

## Are You an Adventure-Luster?

By Jenifer Strauss



**A**t age twelve, I came home one day and asked my parents if I could attend a wilderness outpost camp in Canada. They were surprised. At eighteen, it was a mountain climbing expedition. They were nervous. My honeymoon

was a sixty-day canoe trip, and at age thirty-two...I left a secure teaching position to become a full time storyteller and public speaker. While friends thought I was crazy...my parents were used to this. My mom still calls me a life-long adventure-seeker. But I credit my adventure-seeking nature to the inspiring people who taught by example, that “being adventurous” is not so much an action...but an attitude. Adventure is not something that happens to you, but instead, how you think when things are happening.

So when the National Association of Career Women asked me to deliver a keynote for their annual conference, “Dare to Discover”, they asked me to speak about being adventurous! I had to really think about what that means? So...late one night, I grabbed the Webster’s dictionary and simply looked up the word adventure...an exciting and remarkable experience...an undertaking involving danger and unknown risks. “I could go along with that!”

To be adventurous is to cope with the new and the unknown. “Yes...something new...that is key!”

An adventurer is one who engages in risky enterprises for profit.” I thought...true...but the profit may not be monetary.”

And then, surprised that it was separate... I had to read the definition for adventures... A female adventurer. I thought, “OK...that is pretty obvious”, but then I read...or a woman who seeks position or livelihood by questionable means. I was outraged! I mentally argued, “There is nothing questionable about a woman who wishes for adventure in her life!” I thought about my favorite folk singer, Claudia Schmidt who confesses that she suffers from a low wonder-lust threshold, and a chronic case of FMS (Fear of Missing Something), and then there is that magnet on my refrigerator that says “Well behaved woman rarely make history”. ...I

thought it was time to update the Webster’s! So, I created a new definition.

*adventure-luster: a person with a low wonder-lust threshold, who believes that all of life’s experiences are adventures...willing to take risks, be surprised and sometimes squirmishly uncomfortable...is not afraid to ask questions, and values reciprocal conversation.*

You don’t have to go on exotic trips or take physical risks to be an adventure-luster. Being an adventure-luster is more of a philosophy or creed to live by. It means maintaining a sense of anticipation and expectation about the richness that all life’s experiences can bring.

Adventures can occur by just being in the right place at the right time. For instance, on a vacation in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, I ventured into an antique store in the historic, copper-mining town of Ameek. There, I found an old, square, wooden lantern hanging on the wall. The owner noticed my interest and explained that the lantern had belonged to a family who lived nearby. Over a hundred years ago, they had moved from Finland to Michigan to work in the copper mines. On cold winter nights, when the darkness came early, they would sit in the light of the lantern and tell stories. When I asked why the lantern ended up for sale in his store, he told me that the last two boys in the family, sold the house they had grown up in, including all the items they no longer wanted, and moved to lower Michigan. The lantern was one of those items sold. I bought the lamp and now I light it when I tell stories. That day, I discovered that it is not just being in the right place at the right time, but approaching each day with the belief that something extraordinary can happen. If I want more adventure in my life, I have to show up, and pay attention!

Byron Katie, who wrote the book “Loving What Is” says, “If you want to know who your greatest teachers are, look at the people you live with.” The greatest adventures can happen right at home, and within our key relationships. Nothing could have taught me more about my marriage than the sixty days spent paddling with my husband, in the same canoe. And although that trip was a physical journey, the true adventure was what we learned about each other during the experience. Our life-journey together would require communication

and teamwork, not to mention the importance of warning each other about obstacles, admitting when we were scared, being grateful for each other, and not bailing out when the waters got rough.

But, adventures don’t have to be big, or long or far away. They can happen in a moment’s time...in a glance, a brief meeting, or one comment from a loved one. What makes them an adventure, is that they have the power to change us, and see life in a new and fresh way.

While facilitating a weekend storytelling workshop, I had breakfast with a woman named Mary who shared a story about her youngest son. Ryan was ten years younger than her eighth child. She called him “her late-in-life gift from god”. One day, when Ryan was seven, Mary was making lunch and her son was chattering away as he often did. Mary explained, “Ryan was my ninth and most talkative child, and that day, I was answering with obligatory uh-huhs, when all of a sudden Ryan stopped talking. He called me over, placed his hands on my cheeks and said, Mom...you have to listen to me with your eyes, so my heart knows that you heard me”. Mary had shared her “adventure” with Ryan and I had a new story to tell.

And so I will close with seven simple reminders to create more adventure in your life.

- Be an adventure-luster, willing to take risks, be surprised, and make yourself squirmishly uncomfortable from time to time.
- Acknowledge who inspires you to try something new, and then go do it!
- Combine anticipation with expectation and extraordinary things will happen each day.
- Remember the right time is now, and the right place is here, if you show up and pay attention.
- Your greatest source of adventure can come from the people who are closest to you, and probably live in your house.
- Say, “yes” to all of life’s experiences for the power they have to change you and then embrace the change.
- And ask yourself, “do you experience a lifetime of adventure in each day or is each day just one more in a lifetime? ➔

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