

What are You About?

by Leslie Kausch, M.Ed. LPC, Licensed Counselor



“I don’t know what’s wrong with me! My life is fine, but I just feel so ... unfulfilled.” My client’s life WAS fine. She had a good relationship with her partner, she was good at her job, she got to hang out with friends often...so what was the problem? To find out, I began by asking her what she wanted. After staring at me blankly for some time, she realized that she really didn’t know what she wanted. She had met her partner in school and the job had landed in her lap, so she had never considered what she actually wanted. Trying another angle, I asked her if there was a time when she knew what she wanted, or when she felt more engaged in her life. Her face immediately brightened, and she sat up straighter as she began talking. In high school and college, she had worked on various projects with friends and/or local groups around environmental issues. They had worked on recycling and beautification projects, and they had worked with her schools to reduce waste in the classrooms. Clearly, this had been an exciting time for her. Since she hadn’t mentioned being involved in any similar efforts since she had moved to town for her new job, I asked her if these issues were still important to her. She looked puzzled and replied, “Of course!”. When I asked why she was no longer doing these projects if these issues were still important, she was stumped.

For all of us, if you want to know what’s important to us, look at our lives – how we spend our time and money, or what we talk about and think about most. Many of us have a disconnect between what we mean for our lives to be about and what our lives actually look like.

Of course, life often has plans for us that we wouldn’t make for ourselves. Work, family and circumstances can occupy our attention, but when we aren’t taking care of what HAS to be done, what we do with what time remains, reflects what matters to us.

In my client’s case, she wanted the community to have less trash on the roads and in the parks, but she spent most of her spare time binge-watching at home. Without noticing, her life had become more about vegging out than almost anything else. Everyone needs to chill out sometimes, but chilling out to the exclusion of things we care about can leave us feeling empty, disconnected, and unfulfilled.

To shift gears, my client took on a series of exercises to help her reconnect with what mattered to her. Next, we discussed what activities she had in the past or currently enjoyed most. Then, we looked for situations that might connect what she care about AND liked to do. We looked at her “vision” for her life as she would want to live it to bring her closer to fulfillment.

Over several sessions, my client began coming to our appointments looking much more excited and engaged, eager to tell me what she was figuring out. As it happened, as she had talked to some friends about what she was doing, she found that several of them were also interested in similar issues, so they began to look for projects to do together.

It’s easy sometimes to let life happen to us, but it’s important to take stock of our lives once in a while. How does your life reflect what you mean it to be about?

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