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START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01] Speaker1

Good morning, Wellspring's. It's good to be with you again. The image I'm going to show you in just a moment is familiar to some of you, but I recognize it's not familiar to all of you. It is one of the techniques, one of the practices that we regularly use in our Wellspring's 2.0 group, the foundational small group here at Wellspring's. It's actually how Wellspring's began. We also call it listening to our lives. So this image right here, it's a kind of it's a tool for gift's discernment. The idea is that you kind of work with these axes and the four quadrants within the overall box and you fill in as many things as you can for each of the four quadrants I'm not good at. And I don't like as many things as you can think of I'm good at, but I don't like number two. I like, but I'm not good at number three all the way, number four, I'm good at and I like. And the idea is that, you know, everything from brushing your teeth, wash your face to walking the dog from. Pastoring to parenting to all forms of professional activities, leisure time, spirituality, we fill in as many things in these four quadrants as we can. One of the really interesting things about leading this little practice of this gift discernment exercise mostly at Wellspring's over the years for me, but also beyond Wellspring's at times, is that sometimes people will reflect that there was a time in their life when they could identify something in box number three, something that they weren't good at, they liked doing.

[00:01:53] Speaker1

And then at a certain different point context in their life, it kind of moved into box number four, something that they were good at doing and they like doing. Sometimes people even reflect that something that used to be in box number four or something I'm good at, like doing at one point has become something I'm good at. I don't really like doing any longer. Sometimes there's kind of a fine line, it's not just about the activity itself, but it's about its time, context, place, what else is going on in our lives that determines at a given moment where we put it and in what box on this little grid. Today's spirit flicks movie kind of gets at the heart of maybe the difference or that fine line of what separates a good at in a like from good at, but don't like the difference between kind of a flow state of a really immersive, vital alive kind of activity and activity that even if we're good at it and started to take on a sense of maybe drudgery or obligation. So spirit flicks, which now got a beginning today for the summer, twenty twenty one we've been doing since the very beginning, since that first summer, two thousand and seven spirit flicks, which is essentially about the stories that we watch on our screens and the spiritual meaning that we make and drive out of the stories that we watch.

[00:03:35] Speaker1

And there are many different forms of screens. The movie for today is another Pixar. I think probably every single year over the last 14 summers, there has been a Pixar movie in one form or another featured during spiritflick. This is yet another Oscar winning Pixar movie. And it demonstrates once again that Pixar does not continue to rest on just what is already known for, but continues to expand both its breadth, the kinds of stories that they're telling, and also the kinds of communities and people that these stories are being shared about. And also the depth, philosophically, psychologically, spiritually. I absolutely adored today's movie, so. It is about a particular character and the character in this character's orbit, a guy named Joe Gardner, who, when we first meet him, is a frustrated jazz musician who is leading a middle school jazz band class as a music teacher. And you can tell that he is not at all excited by his life. He is not where he thought he would be. And what we see start to happen in this movie of Joe kind of walking through his life a feeling like you was either has been or never was. Voiced by Jamie Foxx. Joe gets his big break.

[00:05:13] Speaker1

He gets to play for famous saxophonist Dorothea Williams, she's called in moving her quartet and he gets a tryout because the drummer in the quartet was once Joe Gardiner's high school music teacher. And he says to Joe, you know, you're the only reason I made it through high school. So he brings Joe in for maybe his big break and he just plays from this state of flow, deep soul and spontaneity and vitality. And it gets the gig. And he is so overwhelmed with joy that he becomes profoundly inattentive to the surroundings. And he falls down an open manhole in the middle of a New York City street and he plummets apparently to his death. He wakes up in the afterlife and we see him ascending now in the form of all the other souls, kind of a bluish blob like those of you who are Gen Xers might remember the Saturday morning cartoon Schmoo. They look like kind of like soulful shmoo in the afterlife. And he's ascending up this kind of divine escalator to this amazing welcoming, warm light. But he does not want to go there. He wants to get back to life because he's just had his big break. And this is a fantastical story. So much of it happens in this created afterlife. And so because it is a world that you have to immerse yourself in to really get I can't do justice to all of it.

[00:06:53] Speaker1

But we'll just say that in Joe's resistance to admitting that his life is over, he moves from one part of the afterlife called the Great Beyond After We Die to the Great Before, which is the place where souls get kind of developed and seasoned so that they can then join with a human body. At the start of life, so Joe becomes kind of a mistaken for a mentor for these developing souls in the great before, and he gets kind of connected with a new soul developing so-called twenty two, she's voiced by Tina Fey. The challenge with twenty two, however, is that twenty two has been doing this. So preparation, what they call in the in the youth seminar, getting prepared to go to Earth to go to life for a very, very long time. But twenty two is kind of cynical about it all. She doesn't really see the point. And Joe thinking that this is the way eventually he'll be able to get back to life himself, kind of cajoles and wrangles and tries to get twenty two to be prepared to go down to earth. Twenty two does not want to. She doesn't really see the point of living. What's so special about it, she thinks and one of the things that they do is through this journey of kind of Joe tracing and trying to catch up with twenty two in the great beyond or excuse me, the great before.

