

## To get where you want to go, you first need to stop.

I'm in Mexico right now, alone on a "working holiday". I'm preparing for the launch of my book, *Live a Life You Love*, and resting and reflecting on life. I used to travel by myself all the time when I was single, to get away from the craziness and drudgery of the medical clinic and fly away into a kind of life, however brief, that felt more like me and gave me hope for a better, more passionate future. It amazes me to look back and see all that emerged as a result of those solo trips. My flamenco dance company in Mexico, the dance moves I learned in Spain, the stories now published in my book, my beautiful Mexican husband, the different languages I speak — all of these I discovered, absorbed or created through those adventures that I almost obsessively threw myself into, one after the other.

I used to spend long hours on those trips journaling, and reading, and staring into space thinking about life. Traveling alone can be quite lonely, shockingly so at times, but it was that loneliness that pushed me deeper into myself, cracking me open and making me think about my life, sometimes just to pass the achingly quiet, slowly ticking hours. I ruminated endlessly and wrote page after page about what I liked, what I didn't like, who I was, and what I dreamed of. I haven't done that in a long time.

I still travel a lot, but mostly to speaking engagements, where I grab time on the plane to read as many books as I can (I used to have a lot more time to read in my previous life), then go through the whirlwind of whatever conference I'm speaking at, and then happily collapse into a scalding tub at the hotel, before flying back home the next day. And when I travel on vacation now, I'm always with my husband, a wonderful companion who I love to dine, walk, explore and lounge around with. The closest thing I get to solo time is lounging on a sun chair as he boogie boards on the waves — a nice break but not a deep enough solitude to take me anywhere meaningful.

It can be a strange phenomenon, "living the life of your dreams". The life I have today, with international speaking engagements, new book, sexy Latin husband and all, is exactly what I described so longingly in my journal during those solo trips. Yet I am now so busy living all of the elements of this manifested dream that I apparently forgot how important it is to periodically come back to me. Here alone in Mexico, I'm processing emotions that have apparently been in hiding since late 2008: grief about deciding as a couple to move base from Mexico to Canada (we still don't know what the next step in the adventure will be and where we'll live next); more grief at having had to give up my flamenco dance company in order to make that move, even though the dance stages and environments where I have been performing lately are taking me to a new, more exciting level; and a profound wistfulness in accepting that I'm no longer that semi-lost traveling seeker a la Elizabeth Gilbert (re. "Eat, Pray, Love"; I frequently half-joke that I could have written an almost identical book titled "Love, Dance, Pray" based in Italy, Spain and Mexico).

I have now become a doer who doesn't need to search so intensely "out there" to find my life. This too is a loss, as I identified so strongly with being a seeker and thoroughly enjoyed searching across the globe for my "real" life. I knew it would be fabulous, and it is. I didn't know any of this was there, going on inside me, as for the last year I have just been going, going, going. My weight has been creeping up slightly, and I have been eating more, I think because I had all these unacknowledged transitions inside. I didn't know that they were there, because I simply hadn't stopped and been truly alone.

What might you have inside that you're not aware of? When is the last time that you stopped and were truly alone with yourself, without any of your usual escapes (work, food, sex, television, whatever) at the ready? We live in a society that's so numbed out, that even those of us with the best intentions end up anaesthetizing ourselves without realizing it, via the deceptive pace of everyday life. It takes time to reach this place of honesty, to really feel your heart and what's going on inside.

On the first day of this trip I was just so tickled to be able to lounge around all day reading, nap decadently whenever I wanted, and dive into the piles of food on the buffet. It wasn't until the second day, when the novelty of all this

down-time began to wear off, that I started to feel the real me. Though it hasn't necessarily been easy to weather this emotional storm of discovery, I'm excited. I can feel that the processing and thinking have been officially closing a chapter of my life, and opening me to prepare for a new one. A really big one. I'd hate to think of what might have happened if I hadn't stopped to notice all this and had just kept going.

When's the last time you stopped and gave yourself the luxury of time to move from relaxing, through "bored", and into the real you? You don't have to go all the way to another country; you just need need to get out of your usual environment, away from the usual people and distractions, to somewhere quiet. Somewhere where you can't escape yourself. You'll be amazed by what you observe, feel and discover about yourself and your next steps in life.

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