

Immerse Your Entire Being in It:



In the Pursuit of Happiness

by Audrey Louise

"In the pursuit of happiness," happiness for some can mean a car, a home, nice clothes, and all the material things and external joys in life; all of these things can seem to fill one's cup and there's nothing more needed. For others, the pursuit for personal fulfillment is an internal one that leads them along an inward path towards inner peace and happiness that can only be found by seeking out one's innermost desires.

Some ask as we move through our busy world, *"Is it possible to merge the external world of materialistic desires with that of our innermost passions?"* I definitely believe this is possible.

I believe it's also possible for either the external or internal pursuits to get in the way of the other.

It is all about extremes. We can tip the balance either way and become lost in either a sea of materialism or drenched in a downpour of inner seeking (forgetting to touch the outside world).

Beyond these inward and outward pursuits, I see that there is an even greater pursuit that lies within (and on the outskirts) of these inwardly and outwardly expressed feelings as they become embedded in our being. As we harness these and merge them in our lives we seem to cling to a desire and need to spread this happiness that is felt through an interconnectedness to all other life at a universal level.

"In the pursuit of happiness," I've, personally, stumbled *many* times along the way. No doubt, there may still be bumps in my road; tears to shed.

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When we're bombarded by the desire to make the "American Dream" come true for our families, and as we are out seeking all avenues to obtain this external happiness, we sometimes find ourselves sacrificing the very INNERMOST pursuits we once beheld. This is one extreme.

We will sacrifice hobbies that we once thought could be achievable careers in order to "get by" and maintain our household, sacrifice time, occasionally grab a house along the way, and maybe grab a car, too, in hopes that we'll get back to our "hobby" one day, in hopes our families have everything they need (materialistically), and in hopes that one day we might get a day off to spend *time* with our families.



And... we somehow think we have all we ever wanted. We're doctors! We're wealthy (maybe)! We can retire... one day. Right? For some, this is perfect. Some people have wanted to BE doctors since childhood. For others, this is something that's a second place,

sacrificed choice...

So then, at this extreme, where did our INNERMOST pursuits go? Is our paintbrush and canvas in the attic? Is our musical instrument lying on a shelf? Is our pen and paper out of sight? Where'd we put those dancing shoes? Where'd we put that beautiful "hobby" that moved us? We probably placed it not TOO far out of reach. We may even touch it now and again. Perhaps we do, sometimes. But why did we tuck it away? Why did we sacrifice our loves for a job? Were we afraid we wouldn't make it? Did family life come at us too fast? Did we feel pressure from our families or even this fast paced society, in general? What happened to the time we thought we'd gain through time we sacrificed? Is it even there?

We seem to be drawn in to what we THINK is right by succumbing to an 80+ hour work week in order to just MAINTAIN those things we THOUGHT would be good for ourselves and our family...

But what is good?

Is it good that our families don't see us and/or that we don't see ourselves?

Is it good that we can barely drag ourselves out of bed because we are so unhappy (or "barely-making-it-happy")?

Is it good that we are so drained at the end of the day that we have zero *time* to really communicate with anyone, including ourselves?

Is it good that we have lost our so called hobbies along the way?

So I ask you, what makes you thrive??? ***What makes YOU happy?!?!***

Do you LOVE being with your children, family, friends or just yourself, having a peaceful household that you know you could have if you were home with these people?

Do you love music, writing, drawing, helping others, dancing, singing, playing sports or any other various activity that may be being held back because of a career that you have placed yourself in, sacrificing all of these other things just to grab hold of a few materialistic "things" that may or may not be there in a few years anyway?

Maybe you are doing what you love... and maybe you ARE happy!

But there is always a choice.
First choice. Remember.

Remember what **MOVES** you, drives you, and makes you feel **ALIVE!!!** Second choice. Act. Do it. If you like to sing, sing. If you like to draw, draw.

Some will say, *“Well, I cannot quit my job because I need the money; I have to have food for my family, for myself; I have to have gas for my vehicle; I have to have a roof over my head.”* It’s hard to make the transition. It’s hard to let go of certain attachments. It is hard to see that our once cherished hobbies could even possibly *generate* funds to sustain us. And it is even harder to see that time spent with our families or ourselves can be even more valuable than all the money made in the time spent AWAY.

