to learn" or "to love." I have come to understand my purpose to be as fully "me" as I can be, and to express the gifts and talents I've been given as broadly as I can. The difficulty for me has been to recognize and acknowledge my gifts (having been taught that it was conceited to think I had talents). I'm relieved by the story of Rabbi Zusya who said, "In the world to come, I will not be asked, 'Why were you not like Moses?' But I will be asked: 'Why were you not more Zusya?'"

Here's my favorite purpose story: "An old woman planting an olive tree was asked if she expected to benefit from its fruit or its shade. She responded that she wasn't planting for herself, but for her children and grandchildren. 'I found fully grown trees in the world. As my ancestors blessed me, so I bless the future by planting for the generations to come.'"



Reflection: Explore and experience the hope of spring, your "new" beginnings, and your purpose. Spend only 15 minutes each time you write. Return as often as you choose to reflect on this topic.

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There is space available for the Sept 30 - Oct 5, 2007 retreat.