



The Path

The Spiritual Theme Newsletter of the First UU Society of Burlington

What Does it Mean to Live a Life of Passion?



Dear Ones,

This month, we ask “*what does it mean to live a life of passion?*” How might tapping into passion/our passions deepen our spiritual lives? Does passion come with any perils? What gets in the way of our passion, and how can we reconnect with our passion for life?

I look forward to exploring these questions with you, and hearing your stories, through the month of March!

Much heart,
Rev. Mara



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Introduction:

From Our Friends at the Soul Matters Collective

*"The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep
that most of us end up hardly living out of it at all."*

-Frederick Buechner

It's matter-of-fact. It's like he's telling us something we already know but sadly allow ourselves to forget. It's like he's saying, "Come on folks! We know how remarkable we feel when we are in touch with and living from our passions. So why are we spending so much of our lives living otherwise?!" This month is about just that: Getting back in touch with our own passion, getting it back on the radar screen of our consciousness. Our questions, exercises and resources are designed to help us with this.

But our work this month is not just to get in touch with our passions, but also to share them. When I asked a friend what life has taught her about passion, she replied by telling me to pay attention to the spelling. She wrote, "maybe passion = "pass - i - on" —passing my "shimmering self" — my shimmering "I" —on to others." She went on to suggest that this is when the real magic and transformation happens: when we take what we love to do most and find a way to enrich others through it.

In this sense, passion can't really be experienced or fully known unless we pass it on. Unless we pass "the real I" — the "shimmering I" —on. It's one thing to listen and open to your passion, to know your own loves. It's quite another thing to share those passions with others. And that's where this month's "Spiritual Exercise" fits in —inviting us to make just a little room for bringing others to life by sharing the thing that brings you to life!

There is no passion to be found in playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.

- Nelson Mandela

Getting Started: Spiritual Exercise

Spiritual Exercise: Reconnect with an old passion by passing it on.

This month's spiritual exercise invites us to renew our relationship with one of our passions. It's grounded in the above idea that passion is experienced most deeply when shared with others:

1. Pick a personal passion that you have not engaged in a while—something you love doing or experiencing but have not done or experienced in some time.
2. Find one way to engage it again.
3. Then, find a way to use your passion to enrich the life of someone else (or life itself).
4. If you are in a Theme Circle, bring in an object connected to your effort. It can be something symbolic or something that was actually part of your effort. *(continued on page 3)*

(continued from page 2)

This exercise may seem simple, but we invite you to notice any unexpected complexities and insights that arise along the way. Pay particular attention to how you feel about not having connected with your passion in a while. Maybe you will wonder what's taken you so long to get back to it. Or maybe you'll be disappointed, wondering why you ever liked this in the first place. Also pay attention to how you feel about trying to share it with others.

An alternative approach: If it works better for you, feel free to pick a passion you often engage, but find a new way to share it. For example, I know a symphony cellist who was invited to play at the bedside of a friend with cancer. She says it was "transcendent" in a way that playing before a huge audience of music lovers never was. What might be your new way of sharing your "old" passion?

Living the Questions

Here are some questions for reflection and, if you are in a Theme Circle, this month's sharing. We invite you to live with these throughout the month and see how they break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts.

1. What were your childhood or youthful passions? Which ones did you abandon and why? Have you carried any with you into adulthood?
2. How do you know you feel passionately about something? How do you know that you have found or are doing something you really love? What are the signs?
3. Passions can be strong and unruly; has your passion or passions ever gotten you into trouble?
4. How has your sense of passion changed over time?
5. What helps you reconnect with a sense of passion when you lose touch with it?

Resources

Words for Wisdom and Inspiration

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

— Martha Graham

Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

-Howard Thurman

Resources (cont'd)

Words for Wisdom and Inspiration

You are young. So you know everything.

You leap into the boat and begin rowing.

But listen to me.

Without fanfare, without embarrassment,
without any doubt, I talk directly to your soul.

Listen to me.

Lift the oars from the water, let your arms rest, and
your heart, and heart's little intelligence, and listen to
me.

There is life without love. It is not worth a bent penny,
or a scuffed shoe.

It is not worth the body of a dead dog nine days
unburied.