The transition from a full-time career to that of a “hobby” career CAN be difficult (and I really can’t stand even calling it a “hobby” career because these careers, had we chosen them as 1st place, would really be AWESOME careers!), and I’m *NOT* telling anyone to up and quit their jobs and run off into the “woods of Walden” and begin writing a book, BUT... I *am* telling those who want to hear,

If you are missing something you lost along the way, dust it off, pick it up, and look at it again – try it again (even if it is just an hour a week to begin with).

Then, try an hour a day. THEN, see if you can make a transition somewhere along the way.

Your paintings could generate you millions! (Or not.) You could be a rock star! (Or not.) You could BE a doctor if that is something you don’t have now, but has always BEEN your dream! (Or not.) Succeed or fail, if it makes you happy and joyous inside, if it



moves you, then it will grow to the highest height you will allow, and at worst, you will FEEL happy.

I say, "DREAM BIG!!!" Make it happen.

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As far as the pursuit of happiness that lies within, the search within ourselves, which is the quest for internal peace and happiness, that is something that can be put on the back burners, especially when we become bogged down with our careers, family life, and external worldly affairs.

Turn *off* the T.V. Put *down* the newspaper. LOL OK, just for a little while. You don't have to COMPLETELY disconnect.

A little introspection goes a *lonnnnnnnngggggggg* way! It can release us from our attachments to all of the negativity that flows in the outside world as we move through life. But furthermore, it can guide us towards our own positive outlook for *all* of life.



Looking within to generate a peaceful state of existence can be done anywhere really. Although, it *can be* difficult to achieve when we are surrounded by people screaming and shouting on Wall Street! (Anything is possible, though! ;)) In this scenario, my best advice would be to allow introspection of the mind through "retrospection." Allow the feelings from the busy day to be released as an *afterthought*. For others, introspection can be done in the mornings before work, on weekends, in the car (but don't go too far!), or at break time.

My strongest point is that looking within the self to find peace and happiness, and really KNOW what that means for each individual (as we are all unique), is vital towards generating those same feelings for ALL of humanity. As each person grows within, we're able to spread our inner growth to others so they might do the same.

Now, this can be taken to extremes, as well. "Everything in moderation." That is key! If you live COMPLETELY inward, you can never glow outwardly... you'll put out your flame just as wrapping your hand around a candle will squander *its* light.

So, I'm not implying in order to find happiness (or peace) within that one must leave all other worldly things behind. Some people do. Some people take a very LONG path towards inner peace, and it is (to say the least) mighty treacherous. Some people, like monks, spend their entire lives devoted to an inner spiritual path. However, others (many others), are able to take *brief glimpses* along their way and are provided through their years their own path for an inner pursuit of happiness; as they pursue their path, taking small moments of meditation, introspection, and deep thinking, they may find themselves moving perfectly through their careers, advancing to different areas of their careers, or moving along an entirely different road.

"I shall be telling this with a sigh.
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference."

~ Robert Frost

As the inner pursuit towards peace and happiness grows stronger, one understands that their direct impact and effect on the world is humongous and therefore *every movement* they make becomes one that enhances their internal pursuit; otherwise, they begin to feel empty.

This movement inwards (even the smallest glimpse) is why some will turn OFF this inner awareness and divert back to an exclusive outer materialistic view (they can not bear to see that something they may be doing is in conflict with their internal pursuit – certain relationships, work standards, or habits), while others will seek to dig deeper and find further awareness in order to find what completes their pursuit and makes their life feel balanced (seeking counsel, finding ways they can fix situations in their life, finding relationships that make them thrive, harnessing different careers, removing negativity, becoming mindful... the list goes on...).

When one finds true wholeness and balance in their internal awareness, they begin to project this in every facet of their being (home life, work life, social life, even their external material world; they can become very productive and positively move people towards making our world feel as whole and complete as they, themselves, do).

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” ~Gandhi



This will then lead to another “pursuit in happiness” explained at the end of this article. It is at the end of my own story...

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As for me, my own “pursuit of happiness” began when I was about 16 (that is when I truly began to project it anyway, although I had *felt* it since I was a very small child). I love and loved music. I wanted to play my violin for a living.

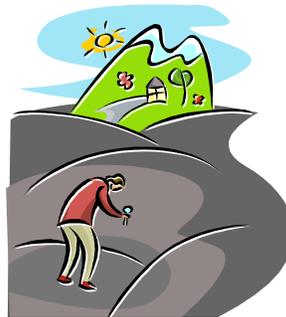
Then, when I was 18, I got married and, subsequently, had 3 children. In between my twins’ birth and my third child, I suffered a car accident that left my violin in a dusty corner. I tried to pick it up from time to time; it hurt me every time.

