

CAREER

'Is This All There Is?'

"Is this all there is?"

It is amazing how frequently this sentiment is voiced by successful, high-achieving women with enviable careers and lives.

Most often, you start asking yourself in midlife, when you have, according to society, ostensibly "made it."

The situation is this: Things are going along OK – fine actually – and you really have nothing to complain about.

You have "arrived."

Perhaps you're at the pinnacle of your career or your star is definitely rising.

You're healthy. Your home life is satisfying.

You've got plenty of friends, even if you can't spend as much time with them as you'd like.

Basically, you feel you really have nothing to complain about, but you just don't feel "alive."

You can't remember the last time that you jumped out of bed really looking forward to the day.

You see everything (even the good stuff) as just another item on your never-ending to-do list.

Taking time off doesn't help. You're still feeling that there's something missing, that there's got to be more to life.

What's Going On?

Most likely, you have lost your sense of connection to your heart, your core – the deepest part of yourself that gives depth of meaning to life. Perhaps you've been in the habit of looking outside yourself for



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answers.

This works well for a lot of issues but can never answer life's biggest questions about meaning and purpose. For that you need to look within to the core of who you are and what you value the most.

The is-this-all-there-is? feeling is therefore a great guide. Whenever you feel world-weariness and that vague sense of something missing, check first to see what emotions you may be pushing aside or overlooking.

What You Need

You need a new perspective, and the best place to go for that perspective is to your heart. Think not only of your physical heart but also your core values, center, foundation and

such qualities as wisdom, love, compassion, courage and strength.

When you connect consciously with your heart's wisdom, you start feeling alive again, so even though nothing in your outer life is any different, everything has changed because your perspective has changed.

Do in the Moment

Stop and Observe. Have you momentarily lost your sense of connection to your core? Notice if your psychological center of gravity has gone "up and out" – up in your head, lost in thought about what should or shouldn't be happening out in the world, a state which leaves you off balance.

Take a Slow, Deep Breath. This brings more oxygen to the situation. It is a great way to bring your attention back to your body – the part below your neck.

It lowers your psychological center of gravity so you feel more in balance.

And slowing your breathing, especially extending the out-breath for five seconds, activates the part of your nervous system that fosters a state of relaxation.

Stomp Your Feet. Stand up and stomp a couple of times – or if you are in polite society, at least bring your awareness to your feet and feel where the bottoms of your soles meet the ground. This gets you even more grounded and centered.

Get Really Curious. Notice everything you can about your is-this-all-

there-is? state. Usually, your first inclination is to avoid, get rid of or, at the very least, distract yourself from unpleasant feelings. Do something counterintuitive, something that can usher in a new perspective: Move towards rather than away from those feelings and listen to their wisdom with an open heart.

Take Some Time

Invite your feelings in for tea. Sit down in a comfortable place and take half an hour to really get to know these feelings the way you would if you had guests in your home and wanted them to feel welcome.

You can imagine a conversation in your head, but often the best way to do this is through stream-of-consciousness journaling.

This isn't your ordinary diary writing. It's writing down a question you'd like to ask your guest. "Tell me about yourself." "What do you want me to know?" "What do you need from me?"

And then – and this is the fun and intriguing part – wait for a few sec-

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onds and start writing whatever comes to your mind as the answer.

Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, spelling or whether it feels silly or even makes sense to you. Just let it flow.

Keep on writing down your questions and the answers that come to you until you come to a natural resting point.

Generally speaking, after a while – often within half an hour or so – you will feel a greater sense of aliveness,

possibility and hope.

It's great to feel that shift, but even if you don't right away, know that you are opening yourself to a more enlivening perspective as you reconnect with your core.

Come back to your writing a few days or weeks later or share it with a good friend, confidant or coach who might be able to see even more in what you wrote than you can because they aren't so close to the feelings.

What to Remember

Keep on asking yourself important questions to deepen your sense of connection to your core and bring it to full expression out in the world.

In particular, welcome your is-this-all-there-is? feeling when it shows up at your door. It is your well-spring in disguise. Invite it in for tea and conversation.

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