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The Keys to Leading an Empowered and Fulfilling Life

Wednesday, October 19, 2016 - by **Rachel Karu**

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Have you ever been so busy developing others at work and at home that you have disconnected from yourself? Do you feel like you are sometimes not "walking the talk" when it comes to living a purpose- and passion-filled life? Have you ever felt like you have it all yet also feel like you have nothing?

This happened to me, too. I disconnected from my purpose and passion, but I thankfully was able to reconnect. Through my experiences, I developed a process I call Stepping into More to help people discover and reconnect to themselves.

My journey

First, a bit about my journey. At 29, I was the HR Manager at EMI Music Distribution representing 10 record labels. I worked in a big corner office complete with scenic view, CD player, and couch. I was a proud mom and wife and was in the midst of completing a master's degree. From the outside looking in, my life looked pretty good. Most would have consider me successful and living the dream.

Yet I was unhappy. I felt empty and incomplete.

When I realized this disconnect, I began a process of self-reflection by identifying my values. I had an insight and realized I wasn't honoring one of my values—self-expression—and that was depressing the heck out of me.

Eleven years earlier, I had attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts with the dream of being a performer. Specifically, I wanted to express myself through song as a singer in musical theater. My joy had always come from singing. I did not get accepted into the academy for the second year. Being a full-fledged perfectionist, I thought I had failed and took the road more frequently traveled by studying business and HR in college.

Now here I was at EMI and nobody had a clue that I sang. I remember seeing *Les Miserables* for the first time with tears streaming down my face, as I imagined myself singing my heart out on the stage. I felt like I had buried my dream alive at the tender age of 18.

What I later realized was that I had disconnected from my purpose and passion and that I was definitely paying the price. Fast forward many years and a whole series of events occurred, starting with a car accident that led me back into performing, integrating singing into my work, publishing an autobiographical self-help book, producing a CD of songs, and running a thriving business to support clients to unleash their purpose and passion.

Words cannot express how much more alive, on-purpose, and fulfilled I feel. I have reconnected to my value of self-expression and have started to integrate it into all aspects of my life. Now I am a certified coach, and I get to work with people to help them bring passion and purpose back into their lives, as well.

You can step into more

I know from my many clients that my story is not unusual, which is why I created the Step Into More process, the five keys of which are to

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- unearth your purpose
- ignite your passion
- clarify the link between your purpose and passion
- move into meaningful action
- integrate lessons learned

How to unearth and reconnect to your purpose

The key to leading a fulfilling life is to truly know yourself. This includes getting clear on your purpose. One meaningful way to gain clarity on your purpose is to identify and honor your values. A value can be defined in a number of ways: "A principle, standard or quality regarded as desirable or worthwhile" (Merriam Webster Dictionary); "An ideal accepted by some individual or group" (Vocabulary.com); "Our unique and individual essence" (Co-Active Coaching).

Values are intrinsic to who we are. They are not imposed by the outside world. When we don't honor them there are consequences. Generally, we either feel disconnected or unhappy. Not honoring our values can also impact our attitude, morale, and productivity. When we don't honor our values, it's almost as if a piece of us dies.

Exercise: Peak experience

One way to explore your values is by thinking of peak experiences in your life—moments when you felt on top of the world and completely yourself. You can unearth your values when you look a bit deeper and search for the meaning and significance these experiences have for you. For example, if a peak experience was climbing a mountain, this might reflect the values of perseverance or being challenged. A time when you learned Spanish in Guatemala might point to the values of diversity, communication, or adventure.

One personal peak experience for me was when I released my CD. This had been my dream for more than 20 years. When I reflected on the experience, I realized that I was honoring my values: self-expression, creativity, authenticity, freedom, and living on purpose.

Now it's your turn. Reflect on a peak experience that represents a non-work-related time in your life when things were great. You were on top of your game. You felt powerful and strong and were truly thriving. It might be an event, such as crossing a finish line or something that happened when you were in college. It can be when you were an adult or a child.

Your peak experience is a time that you felt great, because you were truly living or honoring your values. You were being your authentic self.

Set aside some time to reflect upon this experience to see if you can identify the values it represents. Once you unearth those values, reflect upon how often you are honoring them by ranking them on a scale of 1 to 10, and then consider how much you are honoring those values at work where you spend a large chunk of time. From there, you can strategize how to integrate your values weekly into many areas of life.

This baby step can help you move forward into a more empowered and fulfilling life.

References

Co-Active Coaching by Henry Kimsey-House, Karen Kimsey-House, Phillip Sandahl, and Laura Whitworth.



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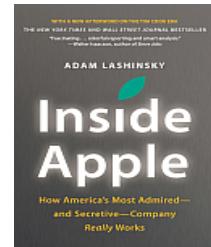
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Rachel Karu

Rachel Karu's personal journey as a recovering perfectionist inspired her to create **Stepping Into More**—a professional and personal development company, dedicated to supporting clients with their quest to unleash their purpose and passion in order to lead a fulfilling and empowered life. Karu has coached hundreds of successful leaders who supposedly have it all and yet feel empty and burned out. Previously, Karu served as human resources manager at EMI Music Distribution and the manager of organization development and training at Easton Sports. She earned an M.S. in counseling for business, industry, and government and a B.S. in business, with a specialization in human resources.

Karu achieved her coaching credential through the International Coaching Federation and is a Certified Strengths Coach with the Marcus Buckingham Company. She is president elect for the International Coach Federation, Los Angeles and leads the Westside Breakfast Special Interest Group for ATD.

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Amy Limbacher • 4 days ago

Interesting article. Getting in touch with our individual core values is not always easy but in the end a feeling of personal contentment can be well worth the effort.

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Michele Miller • 4 days ago

Congratulations on this revelation! I commend you for stepping into more. I too believe that this is the "Year of Michele" where I am stepping into more. Not there, but truly on my way! Thanks for sharing.

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