

Yogamama Says

## An Ahhh...ful Good Feeling

By Kathleen Thompson

I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up until I was fifty-one years old.

When I finally found "my thing" it wasn't the thing I thought it would be, and it certainly wasn't anything anyone would ever pay me to do. But by that point, I didn't really care about money. All I really wanted was to know. I wanted to know finally, definitively, and without a doubt what I was put on this earth to do, before I left it.

The day it dawned on me, the day I figured it out, that was the day I discovered such a deep, rich vein of contentment, happiness and stability within myself that I've been feeding off of it ever since.

Now I'm growing and evolving and learning to play this game of life for some really serious points. No more dinking around. No more hand-wringing and wondering. And what a relief it is, let me tell you.

When you finally know what you want to be when you grow up, this rock-solid self-knowledge allows you to even "settle" and take a job "just for money," without any qualms, because you finally know what your real work is, and you don't have to worry about being mistaken for a checker at Wegmans, for instance, or a barista at some coffee joint. If people ask you what you do for a living, you can tell them your job title, but then add, "But what I really am is a (fill in the blank here) which in my case was "a writer and a teacher of yoga." And smile.

Ahhhh...

Soon after I became certified to teach yoga at age fifty-one, I found a little space to rent, just to see if I could get anyone to



practice with me. It was a risk, for sure, but now, miraculously, I have a sweet little studio and every week a whole bunch of people come and practice with me. I've been consistently making the rent for the last seven years doing what I was put on this earth to do.

Before I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up though, I must have read every book written about how to find your "vocation" or "calling." But it wasn't until I started actually doing things, these five practices specifically, and doing them consistently, even religiously, over the course of a few years, that everything started to fall into place.

These practices will give you that all-important "self-knowledge" I was talking about. And I guarantee, you won't find your vocation until you gain some measure of that.

So, if you still don't have a clue about what you're supposed to be doing with this "one wild and precious life" of yours,

start with these five things. They were the keys that unlocked everything for me.

**1. Make Lists.** Actually, two lists. In the first one, list all the things you love/like. In the second one, all the things you hate/dislike.

Why do this? Because the act of listing these things will bring you into sharp focus. You might not know what you want to be when you grow up yet, but at least if someone asks: "Who do you think you are?" At the very least you'll be able to say, "Well, I am a person who prefers chocolate over vanilla, and baths over showers."

I keep my lists on [tadalists.com](http://tadalists.com). That way I can edit them and even share them with others if I want. You can check out my "likes" list. And my "dislikes" list. Remember, too, that your lists are an ongoing project and will evolve and change over time, just like you, so keep adding to, and subtracting from them as you think of things.

**2. Play A Daily Game of Freeze Tag.** Remember Freeze Tag? If someone tagged you, you had to stand like a statue until someone “unfroze” you. Yeah. So here’s what you do: you take a timer and set it for ten minutes. Sit down in a chair and don’t move a muscle for ten minutes. When the timer goes off, you’re “unfrozen.” If you do this every day, you will know what you want to be when you grow up very, very soon. Some people call this “meditation” but you don’t have to. Just sit down, shut up, and don’t move for ten minutes (minimum) every day.

**3. Make More Time For Stuff You Like To Do.** (Unless the stuff you like to do involves passively staring at screens.) Watching football on television, or playing on Facebook doesn’t count. Make less time for screen-staring, and spend more time building a rock garden, or an ultralight plane in your garage. Sew a quilt or write a novel. Make a complicated new recipe or train your dog for an agility competition. It doesn’t matter if nobody will ever pay you a dime to do this stuff; if you love to do it, you need to build in some serious time in your life to do it.

Don’t neglect what you love. Remember: What you love is who you are.

**4. Find a Body Practice You Can Do Consistently, And Do It.** Run, walk, do tai chi, practice yoga, bike, hike, swim—it doesn’t matter. Just make sure it’s something you can do in all kinds of weather, and without a lot of equipment, and without a partner. You don’t have to do it every day, just most days.

**5. Streak Something.** Find something you can do every day and do it. Build a streak. You might even make your body practice your “streak thing,” thus taking care of No. 4 and No. 5 in one fell swoop. I have had “yoga streaks” and “workout streaks” and “writing streaks” and “meditation streaks.” I have a 420-day writing streak going on 750words.com at this very moment. Doing something every day, no matter how small, insignificant or silly it might seem, builds stamina and endurance and discipline. It will make you proud of yourself. It will make you stable. And when the streak ends (which it will, inevitably), you can start all over again, or streak something else.

It wasn’t until I started making and

tending my lists, sitting still every day, carving out time for the things I loved to do, moving my body, and building up long streaks of discipline, that it all fell into place for me.

I wish I had started doing this stuff sooner. It would have spared me a lot of “path errors” and saved me thousands of dollars in books. You should really try it, especially if you are still wondering who you are, and what you are going to do with this “one wild and precious life” of yours.

If you start today and keep at it, I’ll bet in less than a year, you’ll know what you want to be when you grow up. And when you do, write and tell me what it is, okay? I’d love to hear. 📧

This is a short excerpt from a book I am working on called *How To Win The “Well-Lived Life” Badge For Your Tombstone or Urn.*



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