

# *The Not So Big Life*

## Chapter Two: Noticing What Inspires You

### **Your Turn: Significant Objects**

*This is the first exercise for you to enter in your notebook, under the section headed “Significant Objects.” As you read, did any significant objects come to mind from your own life? Make a list of those objects that seem to have hidden meanings for you. Even if you can’t yet identify what those meanings are, you may be aware of the recurrence of particular objects – objects that seem to be around when big things happen. If there are any, write them down, and if not, don’t worry about it. They’ll become apparent as you read on.*

### **Your Turn: Providence**

*Look back over your life and see if you recall any situations where Providence moved to create the perfect conditions for your own exploration or pursuit of an interest or passion. Was there someone you met who changed your life, for example? Had you been looking for a job perhaps, when someone half way across the country offered you an opportunity to do something not quite what you’d been thinking, but ultimately much more beneficial? Make a list of the occasions you can think of, and over the next few days take note of any other associations or related events you recall. Often, when you jog your memory, or pay attention to what might have occurred in the past, you’ll recall other details. If you don’t remember any, don’t worry. They’ll begin to happen if you let them, and if you stay aware.*

### **Exercise: Identifying the Significant Moments in Your Life**

In this next exercise it’s important to review what really fulfills us. If you make a list of the most significant moments of your life—the ones that moved you to tears, filled you with awe, or made you feel that your heart was going to explode, chances are they came about in a completely unexpected way. For me, they’ve happened more often than not, when I’m not in a rush, and when I’ve given myself the time to fully engage in something—like the time I was simply sitting watching the water rushing along a stream, and suddenly experiencing its flow as fluid energy, unbounded by time or space; or the time I rowed out into the middle of a lake in South Dakota late at night, and saw the night sky as I had never seen it before, an experience that filled me with wonder and gratitude for the great good fortune of being alive.

Had I been rushing to my next appointment, or watching the evening news on TV, these events simply wouldn’t have occurred. It’s the slowing down that allows the ineffable to seep in when we least expect it, and give our lives meaning. For me, these

moments are often visual, but for you, your dominant sense may be hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. You may find significance through movement, or through stillness. We're all different, but the experience of significance is the key.

Before you read further, take your notebook, and sit quietly somewhere in a place where you won't be interrupted too often for about ten or fifteen minutes. Settle your mind a bit, and let go of any worries that are currently engaging you. They can wait. Nothing is so pressing that it can't be put off for a few minutes, other than a physical emergency of some sort.

Now allow your mind to drift back to memories of events or occasions like the two I've mentioned above. Breathe calmly, and don't expect too much. Nothing may come to mind right away, but if you maintain an openness and receptivity to your own inner wisdom, experiences will arise from your past. We've all had them, but depending on your state of being, they can be more or less accessible. Don't discount anything that comes up. Write it down, even if it seems insignificant, or idiosyncratic. You aren't trying to please anyone here. You're just using the lens of your own inner wisdom to focus on experiences that fulfilled you deeply, and which until now have probably been outside your awareness. It's time to integrate them-- time to appreciate their value so that you can recognize the conditions under which they arose.

If the well is dry today, put your notebook down and keep reading. But pay attention over the next few days to any memories that **do** arise, and see if they don't contain the seeds of significance. Sometimes we've clothed a memory in garb that makes its importance unrecognizable, even when the experience itself was earth shattering, or powerful beyond words. Give yourself permission to observe these memories afresh, and to remember them without the filter of past interpretations. If you find the memories overwhelming in either a positive or negative sense, know that the next couple of chapters will help you understand how to be with these recollections in an entirely new way.

These remembered moments of significance contain within them the vibrancy that will allow you to unlock the door to your inner self. Though it won't be clear yet just how this can be so, the coming pages will reveal the reason for these moments' significance, and the quality they contain that opens you to the more-ness you've been longing for.