BUT, I had a NEW pursuit. And this was one I had dreamed of since I was young, *as well*. It was to rear my children in a loving family to the best of my ability, watch them grow, love, teach, and care for them. My husband continuously was out of work, and I felt what many might feel in that kind of situation. We needed finances; therefore, I went to work to provide for my family.

For years, I battled the emotional struggle of providing for my family versus the need to be a mother figure at home. I still thought of my violin on occasion, and I listened to music all day long (I was allowed to put a radio in my store! :)). This became even more of a struggle when my husband went back to work *while* I was working even though we had sufficient funds, leaving my children with many unfit babysitters.

After working 60-80 hour work weeks (I was a salaried manager; they had me right where they wanted me!!), watching my children grow up without me, trying vainly to journal and find time for myself late at night or on breaks, and feeling myself being pulled thinner and thinner in every direction (from manager to mother to wife), I BROKE. I broke like a beautifully set table of china crashing to the floor with no one around to pick up the pieces but *me!*

In the years that followed began an extreme *inward pursuit* (while our family pulled in resources from our external family, food



stamps, and Medicaid) towards what had been missing all those years. Was it my violin I'd lost in that crash years ago? Sure, I missed it. I had lost a lot more, though. I remember my parents telling me how foolish it would be to pursue something so unrealistic and unreliable as my music interests (I would need a "back-up" plan). But the reality was that I *DID* hurt when I played. As much as I loved music, it was surely a past-time until I could find a way around it. What could I do? I lived in *searching* for years...

As the days dragged on, and I was able to write more, I found out much about ME. I found out that some of the emptiness inside *was* a deep-seeded emptiness resulting from the loss of my ability to play my instrument, and I found myself involved in my own type of music therapy, singing songs to ease my pain.

As the songs made meaning for each individual struggle along my path, I found that the mood swings I had suffered had been intertwined with a physical restraint that left me with limitations, adding TO my feelings of worthlessness.

Things began to make sense. With a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia, alongside my Bi-polar, I finally understood how my physical pains exasperated my emotional aches and vice versa.

Something inside me went "click." It wasn't like a clock. I had heard the tic-tock for years as my search lingered on. It was like the click of a deadbolt lock of the door to my *future* being released. CLICK!!!!!!!!!! CLANK!!!!!!!!!!

What was it that had moved me all those years? What had I ALWAYS done even before I picked up the violin in the 5th grade? What was it that got me through those years when I went to school and those kids made fun of me? What was it that made me happy when I was sad? What was it that helped me

figure things out for MYSELF? What helped ME pick up those broken china pieces? WHAT MOVED ME???

OK, sometimes listening to music moved me, but even after the songs ended... I'd go get my pen and paper.

I'd ANALYZE the songs; I'd interpret them for me onto paper!

Poetry...journals...essays...articles...songs...free-writing...

As I look around my room, now, I see *stacks* of papers piled high from YEARS of writing! And I know that is what has helped me through. I can write when I'm in my deepest depressions; when I'm in my most loving inspirations; when I feel wonderful! The tone takes its own voice for each of these times, yet I'm a writer, still, for all the moments I have to explore my mind and my world.

How much money do I make from writing since I broke down and quit my management position to be home with my children? ZILCH, but I still do it! If the words I say on paper help one person, I've helped the entire world. (This is an even further pursuit of happiness.) It's surely my life's purpose – to help people – to make this world (my world) a more peaceful and happier place.

At times my children ask me what I'm writing, and I'm offered an *even greater* opportunity to share it with *them*. As I said, my new pursuit had been to rear my children in a loving family to the best of my ability, watch them grow, love, *teach*, and care for them. Now, I'm afforded the opportunity to join my "outer" pursuit with my "internal" pursuit.

We CAN merge our external pursuits with our internal ones!

Being a mother is a job, yet it's also a pursuit of happiness. Being a writer, to me, is an internal pursuit of happiness that I can also perceive as an external career that's used to help others (including my children) which allows for an even grander connection and greater fulfillment.