[00:08:25] Speaker1

And the afterlife is they wind up in a part of the great before in which people experience low status here in life. And you kind of see the compliment in this afterlife state. But again, this is where people are still alive. Like I said, try and keep up with me. It's kind of hard to describe, but it is beautiful to watch, very immersive. And you see people in these states of deeply engaged in meditation or art in their life. And you see these pictures of kind of souls at bliss. But just adjacent to the flow state place is a place that's kind of dingy and depressing and despairing. And C, it's a place where people who were once in flow have entered a place of fixation of inattentiveness to their larger lives, and what was once done from a place of love, joy of vitality and vibrance has become obligatory and drudgery. This is one of the most wonderful parts of soul that. It kind of talks about that fine line between not just being good at something, but finding the vitality in it, that inner vitality, the difference between holding our experience lightly, lovingly and holding it tightly. Almost to the point that we kind of crushed the life out of it. Like to give you a little practice that sometimes I use in my own life and with others to kind of demonstrate the difference between holding tightly and holding lightly when we're working with the exact same thought, emotion or experience or activity.

[00:10:18] Speaker1

So you can join me in this if you want to. And really what you need to do, all you need is one of these. You go grab one if you want. You can just watch. And what I'm going to do first and then ask you to join if you want to, is grab that pen as tightly and as firmly as you can. No half measures. Put your back into it, really grab it and notice what's starting to happen in your hand. You can notice parts of my hand are going white and parts are turning red. The blood is pooling in parts of it and seems to be receiving from other parts. And wow, all my attention, all my focus is going to my hand is cramping and it doesn't feel very good. And now. Shifting to holding. That Penn. Lightly opening up. Noticing the blood kind of rushing from my hand back into the rest of my arm, I'm noticing even the rest of my body start to ease up. That was really tight and tense, even though my hand was only clasped tightly around that pen. So just kind of noticing the difference between what it is to hold the same exact pen tightly. And lightly. And then I want to extend it another step.

[00:11:37] Speaker1

I'm going to take something I'm good at. I'm good at cooking and I'm going to take this pen and get a few piece of paper, you can join me in this if you want to, and I'm going to hold that pen as tightly as I can, as tightly as I possibly can. I'm going to write that sentence. I'm good at cooking. And then I'm going to write the same sentence, holding it lightly. I'm going to disappear from the frame for just a moment here. We'll join you in a second. Like I said, join along at home if you wish to, holding it tightly at first. And the next. Holding it lightly and writing the same sentence both times, see in a moment. This is what two sentences look like, the first one kind of chicken scratch. Well, actually the second one's kind of chicken scratch, too, because I don't have the best handwriting in the world. But you do see the difference. Right. And I think that does hit at kind of the literal version of the metaphor of noticing what happens. When? We hold on to our experience too tightly, even if it's a part of us that we love, that we're good at or have loved at one point to the same lesson, I think with pain or or discomfort, the kind of just natural discomfort that comes along with being alive, having our hearts broken, being disappointed, the difficult things in life.

[00:13:37] Speaker1

This is at the heart of what? Seoul is all about. The difference between holding tightly and holding lightly in our experience. And so at one point, and I can't exactly choreograph to you how this exactly happened. Just go with me, Joe and 20 to. Find their way back to Earth. Except kind of like Freaky Friday and all those switcheroo movies. Twenty two finds herself inhabiting Jo's body, and Joe finds his soul in the body of a therapy cat at the hospital where his comatose body was being cared for. And like in all those movies, the switcheroo movies, they all have one more one. It's a wonderful moral. You know, they always get someone who's kind of holding things tightly or feels stuck in their lives. And the switcheroo or the difference in perspective that happens when someone who was big, like the Tom Hanks is now young, is that something shifts and change in there are changes in their perspective on their lives and something opens up something that was closed down to finds a way of releasing. And life after the switcheroo. Can be shifted and changed and growth occurs. In a really key scene in the movie barbershops, if you've seen it, you know what I'm talking about, the co-director of this movie, a fellow named Kenny Powers, who also co-wrote a co-wrote another Oscar nominated movie from last year one night in Miami.

[00:15:27] Speaker1

He said that he wrote this barbershop scene 40 times for a couple of reasons. One, because he wanted as a black person to represent an authentic part, he said of black life barbershop in as fully an accurate and vital way as he could. And he said the second thing that made him really be particular about. This scene is that it gets right at the heart of what happens when we shift perspectives. So Joe, who's had a mishap with the cat trying to kind of trim up his hair in preparation for the show that he's going to play that night, major malfunction with the Clippers has to go into the barbershop. Except remember, now it's Joe with twenty two inside of Joe and Joe with the cat, who's the soul of Joe trailing along, kind of observing all of this. And Joe's been going to this barber Des's for a very long time and had been normally the same exact. Technique, you know, Joe goes in, he sits. And Des the barber asked him a whole bunch of questions to this time, Joe as twenty two with twenty two, so. Starts to ask, there's a whole bunch of questions, and this says, you know, I actually wanted to be a veterinarian before I became a barber. And Joe, who's the cat sitting in the corner, just feels himself kind of open up to Des, who he has known for all these years, but never really knew him.

