



Taste of Capay Blessing

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By Jim Durst

One of my mentors, Anne Lamott, wrote a statement about the 10 things she believed when she turned 60 years old. When I turned 70, I decided to write something similar, borrowing a few tidbits of wisdom from Anne. Only I couldn't condense it down to 10, and I ended up with 14.

So here is what I have come to believe:

1.) I believe we are every age we have ever been at the present moment. Age and memory transcend chronological time. I know I am no longer 35, or 48, or 53, but at the same time I am all those ages. And if I had exercised more and lost a little weight I would probably feel a little more like 60.

2.) I believe the people we surround ourselves with are our true family. These are the ones who laugh with us, cry with us, cuss with us, fight with us, and share meals together. They are not afraid to point out our shortcomings and are brave enough to receive both praise and criticism.

3.) I believe we are intricately connected to the natural world in ways we do not fully understand. When we treat other life forms irreverently and place our presence here on this planet above others, we are doing ourselves, our ancestors, and future generations an injustice that is difficult to heal. Go ahead, love your pets, hug a tree, lay on the grass and gaze up at the sky, stick your head out the car window and feel the breeze on you face. This magical beauty is given to us as a gift, no visible strings attached; only, empathy and care. 'Leave it better than you found it' is the motto of our relationship to this world.

4.) Life is truly paradoxical in nature. We have been blessed with abundance beyond need, but still yearn for more. Our houses are full but we still go shopping for more. I have collected more items in 70 years than I will ever need or use. I have decided for my 70th birthday to begin to give it all away, just as I acquired it; piece by piece. So when I die, I will depart this reality as I entered it. Naked and empty handed. Well, at least empty-handed.

5.) Every thing we think we need is just a substitute for what we are truly seeking. You cannot purchase peace of mind, or happiness. You cannot purchase contentment or well-being. You cannot purchase friends.

6.) And you cannot improve other people or change them into your image of wholeness. They have to find their own way, just as I have to find my own way. I have found it better to help when asked, not when I think it necessary. Be fully attentive to the other.

7.) Walking, listening to or making music, viewing or making art, reading or writing good poetry, and writing stories are the key to fulfilled being. They help move our consciousness from this world to the 'other world'. To the world of spirit, of magic, of wonder. The world of daydreaming and imagination. Feed your creative spirit and it will feed and nourish you.

8.) Walk barefoot on the ground regularly. There is something primal about walking barefoot. Touching the earth 'grounds' us in the reality that we come from, and return, to the soil. You know the first thing God said to Moses? He says, "take off your shoes," Because all ground is holy ground.

9.) Visit darkness and the night sky and gaze upon the stars. Our planet, our solar system, do not exist in a void. We are part of a mysterious cosmos. Go outside! Look up!

10.) I believe that coffee is really good for you.

11.) Eat good food. Nothing is as satisfying as a good watermelon, or tomato, or avocado, or peach; you name it. Home grown and home cooked foods bring life to our bodies. Eating good food around a table with friends and neighbors is primal to our being. It's the place where stories and wisdom is shared. And breaking bread together helps us celebrate the brokenness of life. By taking the broken bread inside, its brokenness helps to nurture us, heal us. Refer back to the paradoxical nature of life above.

12.) Take naps regularly. Even a ten or fifteen minute nap can be restorative. Turn off all electronics, and doze.

13.) Be generous. Be generous with your time and your resources and, especially, with your words. It's so much easier to be a critic than a celebrator. Always remember there is a human being on the other end of every exchange. To understand and be understood, those are among life's greatest gifts, and every interaction is an opportunity for this exchange to take place. Be generous with compliments.

14.) And lastly, we cannot escape death. As more and more of my friends and acquaintances pass on, I know my time is also closer. So surround yourself with

friends who understand this journey. As Ram Dass said, "When all is said and done, we're really just all walking each other home."

Spirit of living Goodness,

Today, we can see creation's hand in this meal of harmony and abundance

Today, we can see creation's hand in hearts that know of the connections between all things..

I invite us take Creation's hand, and hold it tight, very tight.

Let us not lose sight of the Holiness in the Wholeness,

Let us not lose sight of the Sacred in the ordinary.

Spirit of living Goodness, pour your blessings upon these people, at this time, In this wonderful place.

And Let us celebrate the true nature of things, by sharing this meal today, in community. Amen