

Secure Your Own Mask First  
By Jeanne Loehnis

If you've ever flown on an airplane, you have been instructed on how to use the oxygen masks in the event of cabin depressurization. You have also heard:

"If you are traveling with a small child or an infant, put your mask on first, then help the child."

Why? If you are struggling with your own breathing, you are far less able to help another. Any assistance you give is likely to be impaired, labored, and slower than it might otherwise be. By caring for your own needs first, the help you give another will have a much better chance of success as you will have more patience and less fear. Your presence will have a calming effect on those around you.

"Help yourself first. Care for your own needs. Feed your inner spirit."

What do you hear when you read those words? Do you hear selfishness written all over them? Or can you hear good advice for living? Consider these lyrics from the song, "I'm Gonna Honor This Need" --

I'm gonna honor this need within my soul  
I'm gonna honor this need that I might grow!  
I'm gonna honor this need and you will know  
I have honored my need so my story goes.

It goes on and on each and every day.  
It goes on and on when I'm at work and at play.  
It goes on and on and I dare to say  
I'm movin' on and on livin' Spirit's way.

I'm gonna tend to that flame within my soul.  
I'm gonna feed it with love that it will grow!  
I'm gonna share this bright light and all will know  
I have tended my inner flame and my story goes.

It goes on and on each and every day.  
It goes on and on when I'm at work and at play.  
It goes on and on and I dare to say  
I've got a fire roaring in my heart livin' Spirit's way.

My inner flame's roaring brightly now livin' Spirit's way.

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Imagine, for a moment, a campfire. It begins as a spark, a very small and insignificant flame. Yet, the more we feed and tend it, the larger it becomes and the more warmth and light it offers. In fact, it cannot help but grow and pour itself out on all who come near! Ignore the basic needs of the spark, however, and the flame dies.

Consider now the sparks of talent and creativity that live within you. Are there any that you have nurtured through lessons or practice? As these skills grew in you, were you really able to contain yourself and not let anyone see them? Or, as you allowed talent to blossom within you, did you naturally find ways to gift the world with your creativity? Did you give gifts that you created? Did you offer your handiwork to the church craft sale? Is the world richer because you fed your inner flame and it burst forth from you?

Maybe you have identified sparks of creativity, areas of interest within you and **not** nurtured them. Is that you? How often have you said: “When I have time, I will learn how to sew.” Or perhaps, “When I have time, I will study woodworking.” And, how often have you felt resentful of the tasks that are consuming the time that is not being spent nurturing your sparks? Are you really giving your best to the world? Are you giving freely? Are you gifting the world with the best you have to offer?

Secure your own mask first; then help your neighbor. Identify and nurture the seeds of talent that you were given. Find those activities which make your spirit sing! Invest in yourself. Grow your talents. Far from being selfish, tending to the inner flame is the personal responsibility of every human being. Passion lies within each and every one of us. It can be suffocated through neglect, but when encouraged, it cannot be stopped! The world needs your passion expressed. All benefit from the free and joyful exchange of creative energies. Nurture your inner flame. Watch your blaze take on a life of its own and brighten the world around you!

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