

What's new?

"Funny how the new things are the old things." - Rudyard Kipling

In addition to Swine flu, the N1H1 virus and the other myriad illnesses and maladies folks suffer from these days is another neophilia – defined by Merriam-Webster as "love of or enthusiasm for what is new or novel." Most folks have some element of neophilia in their personality and some degree of neophilia makes the economy run and spurs innovation, but it seems that more and more folks are suffering from an incurable and deadly strain of the "need for something new" disease.

While neophilia is not a new disease, it seems more and more folks suffer from it – the obsession, preoccupation and intense need to experience whatever is NEW. Recent Japanese research shows that for some reason the word "new" arouses a part of the brain as does an addiction disorder.

From clothes, cell phones, food, TV fare, and cars, to religious and spiritual practices, to leadership and management approaches, to ways of relating (social networks?), to beer with vitamins (hmmm), folks seem to be obsessively attracted to the new and improved. The curious question, of course, is why?

Many folks erroneously equate new with value (not valuable but value). Advertising, marketing and commercialism, and a lineage of folks in families which worship new, have brainwashed a vast majority of folks into believing that new is always better, more important, of greater quality or of great value. Is that the truth?

Folks who have grown to be obsessed with, and steeped in, commercialism and consumerism gravitate toward the new.

And, there are those who are taken in by the "new." Many folks, even cultures, honor, value and appreciate the old because the old is not simply "old" but because the old possesses a sense of character, symbolic value and a connection to wisdom. While the new is often fleeting, ephemeral, and tends toward quick "value evaporation," the old serves a deeper, more grounded way of maintaining relationships and connections with history, time, people and culture.

It's readily evident that much of modern life lacks soul, lacks a deeper, core connection that we knew as value. Today's value is much more superficial, meaning-less and soulfully lacking. Today's value is more about appearance rather than substance, the external devoid of the internal, the surface image as opposed to intrinsic worth, and all too often net worth is the imposter for self-worth.

Many today view their world with their eyes wide shut, with a soul that's been blinded. The fact is that it's not about new vs. old, but about moving beyond the superficial and appearances. When we spend time connecting with our life — our relationships and our possessions — from a soul perspective, a place of centeredness, quietude and depth, then we can orient to the world in a way that truly allows us to discern what's true and real. When our physical eyes connect to our soul, a genuine intelligence arises that allows us to look deeply as we seek to know the true value and worth of every person and every thing that is part of our personal experience.

The underlying pleasure of the soul for that which is fresh, creative and vital has been usurped by the shallowness of novelty, and the attendant brain-washing for what is "new," "improved," "hot" and "must have." Orienting to our world from a soul perspective guides us to look through the hollowness and fakeness of image, appearance and hype. From this place, we have the possibility of experiencing the true substance, value and meaning not only of our own life but the lives of others - at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- What value do you experience from the material possessions and the people in your life? What fads or trends or "new" do you track regularly? What "new" does not have any charge for you? How do you feel when you do this inquiry?
- What things and people in your life possess true and real character, uniqueness and soul? Is this exploration easy or difficult? Why?
- What aspects of your life at work, at home and at play are wrapped in the superficial? How does this affect your relationships?
- Does constant obsession with the new ever get old? Honestly.
- Do you ever feel lacking, deficient or "out of the loop" because you don't have the newest? How so?
- Do you ever feel shallow, or worthless or value-less?
- What was "new" like when you were growing up?

"Know thyself," said the old philosopher, "improve thyself," saith the new. Our great object in time is not to waste our passions and gifts on the things external that we must leave behind, but that we cultivate within us all that we can carry into the eternal progress beyond." - Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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