

## **Fulfillment: Three Steps Towards Living a Life of Meaning** **By Roberta G. Pickett**

“I long for fulfillment!” This is a human cry for meaning and purposefulness in life. At the core of every human is the desire to be of value and to exist for a reason. When our actions or the totality of our life points to value, purpose, and reason, then we feel fulfilled. When our actions or the totality of our life points seemingly nowhere, then we feel depressed, discouraged, and despairing. The secret of fulfillment then is to make time and space in your day to day life for purposeful, meaningful activities. How do you do that? Find things that are in alignment with your values: those things that are most important to you as an individual: not what society says is important to you, but what your soul says is important. One person’s top values may be God, family, and nature. For another, financial security, community service, and integrity may be most critical. A third person may select learning, friends, and health as the three most important. Individual values are just that: individual. Not right or wrong. Not better or worse. They are unique to each person based on who you are.

So, **Step One** to fulfillment is knowing what your individual values are. Take time to make a list for yourself. This may include people, things, principles, philosophies, anything! What do you love? What makes you happy? What makes you feel successful? What don’t you want to live without? What has to be in your life for you to feel complete? Once you have made your list, then rank the items 1 to 10 (or however many you have on your list), with 1 being the MOST important. This is a difficult task, since all of the items are important to you. Then, rate yourself on these items. How well are you honoring each value in your life today? Give yourself a 10 if you are fully honoring a value and giving it time and expression in your life. Rate yourself less according to your inner knowing. Be honest. This is for you!

**Step Two** is to determine how to honor your values more in your life. For the items in Step One that you rated less than 7, imagine how your life would look if you were fully honoring this value. For example, if family is a high value of yours, but you rated yourself only at a 4, what would make it a 10? If 10 seems unattainable, what actions could you take or habits could you change to make it a 7? Would you spend more time with your family? Would you communicate in a different way with your children and spouse? Would you listen more and judge less? Would you hold your children to higher expectations? Once you can imagine what a rating of a 7 or more would be like, then commit to yourself to make a change. It doesn’t have to be a huge change – or it can be, but figure out what you want to do differently, figure out what you are willing to commit to, and start. Maybe it is telling each of your family members that you

love them as they walk out the door for school or work or play every day. Maybe it is revising your whole chores/allowance program. Maybe it is remembering to only talk 20% of the time in every conversation. Congratulations! You are on your way to FULFILLMENT with each and every action you take in honor of your values.

**Step Three** is to envision your life from a perspective above and beyond. Imagine that it is 20 years from now and you are living your life in accordance with all your values. Drink in what your life is like in that future place. Drink in what you are like, how you act, how you feel. Ask that Future Self of yours for advice. Ask him or her to tell you what you should focus on in the present. You may be surprised to hear the answer. Thank your Future Self for the message. What can you do to implement the advice of your Future Self? Take action and know that you always have that wise Future Self at your beck and call. The poet Kalidasa wrote: “ For yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow is only a vision. But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.”

Finally, know that living a life of meaning does not necessarily mean living a life of ease or continual happiness. The September 11<sup>th</sup> hero who urged “let’s roll” was not in the process of something easy, but it was clearly an action that gave his life meaning. Not all of us will be called to something so dramatic, yet each of us is called to fill our life full of meaning and purpose.

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