[00:17:11] Speaker1

And he sees this talk about he doesn't have regrets. He's entirely happy that his life ended up as a barber. He loves what he does, but he sees and does this capacity to move between various parts of his life and own them all flexibly, openly. And he also sees what it's like as 20 to start to become alive and recognize that this living thing is not the the cynical, not really worth its perspective that she had in the great before. And she becomes fascinated, 20 to the soul. Twenty two in the body of Joe of getting to know Des and then eating a slice of authentic New York style pizza. And it's like, oh my God. Flavor opens up for the first time and seeing a seed pod kind of circled through the autumn air and fall from an oak tree. We see the experience. Of both 22. And Joe. Begin to encounter. With the Buddhist tradition calls beginner's mind. A real beautiful way of lightly holding this experience of being alive in such a vital. And gorgeous. Not seen by rote any longer. But by seeing. With new. And fresh and an open old way of being, and this is where Joe starts to realize, eventually gets reunited with his body and he goes on to play that show, but in a little dialogue with 20 to what he recognizes is that he has made jazz into a noun, into a thing solid.

[00:19:11] Speaker1

It's got to aspire to be a jazz musician. But from his own experience of coming back to life from the great beyond and the great before he recognizes that jazz is not a noun. Is a verb, and he and 20, to begin to call it jazzing and jazzing is everything. Jazzing is every moment of that flow state, not just with what you're good at or expert at. But jazzing is that experience of being fully alive and engaged. With your life. So that life. And the experience of living really starts to open. There's a detour back to the great before for a moment, and again, if you see the movie, see the movie. Even if I've been describing it to you, it's still so worth it. I'm going to watch it a second time. So there's a. Scene where Joe finds his way back to the great before and one of these characters that they call Jerry's that all have Ákos accents but are all one manifestation of one kind of spirit. Joe is talking about the necessity of finding his spark, finding his purpose, and how it's starting to change and shift for him and how it's started to change and shift for twenty two as well. And one of these, Jerry, is one of these kind of spirit guides who kind of guide souls into living, just kind of shakes his head or they shake their head.

[00:20:52] Speaker1

And this Jerry character says you, you humans and your purposes, I think what this Jerry character is pointing out is that sometimes even when we think we found our purpose, if we cling to it tightly. We will kind of squeeze the lifeblood out of it. And that sense of vitality and beginner's mind might be lost and we'll find. That it has become obligatory and drudgery. So eventually, Joe does find his way back to Earth and he gets to sit in with Dorothy Williams of the Quartet, and he's amazing. But after the show, he has one of those moments. Is that all there is? And this is where he accesses again. It's not jazz that he is about. It is Jazy. And he remembers what it was like to see the world through different eyes and for twenty two to see the world through different eyes. And he reengages that beginner's mind as he sees a seed pod fall down on a beautiful autumn New York day. From an oak tree. And he falls back in love with his life again. And begins to treat his life. As a precious thing. As a vital experience. By holding it. I want to end today. But just noticing something. That I'm really aware of right now, and perhaps many of you are as well.

[00:22:52] Speaker1

That is, things opened back up. And many of us, this is a wonderful thing, and for many of us as well, too, it's a wonderful thing, but it also might feel like an ambivalent thing. We've been living one way for more than a year. And if I had a t shirt I could print up right now, I think it would say these these words don't let's not get stuck in having to rush back too quickly or if we're not feeling wonderful, judging ourselves for why are we feeling maybe a little bit anxious right now? These words on the t shirt, I would put it, would be normalized ambivalence, it's OK to feel more than one way. That's part of holding our experience lightly. And not totally. I think of something I'm seeing a lot and also feeling a lot of myself. The acronyms, Flomo and YOLO fear of missing out, you only live once. And what I would offer us if some of that FAMO and YOLO is showing up for you at this point, is life open back opens back up is to remember this. To find something small. Whether you're good at it or not. But something that you notice opens up an experience of vitality and aliveness for you. And maybe we can remember the words that often are said when we light our chalice. Every week. That there is a divine spark in each of every one of us.

[00:24:38] Speaker1

And that divine spark shows up. Perhaps in anything that we can do. Not just the things we're going to. Not just in the high moments or the elevated moments or the moments we think life has been reaching to. But that divine spark right here, right now. In the most commonplace and ordinary things. May you hold your life as I would wish to hold my life. Lightly and lovingly. And find moment by moment the Jazy. The Divine Spark. Always here. And he's holding out. I mean. And may you live in blessed. I asked if you would unite your heart with mine in this moment. Feeling the breath and the spirits as the breath and the spirit are showing up for us right now, right here. May we live in a way that allows us to make contact and to access that very ordinary press? The sense of the divine flowing and growing and limitless and never exhausted. In so many aspects of our lives, indeed in our very skin, in our very heart beat, in the very breath in our lungs. May we invite ourselves to open? To life right here, as it is not waiting for the ideal, not waiting for ourselves to get to some perfect form. Which doesn't really exist. But instead, to bring love and awareness to this moment. And with curious and compassionate hearts. Just allowing ourselves to open. To whatever happens. On.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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