

# When Small is Big - Finding Meaning in the Mundane

By Jeffrey Hull

It has been almost a week since what I like to call the big "Shift" in America, truly a collective "life-shift" if there ever was one. I don't know about you but I'm still glowing with the feelings of hope, joy and possibility that Obama's election and the historic collective shift in consciousness may mean for our country...and the globe.

Interesting tidbit though: do you know what the single most talked about topic has been on the blogs and Obama's website since his acceptance speech? Economic downturn? No. Ending Iraq war? No. New Cabinet appointees? Nope. Surprise: the single most talked about thing in the world of "all things Obama" has been what kind of puppy will be gifted to his two young daughters as they transition to life in the big house. A puppy? Not economic tsunamis and wars?

That's right, the puppy. It seems that in the midst of the most historic event perhaps in our lifetimes, what the world cares about is something small. Something mundane. Yet, are we really surprised? When it comes right down to it, even in the midst of huge cataclysmic life shifts--collective or personal--what often really bubbles to top-o-mind for most of us is the small stuff, the little, touching, moving, connective tissues that remind us of what really matters: puppies matter. Daughters matter. Hugs and cuddles and licks on the face...they really matter.

At the end of the day, what gives meaning and purpose to life is the little things. The things that remind us of our inherent humanity, the things--like love of cuddly puppies--that bring all the big woes of the world back down to earth and remind us that we are all really the same, that we are all simply human beings living on a tiny dirtball spinning in space...and that life is a mystery.

Watching President-elect Obama give his first press conference, to the world, as it were--since every eye on the planet is clearly on him these days--I was once again, as I have been often watching him during the campaign, impressed and moved by his groundedness and humility. He's just a regular guy, with his head on straight (hopefully, it will stay that way!), and his priorities in order: puppies first, saving the world, second.

He knows, as we all know, if we stop and reflect for a moment, that where true meaning is found in life is in the small, everyday moments; moments when we come face to face with the mystery and wonder and blessings of being alive: in the glowing, innocent face of a new-born puppy. The miracle of life.

In my line of work, I'm often asked to help clients make the big shifts--to find a purpose in life with a capital "P". There are endless articles and books written about how crucial it is to have a purpose, a goal, a reason to get out of bed in the morning. This is all to the good, but sometimes I think that our goal and purpose-oriented culture misses the boat: what we all really want in life is not just purpose, but MEANING--to feel that being alive has depth, that we are not isolated and alone but touched and connected; to belong.

So in keeping with the President-elect's top priorities: just for today let's not worry too much about having a grand purpose or goal in life. Instead, look around at your life and take a meander through the mundane. Take an inventory of what you find most touching, meaningful, and moving in your life. I bet it won't be a grand, eloquent, or audacious goal for making big money or changing the world (not that there is anything wrong with either!), but more likely it will be the smile across the table from you spouse after you bring her/him coffee, or the grateful meow and leg rub you'll get from the kitty who you just fed, or the heart-warming chuckle you'll feel when a pal sends you photos of his son's first Halloween costume. You get the idea.

Purpose is fine, but meaning is what counts. Purpose is for a life time, meaning is for moments. And, at the end of the day, moments are all we really have.

Small moments, big joy. A simple formula, for a day, for life.

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