

Dormancy and Destiny

November 21, 2006 by [lifeshifting](#)

When was the last time you took a day off? I mean, not just a day off from your regular job, or a day off from personal obligations, not even a vacation in the typical sense of booking hotels and flights and coming back more exhausted than when you left...no, I mean a REAL day off? A day with no agenda, no plans, no to-do list, maybe no movement at all. Don't you long for such a day, maybe a weekend...even a whole week (God Forbid!) to just lie in bed and stare at the ceiling, or cuddle up on the sofa with a good book? If you are like me, somewhere in the recesses of your mind you long for true rest and relaxation. Penetrating soulful rest, the kind that nurtures your spirit and reconnects you to a deep, resonant voice that you normally give short shrift: yours.

A key principle of *Life-Shifting*, one that I have touched upon a number of times in this blog, is **going within**. For most people, the idea of getting quiet and spending time listening to one's own inner guidance sounds inherently practical. Not that there is anything wrong with seeking advice, or getting help from others—these are also essential elements of the Life-Shifting process—but at some point we all need to just stop, sit still and listen to our own inner wisdom. But, if this practice is so intuitively obvious, why don't we do it?

I suggest that in our harried, productivity-obsessed culture, we have become caught up in a paradox: we fear that if we stop—stop work, stop striving, stop achieving—we may be thrown off track, end up as a bag lady...or worse. Yet, the opposite is true: if we do not stop, rest, and rejuvenate, on a regular basis, we will die. That's right: die. Incessant, manic activity is ultimately deadly, to the body, to the soul, to the spirit. So today, I want to write about the wisdom of dormancy.

In his beautiful book, “**Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Daily Lives**”, [Wayne Muller](#) speaks eloquently about the essential requirement of dormancy: “If certain plant species, for example, do not lie dormant for the winter, they will not bear fruit in the spring. If this continues for more than a season, the plant begins to die. If dormancy continues to be prevented the entire species will die. A period of rest—in which nutrition and fertility most readily coalesce—is not simply a human psychological convenience; it is a spiritual and biological necessity. A lack of dormancy produces confusion and erosion in the life force.”

Very powerful stuff, no? Have you ever considered that taking a REAL VACATION might be a “spiritual and biological necessity”? Well, I would go one step further and add that not only does a lack of “dormancy” produce confusion and erosion in the life force, it is a major contributor to depression. You see, as counter-cultural as it sounds, I believe that many of the patients with severe depression that I see in my private practice are not really depressed at all: they are spiritually, energetically, emotionally, and physically EXHAUSTED. Wasted. Burnt.

Depression is sometimes just a symptom, a signal of the soul's call for help. It is the human body/soul attempting to get us to STOP, take a break, get quiet. Yet, instead of listening to the signal and allowing ourselves to take a much-needed break from the world of hyper-productivity and consuming and striving, we choose to medicate ourselves...and keep right on going. But where? Do you ever stop and ask yourself: where are you going? What is it all for?

I have many friends and clients whose biggest struggle in life is not about their relationships, or their kids, or their boss or even their mother-in-law. Their biggest struggle in life, the one that gnaws at them day in and day out from morning till night is deceptively simple, immediate, and insidious: it is whether they can justify taking the day off. Or a week off. Or a year. Deep down they know, and I know, that just as the plants and animals of the natural world require dormancy, hibernation—a time for gestation—the human spirit needs to same thing. The seeds of destiny lie fallow within us...longing to germinate. BUT, they need us to stop and pay attention...to put down our cell phones, close the laptop, lay down and just breathe. And listen.

There is no time to waste. Ok, I'm going to take the rest of the day off. It's a start.