

## JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT

by Stewart Blackburn

I had a lot of fun with some friends the other night at dinner. We laughed over our various plights and oversights. We enjoyed tales of success and near-success. We savored delicious food in an atmosphere of camaraderie and amusement.

Yesterday, I had fun going to the botanical garden by myself, and photographing beautiful flowers and trees. And today I had fun solving a particularly difficult Sudoku puzzle.

I experienced fun in all of these, yet they were all quite different. We all know the experience of fun, and most of us treasure those times of fun. But then, all too often, we “get serious” and go back to taking care of the problems of life. So what makes something fun and why aren’t we always choosing things that are fun?

The dictionary tells us that fun is the experience of enjoying something or being amused. My experience of fun is a lot more than that! For me, fun is something that I experience in my heart. It’s not the same feeling as “love,” but it’s close. It is a feeling that I associate with being alive. The core of my very being gets excited.

Anticipating a great pleasure is exciting, as is doing something that is borderline dangerous. Fun is a different kind of excitement. It is an excitement of freedom, the freedom to be who I am. When I am having fun, I let go of fears and doubts about how I might be perceived by others or how I “should” be acting. I am spontaneous and open. I am expressing my nature without holding back.

Somehow, though, other things besides things that are fun seem to be more important. These are the things that “have” to be done, the ones that we do to take care of the necessities of life. Sure, fun is nice, but only after everything else is done. Or, at least, so goes the thinking – duty first, etc.

The unfortunate thing about duty is that it makes us slaves. Our free will is largely abandoned in order to fulfill the dictates of our duty. It isn’t that what we consider our duty is bad in some way. It’s how we look at it. As long as we’re treating these things that are to be done as necessities, then we reluctantly do them, usually with the hope of finishing them quickly.

Suppose that we choose to do things differently. Suppose that we decide to look at our choices as a matter of which things give us more pleasure, or fun, or love. Suppose that we make pleasure, fun, and love the basis of our personal ethic. This means that we value how we feel and we act accordingly.

Fun is to the body what ecstasy is to the soul. It is an essential nutrient to our being. Without some level of fun in our lives we lose interest and start closing down. We’ve all seen those people, usually older, who have less and less interest in life and the activities of living. I would suggest that we learn from their example and remember to have fun in whatever way we can.

I find that I can have fun shopping. Not just the pleasure of evaluating many different choices to satisfy my desires, but also in brief, spontaneous interactions with total strangers.

We share a little something that makes us smile and then we go on our way. There's a level of fun in each encounter.

I have fun making my food each day. I will make it a little different each time, just for the fun of it! I will drive a different route to my familiar destination, just for the fun of it! And I will let my natural whimsy come forth, sometimes at thoroughly inappropriate times, just for the fun of it!

It is this expression of the freedom to be who I truly am that is one of the most important aspects of life. It is genuine authenticity. It is "my truth." It is what makes my life worth living.

I believe that the essence of all real pleasure is self-love and it is this self-love that I experience when I'm having fun. I cultivate it, honor and value it, and fully enjoy it. I get to love myself when I'm having fun.

And I wish each and every one of you an extra measure of fun today!