

Life Sculpture

If you could conjure up an image of each important thing in your life and make a sculpture with them, what would you see? No, really. I'm serious. If you were to imagine all the things in your life that take up your energy, whether it's positive or negative, what would you see? More specifically, what would you chose to put in your sculpture?

- Would you include your job(s) or the hole that's left in your world because you don't have one?
- How about your family, friends and/or pets?
- Are there people with whom you have unfinished business that need to go into your sculpture because they are taking up a great deal of your psychic space?
- Do you need to see your house or apartment?
- Is your cell phone important?
- How about your laptop?
- Do you need to add your car to the sculpture?
- Do you need to add your TV and couch or chair?
- What about your hobbies?
- What about your dreams and wishes?
- What about the communities you belong to?
- Is spirituality or religion or some sort of higher power important?
- Is money important?
- Are there habits or addictions that are taking up your energy?
- What else needs to be in your sculpture?

Take a moment to make a list of all the things that are important to you or that are taking up a great deal of energy, right now, this day, this week, or this month. It's not necessary, or even likely, that all the things I asked about are important in your life. If it doesn't feel important, no need to write it down.

Now, let's put you into your sculpture. It is, after all, your life. Where are you relative to the things that are taking your energy?

- Are you in the middle, with the important aspects of your life spinning around you like the planets circle around the sun?
- Are you underneath, being squashed by the things in your life or gracefully holding them up like Hercules holds up the world?
- Are you floating over them, dissociated from your life or peacefully observing yourself from a nonjudgemental witness state?
- Are you on the outside looking in or hiding from your life?
- Are you on one side of a wall or barrier with some things while other things are on the other side of that wall or barrier?
- Which of these things is closest to you?
- Which feel furthest away?
- Which look or feel the biggest?
- Which look or feel the smallest?

- Which of these things feel heaviest?
- Which feel lightest?
- Which sap your energy?
- Which give you energy?
- Which items have a positive charge or make you feel good when you think about them?
- Which items have a negative charge or make you feel ill at ease, sad, overwhelmed, or angry when you think of them?
- Who or what is giving you support?
- Who or what is challenging you or holding you back? (This can be an outside situation like discrimination, an ailing parent, or lack of income or it can be something internal, like fear, depression, illness and/or old negative tapes that say things like “You’re such a scew up. You’ll never be able to do that.”)
- Is your sculpture moving or is it static?

Breathe and take a moment to imagine what your sculpture looks like. If you have time, you might even write this down and then take a few moments to concretize it by drawing it, turning it into a collage, or creating an actual three dimensional sculpture. Once you’ve created the image or sculpture of your life, take a moment to breathe and sit with what you see and how you feel in response to it. Give yourself some time to do this. Let the image sink in so that you feel it at a deep soul level.

Once you have sat with your sculpture for awhile, take a breath and check in with that deepest part of yourself. Is this how you want your life to look and feel? If so, sit with the contentment that comes with living a life that you love. If not, what do you need to do to shift the sculpture so that it’s more in line with a life you could love? Note here that you don’t get to change other people or make the world change. Other people and the world will change as a result of any changes you make, but you can’t control how they change. All you can control is you. So, again, what do you need to change or shift in order to have a life that you’d love to live? Maybe you need to clean your house. Maybe you need to look for another job. Maybe you need to spend less time playing computer games or downloading MP3 files. Maybe you need to change your diet. Maybe you need to drag your guitar out of the closet and play it. Maybe you need to come out to your parents. Maybe you need to delete those old life sucking messages. Maybe you just need to shift your priorities and spend more time with your daughter and less time at the bar or at the office. Maybe you need to slow down or speed up. Maybe you need to let go of some things or add in some things. Your conscious mind may not have a clue, but deep down inside, you know. Let that answer come to consciousness.

Once you’ve decided what needs to change, make another picture, collage or sculpture, this time making it look like how you want your life to be. When I studied martial arts, my sensei (instructor) used to say, “What the mind can see the body can do.” If you can envision your life, you can change it. But, and here’s the hard part, you actually have to make changes. For some things this is easy. If you have an ugly coat in your closet that your Aunt Bertha gave you for Christmas that you absolutely hate, by all means, give it away. If it means a lot to your Aunt Bertha, give it back to her, but get it out of your house. If you hate your job, you’re probably going to need to start taking baby steps, perhaps starting with looking at why you hate your job. The next step might be thinking about what you need in a job to feel content. A third step might involve talking to your boss or starting to look at other possible jobs.

Support is not only important in the process of change, it's crucial. Who in your life do you feel absolutely comfortable and safe talking these things through with? If you find that your normal support network isn't up to the task for whatever reason, don't be shy about seeking outside help. See a career counselor, a job coach, or a therapist.

The key is to start with the issue that feels the most incongruent with what you need to feel content and start whittling away at the sources of discontent. Once you've identified the key things you need to change, think of three baby steps you can take to for each to start building the life you'd love to live and start taking those steps. If you keep taking baby steps, eventually you will have walked into the sculpture of the life you want.

This article originally appeared in Outlook Columbus in 2007.

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