



Resilience and Joy

By Kathy Marshall Emerson, Executive Director
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This week I traveled two days across the prairie to attend a family funeral. The lesson is so clear. We celebrated the life of a man who realized resilience and lived with joy. Despite complex health issues and very limited speech for several years, Ted absolutely always smiled. He played tricks and recently even pretended to be in his final moments. As family members gravely prepared to catch him as he wobbled to and fro, or crumpled in a heap, he would pop up, grin unbelievably and shake his finger at them all. In the final hours he somehow managed to get out the words, "Love you!" for every family member!

Syd Banks offers a suggestion for learning to live this way. "Begin the process of nourishing the soul by living in the *now*. Forget the past and the future, and *just be*, and you will surely be rewarded by living in the *now*." (*The Missing Link*, p. 100)

If we do not clutter the moment of *now* with thoughts of the past moment, month, or year or concerns for what is to come, we literally are free to do with *this moment* whatever we wish. In this one moment we can effortlessly experience peace, calm, hope, simple ease, certainty, comfort with the unknown, and freedom even from pain. Resilience is, in many ways, our ability to return to natural joy.

Banks does say, "Living in the *now* requires a clear mind. In clearing our minds, we may have to give up something to receive something." (p. 101) Once we get the hang of nourishing our soul, giving up something—some idea we have been tightly holding on to—is not effortful. It can become a way of life.

Many years ago when I would be in a difficult situation, rather than crying or going to bed for days, I decided to just clean the bathrooms and tidy up the kitchen cupboards. Those activities were distractions and I did not wallow in mental despair. In those days I did not understand my own role in creating my moment-to-moment experience of life—state of mind.

As I learned the inside-out-nature of life, my soul was unconsciously fed. With growing understanding of the principles, I began to live from my soul.

Ted, rather instinctively, knew this way of living. Grieving the process of dying was too high a price for him to pay. He entered hospice, but regularly "checked out" this summer -- to go camping with all kinds of medical support, out for ice-cream 20 miles way, out for a final 59th anniversary dinner, and then one last day a forbidden hike down to the basement for a really good shower. This business of living from the soul is really rather ordinary. Who does not want joy? Are we willing to trust it is truly within reach?

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