

Exuberance and the Art of Active Living

by Mary Fogarty

Some have said I am too verbal and overly exuberant and enthusiastic.

When I am joyful, passionate and exuberant, others get fired up and in turn I am energized. Less as a teacher and more as an elder leader, I experience my audience radiate with vitality, a life force and a quickening that translates into action. I invite my listeners to embrace failure as their greatest teacher because in failure we always know we are going in some direction and learn our greatest lessons.

I also want my listeners to appreciate **exuberance** as a life-saving force. For example: I know passion for life and an exuberant temperament allows me to do things I couldn't do without it. One of the most powerful tools for success is having real passion for goals. An intense desire for a goal helps burn new neural pathways into my brain. Passion also helps me progress by overriding *old* "failure messages" stored in my subconscious. With passion and exuberance, doing for others is no longer a duty—it is a joy that stimulates my own health and happiness.

There is only one me in all time and her expression is unique. If I block that uniqueness, it will never exist through any other medium. A portion of the world and I will have lost my purpose for being. It is not my business to determine how good or valuable my uniqueness is: nor how it compares with other ways of expressing. It is my business to keep the channel open. I do not have to concern myself with how others perceive or receive. But I do have to remain open and aware to the urges that motivate me. When I keep my channels of curiosity and infectious enthusiasm open; there is a blessed unrest that keeps me marching and makes me more alive—a kind of energetic Robin Williams wannabe.

Theodore Roosevelt shared his father's great passion and passed it on to people he encountered throughout his life. We owe our magnificent system of national parks to the enthusiasm Roosevelt had for nature and for the right of the American people to enjoy it.

Marianne Williamson said—

Our playing small does not serve the world.
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that others won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to manifest the glory that is within us.
It is in everyone.
And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give
others permission to do the same.

Sometimes when I look ahead and behind at the sheer bigness and complexities of the world I can feel sadness to the bone. The world is so huge that people appear lost in it. There are too many ideas, choices, things, people and directions. In some ways the reason it matters to care so passionately about something is that my need to explore, experiment and discover whittles the world down to a manageable size. It makes the world seem not huge and empty but full of possibility.

A New Zealand friend of mine once said her heritage made her afraid to show passion to the degree I do. "New Zealand is a 'don't-get-so-excited' kind of culture. I am envious and respectful of those whose passion is expressed so freely."

While exuberance may light my fire, I also appreciate the stillness of silence. Silence can refresh as Derek Walcott the 1996 Nobel Prize winner for literature expressed so succinctly:

The time will come, when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror.

And each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, "Sit here, Eat. Relax."
You will love again this stranger who is your Self.

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself,
to this stranger who has loved you all your life,
whom you ignored for another, but who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs and the desperate notes.
Peel your self-image from the mirror.

Sit. Here.
Now. Feast on your life.
Fall in love again with your Self and with all of life.

While sitting in silence, I feel that life force—that other Self rise as an infectiously enthusiastic, passionate me. At such times I give my heart back to itself.