I've had so many hours of writing that I've found, not only internal truths, but a method of communicating to help others which reminds me of how a conductor would sway his baton to aide the orchestra for the audience's captivation... the audience listens intently then provides a standing ovation! Or they've fallen asleep... Are you still with me???????? ;)

My parents don't understand this quite as much as me. This happens to many people and can be discouraging. Someone tells them they *can't* do it. (And they believe it.) How can someone live so freely? Well, I am at least blessed enough to be on disability now; we barely make it through the month, but we do. My children have insurance; that is real good. It's all we need. Those things... and a pen and paper. Do I believe I'll one day be able to work again, come off disability, and have a little extra for my family so that things aren't so tight? Perhaps. That day might come. When it does, I will not be subject to sacrificing time in a career I *don't* enjoy for time with my family.



When my parent's question me about going back to work because they think that SOMEONE has to (and my husband still is not able to keep a job... he is probably on his own pursuit, too), I tell them that the best I can do (and what I *love* to do) is write. Maybe one day, I'll finish my book. Maybe I'll be able to provide for my family because of it. For now, I'm not concerned about *how* that will all fall into place. I just keep writing.

And I get the same storyline theme from 15 years ago that is so very similar of my quest to play my violin. "That sounds like a nice hobby, Audrey, but eventually you'll have to find some REAL work. Writing is a dead-end job if you are looking at is as a *real* career choice."

"Uh-huh," I say. *Whatever*, I think. To me, this *is* real. Should I have started naming off famous writers for them? It probably still would not be real enough even if I did!

"Fame/fortune" and "ordinary" are "like" pursuits to me when they involve happiness. Ordinary suits me well.

And their pursuits differ from mine. What makes them happy and what makes ME happy are two different worlds.

It only has to matter to me.

Don't let ANYONE tell you your "hobby" isn't REAL (or for that matter, that what you LOVE to do is simply a *hobby*). My violin was REAL. These words I write... they're REAL. Dancers... they're REAL. Singers, too. Sports players. You name it!! "If you build it, they will come!!" (Remember the movie, "Field of Dreams?" What an inspiration!)

This is a very BIG world where many, many, many people have made a REAL profession out of doing all kinds of things.

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Now, all of this leads me to one more "pursuit of happiness" *pursuit* I believe is hiding behind the scenes of all other pursuits and yet is in plain sight, and it is probably the grandest of all. It is the pursuit of happiness within each individual *for* all. Once we find that spark within us, what makes us thrive, and we nurture that spark, there is no turning back. We realize we are connected, not only to other life, but to the universe, at large.

This interconnectedness can lead us towards a yearning to fulfill happiness, balance, peace, and joy throughout all that surrounds us in all that we do and are.

We can do this on a very simple scale in our daily routine or can find that fulfillment on a grand scale with monumental projects that take us to far away lands and touch MANY souls. We can find that just by working in our garden and catering to the land that we are creating a balance, living in harmony, and fulfilling a grand happiness.

The point is that by being in tune with this interconnectedness and spreading the gift of happiness to others we are embarking on a pursuit of happiness that is UNIVERSAL!!!

This is a balance and peace that completely “fills our cup,” and thus overflows into an ocean that captures it and spreads it to other lands! It’s a balance and peace that shines so bright that it glows beyond measure and is seen in galaxies far, far away, captivated by star gazers in other worlds! It is a balance and peace that keeps us whole.



Sometimes we can become discouraged when we run into people that lack the capability to grasp this concept or people who would seek to squander even our own little piece of happiness. And it is a HUGE World; it is an even larger Universe! There is much to sort out, and it takes courage to be here right now pursuing such a grand balance. So, never mind those few that cannot be “gotten to” RIGHT NOW. Perhaps they are not *your* job (no matter how close you may be to them). And don’t worry about if they will find what you have found.

*If they have glimpsed it in you,
you have done enough.*

For we ARE interconnected; that interconnection allows for the yearning that you've felt of peace, happiness, love and balance to spread through the entire Universe.

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If you're happy in your outward and inward pursuits, I applaud you (I even offer you a standing ovation from the front row)! If you're not, if you still have things to sort out, that's OK; I know you will find that greatness in you that knows its joy and that you'll harness it totally; just keep on truckin'! If you're almost there, I'm standing on the bleachers, encouraging you to keep on going. YOU WILL GET THERE! The finish line that says, "In the Pursuit of Happiness" is just ahead!

In your pursuit of happiness, be it a career, a relationship, an inner understanding, or the fulfilment to spread your light to others (even on a Universal scale), perhaps to seek a way to merge ***all*** of your pursuits, I hope you keep pursuing that peaceful and happy life, always, and Immerse Your Entire Being in It...

Much Love,
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