

Your Wild Soul Is Calling by Sandy Phocas

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You may hear it as a voice, or feel it as a pull deep inside. It might feel exciting and inviting, or it may feel more like indigestion after a too-greasy meal. It all depends on how ready you are to listen and how intensely your soul is trying to get your attention. It's always with us, our soul, its voice. But it may be relatively quiet for long periods of time (or we may be ignoring its quieter invitations) and then, suddenly, it is going *all out* to get our attention in any way it can. This may mean bursts of inspiration and creativity, or a desperate need for sitting alone out in nature. It may mean intense dreams at night or a sudden impulse to quit one's job and travel around the world. Or, the soul's call may come during a time of crisis—the end of a marriage, a sudden illness, the death of a loved one, a deep depression or panic. It may be that things are flowing right along and you wake up one day... (thanks, *Talking Heads*):

And you may ask yourself
What is that beautiful house?
And you may ask yourself
Where does that highway go?
And you may ask yourself
Am I right?...Am I wrong?
And you may tell yourself
MY GOD!...WHAT HAVE I DONE?

However it comes, the call is a powerful and vital one, for it is a call to truth—to live one's truth and unique purpose fully in the world. And it is a voice that will never fade or disappear, as it comes from our deepest essence.

If you don't know already about the nature of the soul, I do have to tell you: rarely is the soul's voice logical and practical, and it is not particularly concerned with security, safety, or comfort.

My soul's loudest call came when I was 40 years old. I was a successful psychiatrist in private practice who owned a home, 2 dogs and 2 cats. I had been studying various forms of alternative healing and spiritual practices for a several years, but still had a fairly mainstream psychiatry practice. Then I decided to go out to the Arizona desert for a week to work with a Yaqui medicine man, to honor my turning 40. I thought that I would have some beautiful, deep experiences and then return home to continue on in my life as usual.

Instead, I had a sudden and deep clarity of vision where I realized that I needed to leave my practice of psychiatry and completely walk a shamanic path in my life and my work. Shamanism, with its ancient healing and spiritual practices, allows access to the deepest levels of self and universe—the energetic, spiritual, and soul levels. It can bring about healing of physical, emotional, and spiritual imbalances, as well as bring deep guidance and wisdom—and those called to a shamanic path are called to surrender to it completely.

I felt the truth of that realization through my entire being—there was no denying it. And it excited me tremendously, but also terrified me. As I sat with this new knowing and felt my fear, I realized, though, that I was almost more scared that I *wouldn't* follow through than what it would be like if I did. I had spent years praying for clarity about my life's path and, once found, to refuse it would be like choosing death—a living death. But following through would mean to let go of what I had trained and devoted my whole life to—my work as a physician.

I sat with it for a few months, went back out to Arizona for another week, and extensively processed all of the emotions that were arising. It was still true. My way forward was a shamanic path. And even though I had no idea what that would look like and did not know how I would support myself, I knew what I had to do. And so, seven months after I had that clarity of my soul's path, I closed my practice of psychiatry, sold my home, and moved to the desert to learn and work with the medicine man I knew there. My only plan was to take a year off from doing any work and to learn whatever I could about shamanism. I did not know where that would lead.

It is now 6 years from the time of that first desert visit. I ended up learning from a variety of shamans in this country and in Africa and now I live and work as a shamanic practitioner and workshop leader. I truly love what I do and am more grateful than ever for how my soul called to me and how I listened.

This doesn't mean that I never struggle or get caught up in the chaos and pain of the world or never disconnect from the voice of my soul. But I do have a few things I know to do when that happens. My favorite? Going out into nature and wandering for hours. The wilderness of nature reflects the wilderness of the soul and it never fails to feed me deeply, allowing me to open, reconnect, and listen once again.

In what ways does your soul call to you? What helps you to listen? What has your soul whispered or shouted to you that you need to pay attention to now, today?