

Making Room for New Joys in Your Life

Are you still friends with anyone from your school days or your time at university? It is lovely to share memories from long ago with a dear old friend. It can also be comforting to receive a Christmas or Birthday card from a friend whom we have known and cherished for many decades. On the other hand, occasionally, it may just be the right time to let someone from our past go so that we can open up to new experiences in the present and the future. If we cling too tightly to the past and past loves, we may inadvertently leave no room in our hearts for new relationships, friendships or experiences filled with heart-centred joy.

Have you ever cleared a load of clutter from your home and noticed that you somehow feel lighter or more carefree? Whenever Gloria and I get around to having a good clear out of old, unused stuff, we notice that the energy in our home suddenly feels lighter and brighter. Well, I hate to refer to dear old friends as clutter, but I am afraid the same universal principle applies! If we gently release any fearful, sticky attachment that keeps us trapped in any kind of relationship that has no real life left in it – and that could be a romantic relationship, a friendship or even a relationship with a job or a house - we will definitely open up a beautiful space in our mind and heart that is full of positive potential.

It can be heart breaking to lose a dear friendship or even a treasured object, such as a special ring to which we are sentimentally attached. However, we have to keep reminding ourselves that nothing in this dream world that we call 'life on earth' lasts forever. We may spend 40 or even 80 years cherishing one particular person, then they die before us, and we are beyond heartbroken. But maybe, we have some kind of lesson to learn from this deep, deep grief and maybe we have some more living and learning to do before it is our time to depart Hotel Earth to make way for some new guests waiting to book in for a while.

Now of course, I am not suggesting here that we should stop loving our deceased relatives, partner or friends. We can definitely continue to extend heartfelt love and gratitude to another soul long after they have departed this world. But this freeing kind of love is quite different from a clingy, needy, egoic love or

attachment that refuses to let go of another soul, even long after they have left us either physically or emotionally.

We are all evolving as we journey through life and I think it is probably unrealistic to believe that all the friends and loved ones who accompanied us on our journey during the early part of our life will be with us until the end of our stay here. Life on earth is all about constant change. We change. Other people change. The Planet itself changes. There is actually nothing we can do to prevent this flow of ever-changing energy, however much we might want to do so at times.

As well as letting go of clinging to a past that no longer serves our current best interests, we also need to keep opening up to delightful new experiences in life.

As we get older, I think it is particularly important to remind ourselves that there are no real barriers to trying something completely new, whatever our age. I read recently about a New Zealand nurse who went to France in WW1 who then married for the first time when she was 74! We can also find yoga teachers in their 90s on You Tube and marathon runners in their 80s. Yet some individuals who are still only in their 50s, start saying to themselves, 'Oh no, I am too old to do that now!'

Please do not let your life be over before it is over. Please act as though your age was the same as your shoe size. Find ways to re-create the simple joy and enthusiasm for life that young children display when jumping in a puddle of water or watching ducks swimming around a pond in the park. Don't get stuck in a rut, however comfortable that rut may be. Be adventurous and try something completely new from time to time, even if it is just a new recipe or a new type of wine.

The other week, my friend and I did a really steep walk up to the Hermitage above Assisi and then we tackled a really steep descent back into the town centre. My legs ached for days after that walk, but at the end of it, I felt an exhilarating sense of achievement at having completed a climb and descent that would defeat a lot of individuals in their 40s or 50s.

One of the best aspects of getting older is that we tend to be a little less self-conscious and a little less shy. So, older age is actually a great time in life to go

out and make new friends. Again, during my last trip to Assisi, I struck up some really lovely conversations with complete strangers and only one of them made it pretty clear that they had had enough of me after a while!

So during the next two weeks, here is a little challenge for you: Throw something out that you have not used once in the past 12 months. Then, venture out to somewhere you have never been before or strike up a conversation with a complete stranger, or eat or drink something completely new to you.

When we are living in a totally familiar comfort zone, it is easy to drift mindlessly through our days and nights. On the other hand, when we commit to doing something new and unknown to us, we tend to become naturally more mindful. We thus become more alive in the present moment – the only real place to be. Even just going for a short walk in a park we have not visited before can enliven all of our senses and increase our levels of serotonin and other happy hormones.

So please do not spend the one and only month of November 2022 trudging along exactly the same paths in life that you have been taking for ages. Be brave! Wander off down a brand new path and marvel at the delights you find along the way!

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