When you hear, a mile away and still out of sight, the
churn of the water as it begins to swirl and roil, fretting
around the sharp rocks—when you hear that
unmistakable pounding—when you feel the mist on
your mouth and sense ahead the embattlement, the
long falls plunging and steaming—then row, row for
your life toward it.

– Mary Oliver, “West Wind”

Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the
sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your
rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be
held at a standstill in mid-seas. For reason, ruling
alone, is a force confining; and passion unattended, is a
flame that burns to its own destruction. Therefore let
your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion,
that it may sing; and let it direct your passion with rea-
son that your passion may live through its own daily
resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own
ashes.

- Kahlil Gibran

The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep that most
of us end up hardly living out of it at all. Instead we live out
all the other selves, which we are constantly putting on and
taking off like coats and hats against the world's weather.

- Frederick Buechner, *Telling Secrets*

Passion, though a bad regulator, is a powerful spring.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a
limited time on earth—and that we have no way of knowing
when our time is up, we will then begin to live each day to
the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Let yourself be silently drawn
by the strange pull of what you really love.

It will not lead you astray.

- Rumi

Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from
focusing on what excites you.

-Oprah Winfrey

I think the whole world is dying to hear someone say, 'I love
you.' I think that if I can leave the legacy of love and passion
in the world, then I think I've done my job in a world that's
getting colder and colder by the day.

- Lionel Richie

As if you were on fire from within.
The moon lives in the lining of your skin.

- Pablo Neruda

Resources

Passion is one great force that unleashes creativity, because if you're passionate about something, then you're more willing to take risks.

- Yo-Yo Ma

Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.

- G.W.F. Hegel

Passion's nature is most often cloaked in the deep, subtle, quiet and committed: nursing a baby, planting a rose garden, preparing a special meal, caring for a loved one who is ill, remembering a friend's birthday, persevering in a dream. Passion is the muse of authenticity. She's the primordial, pulsating energy that infuses all of life, the numinous presence made known with every beat of our hearts. Every day offers us another opportunity to live passionate lives, if we will bear witness to passion's immutable presence in the prosaic.

- Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Simple Abundance*



Going Deeper: Resources on Passion

Books

[*The Art of Possibility*](#), Chapter 8: "Giving Way to Passion," by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander

[Roger Housden's](#) poetry compilations: *Ten Poems to Change Your Life; Ten Poems to Change Your Life Again and Again; Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation*

[*Pathways to Bliss*](#), Joseph Campbell

[*The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*](#), Ken Robinson
[*Refuse to Choose!: Use All of Your Interests, Passions, and Hobbies to Create the Life and Career of Your Dreams*](#),

- Barbara Sher

Films

Young@Heart

Inside Out

Flashdance

Field of Dreams

The Princess Bride

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Websites and Videos

<http://www.passionstori.es/>

Stories of 100 people, doing what they love.

<https://seyopa.com/>

Seyopa is an inspirational hub to connect with, engage in, and seize your passion for what you love: travel, health & fitness, music, food, kids & parenting, personal development, whatever. Here you'll find like-minded communities and personal story-driven content all inspired by and about your passions.

Isabel Allende on writing stories and passion

[https://www.ted.com/talks/](https://www.ted.com/talks/isabel_allende_tells_tales_of_passion)

[isabel_allende_tells_tales_of_passion](https://www.ted.com/talks/isabel_allende_tells_tales_of_passion)

Benjamin Zander on classical music and passion

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html)

[benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html)

Evelyn Glennie teaching the world to listen

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html)

[evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html)

Patsy Rodenburg and her passion for acting and being present

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/patsy_rodensburg_why_i_do_theater.html)

[patsy_rodensburg_why_i_do_theater.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/patsy_rodensburg_why_i_do_theater.html)

Ueli Gegenschatz and his passion for flying

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/ueli_gegenschatz_extreme_wingsuit_jumping.html)

[ueli_gegenschatz_extreme_wingsuit_jumping.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ueli_gegenschatz_extreme_wingsuit_jumping.html)

Ben Saunders and passion to ski the North Pole!

