

## Finding the Song of Your Soul

Coca Cola tells us to “have a coke and a smile,” Mars, Inc. tells us, “Snickers satisfies.” Retailers tell us that we will feel like a million dollars in the latest Wunderbra, Hilfinger tights, Gap jeans or Prada shoes. The beer companies all tell us that beer makes everything better. And Procter and Gamble’s bears tell us that bliss can be found by wiping our butts with Charmin Ultra Soft. The message that happiness can be bought is fueled by sexual promises. It is through this very warped lens that most of us gain our understanding of desire. Desire, we learn, rests on the surface, and must be fulfilled if we are to be happy. But the happiness we experience when we buy that new shirt, drink that beer, eat that candy bar, wipe our butts, drink that Coke or scratch that sexual itch is fleeting. It may keep us from feeling our uncomfortable emotions for a while. But as soon as the high wears off, we want something else to bump us back into happiness.

It’s easy to get lost in the spin of desire. We get so busy chasing our cravings and running from uncomfortable feelings that we lose connection with our selves and either ignore or forget about our deepest longings. We slide into autopilot, going through the motions of life so mindlessly that our life dreams get lost. We lose track of what we truly want. But those unmet desires don’t go away just because we ignore them. They call to us. If we don’t pay attention, they resort to anger so that we either find ourselves seething in resentment and lashing out at the people who people our world or we turn the anger inward and slip into depression.

Ironically, the way out of the spin of these surface level desires is through them. We have to observe them and see where they take us. When you are craving chocolate, a new pair of shoes, caffeine, alcohol, sex, or whatever your addiction is, ask yourself the question, “If I weren’t craving \_\_\_\_\_, what would I be feeling?” Sit with the question for awhile. If tears come, let them roll down your cheeks. If anger comes up, sort out who you are angry at and what the anger is about. If fear comes up, trust that it’s simply an electrical impulse that will move through your system like the weather and watch it. Whatever the feeling, let yourself feel it. Find where it is located in your body and breathe into it. See if you can make bigger. Describe it to yourself in detail. Go beyond, “It’s really big.” Flesh it out. For example, “My heart feels like it will pound out of my chest but it can’t because it’s locked into a box that’s two sizes too small. And my gut feels like it’s been turned into a grey rock”. And then sit with this feeling and watch it as it changes. When thoughts come up, which they will, ask yourself, “Is it really true? Will I really totally screw up this presentation? If so, will I really get fired or lose my professional standing? And even if I do, will I die? Is there no other way out? Really?” And keep breathing. This is the most important part. Keep breathing. It also can be helpful to look at the belief that drives the desire. Play it forward. Ask yourself, “what kind of trouble will ‘scratching this itch’ get me into?” For example, “Will this bottle of vodka really make me feel better? Or is it most likely going to

remind me of all my exes and make me feel sorry for myself, cause me to embarrass myself if I happen to talk to people, and maybe cost me my license if I get behind the wheel of my car?"

In the meantime, our deepest longings are calling out for attention. And just as the link to surface desires lies in the body, so too does the link to our deepest longings, the desires we need to fulfill in order to follow our bliss.

Spaceship inquiry – cruising through your body and thoughts as if you were an alien exploring a new planet – is one of the best ways to make sense of surface desires. Music is one of the easiest gateways to discovering your deepest longings. Music works on several levels. First, the pure sound of music can help you focus your attention on something besides the thoughts generated by those crazy little hamsters in your brain. Second, music is vibration. Whether you are listening to Mickey Hart make magic on the drums or listening to a Bartok symphony, you can feel the vibration move through your body. This visceral experience can help you focus your attention inwards. Third, music can help you evoke feelings and it can help you shift them. We feel perky when Rhianna's "It's Raining Men" blasts from the speakers and empowered when we hear Gloria Gaynor belting out, "I Will Survive" and Aretha Franklin belting out "R\*E\*S\*P\*E\*C\*T." Cranking up the volume and shaking your fist to ACDC's "Shook me all night long" is a great way to move through anger. And dancing to whatever sort of music gets your spirit moving can get you into your body more fully than a 2 hour yoga class, if you let it, especially if you can let go of your ego, stop worrying about what other people think and just let yourself be with the flow.

The wonderful thing about getting into your body, once you get past the aches and pains that you may have been ignoring for years is that when you get into your body, you are present with what's happening now, in this moment. You can let the past rest in the past where it belongs and let the future play out on its own. And if you wait long enough, you can hear the voice of your true self telling you what it wants, what it needs, and even direct you how to get there.

*Originally published in Outlook.*