

Where Are Your Answers?

By Jeanne Loehnis

You've just finished the latest self-help book and you're all fired up to practice each of the principles set out before you. Ready, set ... STOP? Trouble is, this is the tenth self-help book this year and despite all your efforts and all the advice, you are still 30 pounds overweight, your exercise program petered out again, and the short story you started is back on the shelf collecting dust (along with those books). What's more, you told everyone who's anyone that this was *definitely* it and they'd better prepare for a whole new you at the upcoming class reunion. Now, of course, you cannot go to the reunion comfortably. Feelings of embarrassment accompany every thought as you try to plan for the weekend.

Why do we torment ourselves this way? We have come to value how we look to others and what they think more than how we feel inside and what really matters to us. We seem to have forgotten that our body is a temple of wisdom, completely capable of guiding us along life's path. When we calm our body and our mind and turn within for answers, we hear clear messages which, when incorporated into daily living, can be transformative. When we allow this transformation from within, not only do we feel better and more comfortable in our own skin, but our new self-confidence expresses as an overall positive attitude toward life that cannot go unnoticed by others.

This seems so contrary to popular belief! From little on, we have been taught what we need to know, given the rule book for proper etiquette, read Ann Landers, been told that straight A's are good, and in recent years been inundated with books that claim to have all the answers for health, happiness, and successful living. Certainly we have gleaned some very good ideas from all of these. But have you also heard that you are your own best teacher? If you attend school regularly, study hard, and incorporate what you learn into your life, then **Yes!** You are your own best teacher. Within you, your very own sage, your wise soul, exists to guide you each day.

What happens at the school of "self-taught" and what does the classroom look like? How are students evaluated?

The school of self-taught begins like most other educational settings. The student must find and enter the classroom which, in this case, must be a place with only one person, the student, who doubles as the teacher. Once in the room, the student selects the most desirable place to sit and does so. Like other classrooms, it is appropriate to be quiet in the classroom so that the teacher's words can be heard.

At this point, the similarity likely ends. In the school of self-taught, there need be no desks, books, tests, or grades. There are also no summer vacations or teacher in-service days! Every day attendance is desired at this school. Every morning, school is in session. The student rises from a night's sleep and enters the classroom, sits comfortably, and begins to breathe slowly and with intention. Some students appreciate having a notebook and pen handy at this point though most choose to close their eyes during the lesson.

With continued inward focus on the breathing, there is a natural disconnect from all that is outside of the body and an awareness of and openness to the thoughts that are floating around and vying for attention. Physical energies: tension, stress, weariness, as well as excitement and peace also make themselves known. The student's job at this point is to notice what the "teacher" is saying. Notice the thoughts that return again and again and notice how the body energy reacts. Which thoughts, which ideas, which items on the list bring joy to the body? Which illicit fear or doubt? What messages are being delivered that offer fresh insight, a new way of looking at things?

Aware of old thoughts and new ideas and the body's reactions to all of these, it's time to do the daily assignment. Here are some questions to be answered:

RELEASE

1. What is part of me, my thoughts and my plans, that I can release?
2. What simply does not **ever** need to get done?
3. What no longer needs to be carried and rehashed in my thoughts?

PLAN

1. What is it that really **needs** to be done today?
2. What is calling out to me as a joyful **opportunity** to be on the list for today?

POSTPONE

1. What has value but not urgency and can be set aside and given NO energy in this day?

At this point, review your plan. Give your teacher one more chance to guide you. As you quietly listen, does this plan sit well in your body? Does it fill you with calm and perhaps excitement? Are there any feelings of overwhelm which need to be addressed before putting this plan into action? If so, gift yourself by pausing and repeating the process.

Today is your day! You have been given this opportunity to live and you alone know how you must spend the precious moments of your day. Follow the guidance of your inner teacher: follow your soul!

Jeanne Loehnis, spiritual singer and songwriter, encourages your creativity through teaching The Artist's Way. Contact Jeanne at SongsForYourSpirit@new.rr.com. Discover Jeanne's creative expression and sign up for class offerings at www.SongsForYourSpirit.com. Check out Unity Church of Christianity at <http://www.focol.org/unity/> for one source of her spiritual nourishment.

SIDEBAR LYRICS:

Follow My Soul

By Jeanne Loehnis

*I've traveled in the city and followed other's steps.
I've done each task before me. My life: a success.
I've learned well, for I thought all life's answers were taught.
Now I'm starting over to dream in the clover
I hear new questions again.*

*The questions that are with me each day and through the night
sometimes send fear straight through me. I know not wrong from right.
Yet I know I must go through this uncertain time
and be with the feeling, as the unknown's revealing. I'm
learning a new way to grow.*

I'm living with the questions. I'm moving in the flow.

*At times I ask direction, yet often I know
that the way, I would go is not the path I've been shown.
Yet, I'm gonna go there; follow my soul where
my heart it knows my truth.*