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_saunders_skis_to_the_north_pole.html)

[ben_saunders_skis_to_the_north_pole.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_saunders_skis_to_the_north_pole.html)



Looking Ahead

Seeking Input on May Theme: “Faith”

The creation of content for each edition of *The Path* is a collaborative effort. Your submissions of readings, stories, songs, videos, podcasts, visual images, questions, and spiritual exercises help supplement the basic materials on our designated theme that we receive from Soul Matters. While we may not be able to publish all submissions, they will all shared with First UU worship leaders so it can become rich fodder for Sunday services.

Because we need to be working a few months ahead, this month, we welcome your contributions on May’s theme: “**faith.**” Please send your related materials on “**faith**” to themecircles@uusociety.org by the end of this month, **March 31.**

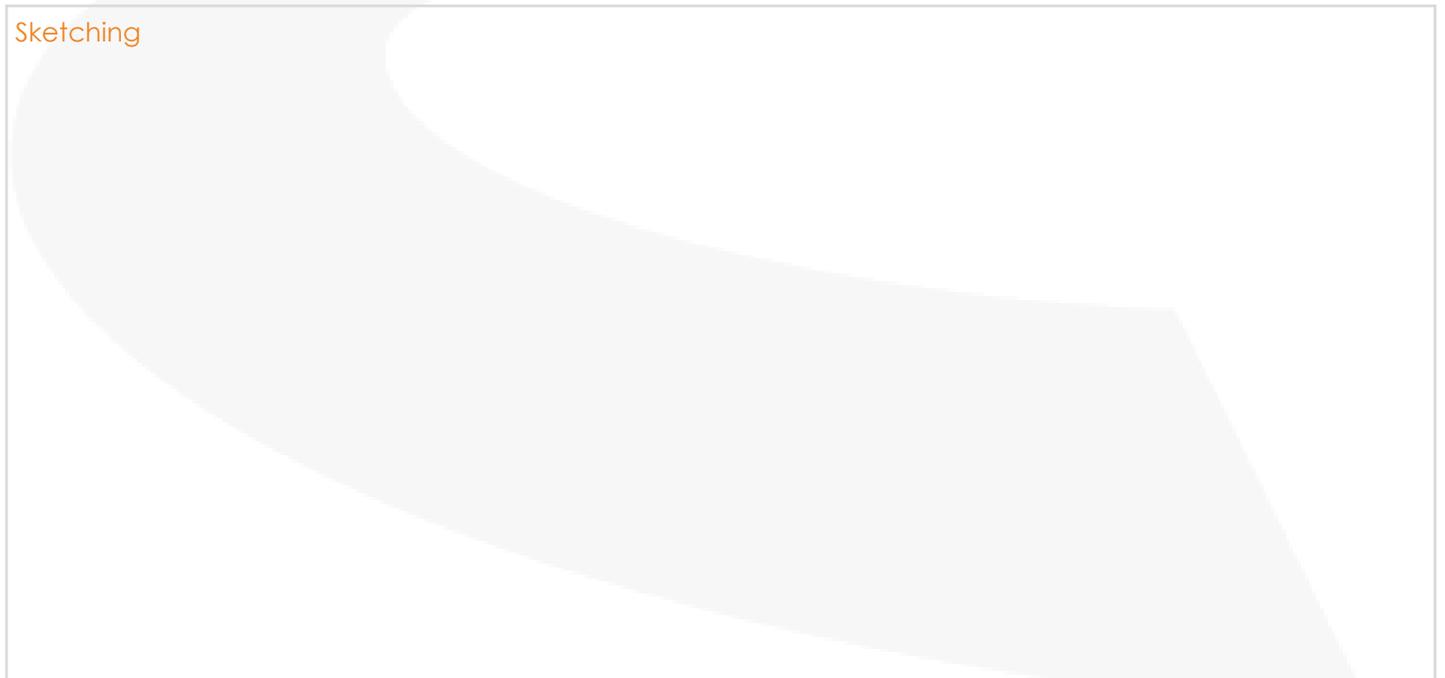
Thank You!

Thank you for participating in this month’s theme, the Theme Circles groups, and for making this new project of the First UU possible!

Credits: This edition of *The Path* relies on material from the Soul Matters Collective, of which First UU is a member, with additional material drawn from *New Horizons*, the theme-based ministry newsletter from the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto.

Creative Space

Sketching



Creative Space

Use this section to write, doodle, and create!

AHA! Moments

Notes

