

Maneuvering Life without a Formal Bucket List

by Liz Gibbons

I don't know when the idea of bucket lists became popular. I believe it is a fairly recent phenomenon. I have never compiled an ongoing bucket list. Sure, I have written down goals from time to time, but most often I follow ideas and aspirations that arise in my mind. In childhood I was guided by parental and societal expectations and my own curiosity. In midlife those proverbial questions assailed me: Who am I? Why am I here? What controls the universe? How does the cosmos function? Now in my twilight years I am still motivated to keep learning and to have new experiences. But I also strive to achieve contentment, peace, harmony, and joy in my life.

In looking back I feel very fortunate. I do not feel I have missed anything significant by living without a bucket list. I have had opportunities denied to many people on earth. As a child I was able to travel much of the United States and parts of Canada via my family's summer vacations. When I turned age seventy I realized if I wanted to travel abroad I better do that soon. An English speaking country seemed easiest to visit. I saw an interesting workshop being offered on the west coast of England. That was the spark that spurred me to spend three days attending it and then five days exploring London by myself. I found the English people exceedingly helpful as I navigated the Tube and bus system in London.

My curiosity has always spurred me to investigate or try new things. I have studied with some interesting teachers, walked on a bed of hot coals and attended several sweat lodges. I have climbed a 14,000 foot mountain in low cut Ked sneakers, a light wind breaker for protection, a canteen of water, a bag lunch and a candy bar, compared to the climbing boots my son wears, and trail mix, power bars, bottles of electrolyte water and other food items he carries in his back pack when he climbs. I have seen the interior of cells through electron microscopes and the night skies through telescopes. I have heard my sons take their first breath and my husband his last. I marvel at booming thunderstorms and how a hail storm can shred my tomato plants. Life is fascinating and miraculous. Insights happen when I slow down and open my awareness to the wonders around me. How does a fat caterpillar transform into an ethereal looking beautiful butterfly. How does an ant carry a burden that looks as if it is heavier than its own body weight? What happens when we sneeze? These are the type of adventures and questions I have pursued. Yet my life has not been all kumbaya and warm fuzzies. I have had my fair share of challenges and difficulties to overcome. As is so often the case, these were some of my most significant learning experiences.