The Soul’s Role in Wellness

By Andrea Lyle

*This week, I have asked Andrea Lyle to write about an often overlooked part of our health – the nurturing of our soul. Andrea has worked as a registered nurse for 30 years, and is now a holistic wellness consultant and SoulFit Coach.*

Most people know the body is comprised of three parts – mind, body and soul. When it comes to our health, it’s important to be balanced in all three areas. In our culture we focus a lot of time and energy on educating our minds and exercising our bodies. Unfortunately, we spend very little time on the expression of our soul.

When considering your health and well-being have you ever considered the fitness of your soul? Has a doctor ever asked you “how is your spirit today?” Are the needs of your soul nurtured on a regular basis like those of your body and mind?

When I speak of soul, I am not talking about “religion,” but rather the very real, authentic, unique spiritual identity that makes up who we really are. In our western culture, this aspect of our being is often silenced at a young age. Conditioned by society, we begin to fear not being viewed as “normal.” We start conforming to societal norms and lose sight of our authenticity. The voice of the soul becomes suppressed or, in some cases, silenced all together.

In her book, *Top 5 Regrets of the Dying,* Bronnie Ware lists the number one regret as “I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.” When we silence our true self, an inner conflict ensues. A gap is created between who you become (due to others’ expectations) and who you really want to be. The gap creates an overall sense of dis-ease and an unrelenting stress response in the body. Left unattended, that dis-ease eventually turns into mental, emotional, and physical disease.

The body is a master communicator. It will manifest a myriad of problems from minor ailments to life threatening ones as a means of getting our attention. Unfortunately, our attention is often focused on relieving the symptoms, rather than addressing the root of the problem. This may explain why you experience multiple health problems that don’t seem to have a solution. In spite of medication, surgery and meditation you can’t seem to get rid of things like high blood pressure, diabetes or depression. Or why, in spite of trying numerous diets, exercising excessively and taking weight loss supplements, you still aren’t able to reach your ideal weight. At times you find yourself feeling unhappy or unfulfilled without really knowing why.

When I was in my 50s, I found myself feeling stuck, stagnant and suffocating in my own life. I was generally unhappy, struggling with minor health issues, and I felt hopelessly unfulfilled. Although I hid it very well behind a happy, all is fine in the world façade, in truth I was clinically depressed and didn’t even know it! At times feeling so lost, so alone, just wanting to go home, I sat in silence contemplating suicide. There was no logical explanation for any of it.

Not until I had a wake-up call that shook me to the core, did I realize I had been ignoring a most significant part of my being. As a conformity queen, fearful of being hurt, I had very successfully walled off my heart trapping my spirit inside. If I ever wanted to correct the imbalance in my life, I would need to look there for solutions.

Reconnecting with my spirit started with first becoming aware that spirit is what I am, then acknowledging it as a significant part of my authentic being, and finally using creative self-expression to open my heart path and bring my soul back into the driver’s seat of my life. I discovered this simple truth: When your Soul comes alive, you thrive!

If you want to reawaken your Soul, begin with adopting a “my Soul is part of the whole” attitude. Ask “how is my spirit today?” Take a few moments and allow yourself to really feel the answer you receive. Then ask:

“If I could change anything in my life what would it be?”
“Am I truly happy?”
“Does my work fit the true me?”
“Does my life-style flow with ease or am I always in resistance to it?”
“Am I honest in my relationships?”
“Am I honoring my likes, my dislikes or am I living to suit another?”

Listen to your first response, no matter how unbelievable or socially unacceptable it might be (your conditioned mind is going to put up some roadblocks to the truth). When I first did this exercise and asked myself if I could change anything in my life, the first thing that popped into my head was divorce! Shocking? On the surface perhaps. I had created such a believable façade of a happy, healthy relationship, my mind could barely allow the thought and, at the time, I certainly would not verbalize it. But deep inside, that answer echoed with truth.

Remember no one ever has to know the answers to these questions. If you are open to listening, your answers will reveal truth to you, help you become aware of the gap within your own being, and very possibly illuminate the cause of many issues you face in your life. It’s the first step toward feeling happier, healthier, more authentic and free.

Stay tuned for a future installment revealing a fun, innovative fitness path that will help you find your soul flow and liberate your love, your life, your laugh.