

WHERE BEAUTY LIES

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Take a snapshot of your life, and ask yourself: Does my life truly reflect who I am? Are the choices I make in sync with my desires, goals and beliefs? Does my life reflect both the inner and outer beauty of a life well lived?

I awakened to the painful realization that I was living the wrong life. In fact, I was living a version of myself that was prescribed and programmed by society, rather than living organic to my true nature.

Granted, we all would like to make some tweaks here and there in ourselves and our lives. But looking deeper into my heart, I felt an immense disconnect between the life I desired and my reality.

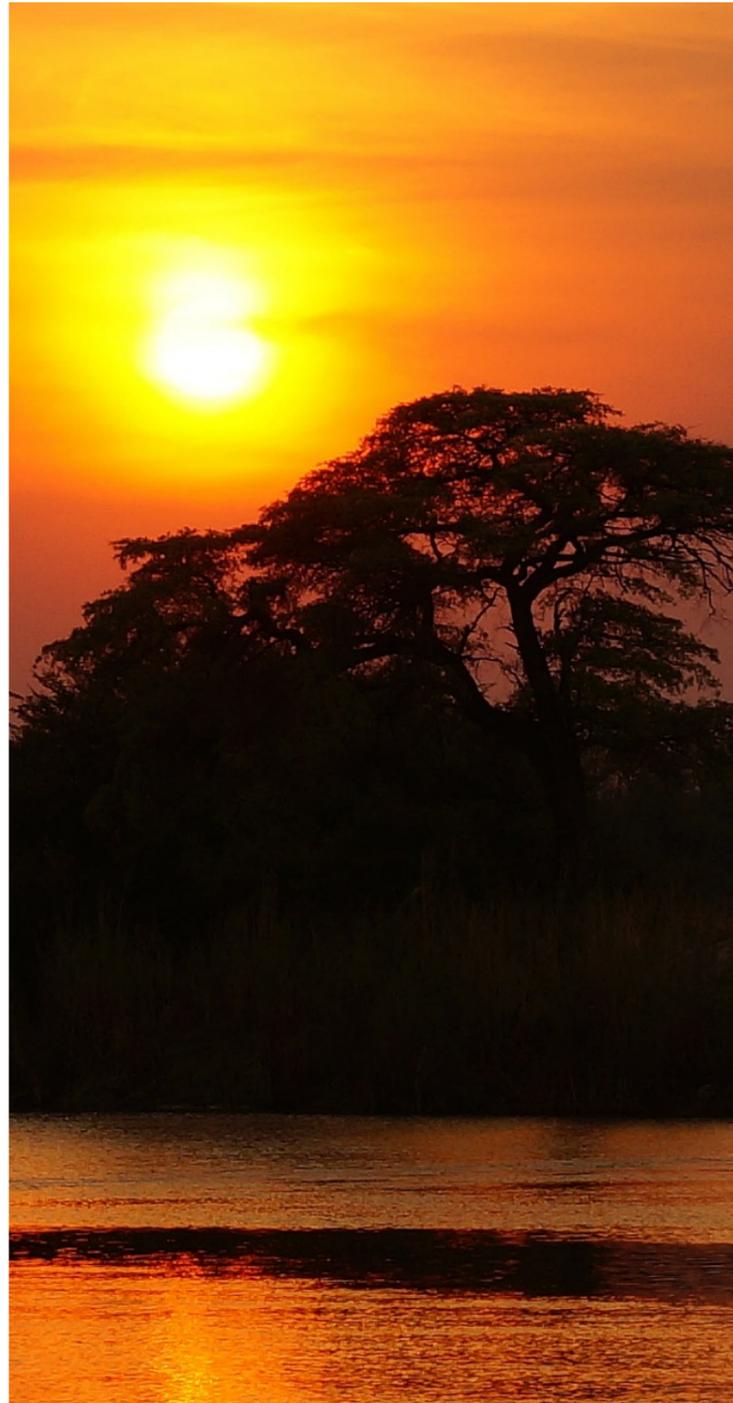
This began my inner and outer journey to deconstruct and reconstruct what for me, is a beautiful life.

As I began to examine myself in relation to my life, I knew that this would begin as an inside job. The deconstructing of limiting beliefs, ways of perceiving, and out-grown coping mechanisms, all had to be taken under close examination.

I kept a journal where I would record my thoughts and feelings each day, because I wanted to be able to see the thought patterns and beliefs that were governing my choices.

My desire was to remove the perpetual seeking of something *'out there'* that was going to bring me happiness and rather, find the beauty in living a fully felt experience of life.

In writing my way through this transition, I was able to record the evolution of myself and use the pages in my journal as a safe space to



sort through the raw data of my life.

When I was able to stop searching for happy or beautiful, I created a space for the real, the authentic, to emerge and from there, my choices became clearer and more organic to who I am.

I had to make many changes, some of which required painful endings. But I knew once I began the process of living authentically, there were some people, places and things that I was going to need to let go of.

I realized that to live a beautiful life would require the truest expression of who I am. It would not be all fun, light and happy, but it would be real and true. Living life deeply, requires a full spectrum of feelings and experiences from dark to light.

I found solace in knowing that all that is required of me, is to simply be myself. It was not a state of perfection I was moving towards, but rather the allowing and accepting of myself as an imperfect human being; as life is endeavouring to fully express itself through me, as me.

As I unravelled the layers of myself, I began to feel fear and anxiety. I was not tethered to anything, as I had not yet begun the process of laying a new, true foundation. Change is hard, even when it is a good change. I needed to learn to be comfortable within the un-comfortableness of the unknown.

My vision for my future was unknown, but I hung onto my truth that the fear of staying the same far outweighed the fear of change. In my darkest moments, I learned to feel rather than flee, acknowledging how I was feeling rather than reaching for a positive affirmation or diversion. I began to state the truth of where I was at, first to myself, and when safe, to others.

As I practiced this, I began to feel the grip of external gratification loosen. I no longer measured myself with a social yardstick, but rather measured my authenticity against my own true north.

I sold my home, all of my furniture, and packed my life into nine totes. I packed up my SUV and went on a long road trip out west. I wanted to feel unencumbered and free for a while until I knew what my next step would be. I wanted to create the space for my true self to be birthed.

As I let go of what was not a true expression of myself, I began to take notice of what lit me up and energized me inside. I wanted to translate that energy into physical experience. I had purged away all that I wasn't, I now had to replace it with all that I was.

I began by fulfilling a lifelong dream to go to South Africa, and as I set my intention, the trip appeared. I would go to South Africa on an experiential sightseeing and volunteering journey that would lay the foundation through which I would authentically live from.

I volunteered at a Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, a Bush School and Wildlife Orphanage, and at Kevin Richardson's Wildlife Sanctuary. As I reflected on this experience, I saw the thread of authenticity and conservation that is woven into the fabric of who I am.

Just as I have the utmost desire and appreciation for animals living in their natural habitat, so too do I desire this for myself and others. To live true to our own nature, and through conservation, we maintain our natural environment through which we survive and thrive.

The wild animals are losing their habitat, as are we. Our hearts are being encroached by consumeristic programming, and technology that further separates us from human interaction and from experiencing the all-encompassing interconnectivity of all life.