

It is About the Simple Pleasures

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Call a Friend – Staying in touch with friends has always had an uplifting effect on me. I have a friend who lives in Virginia. We have been friends for 62 years – a lifetime. We stay in touch via email these days, so a phone call is extra special. Hearing her voice brings her closer to me, and always brightens my day. We feel more connected, I can hear the happiness in her voice, and once again, we are the young girls sharing our thoughts and feelings about everything...

How to make those phone calls extra special.

Spur of the moment calls are extra special, especially if your friend lives far away. It does your spirit good to call just to say that you are thinking of them, that you wanted to hear their voice, and because you miss them. You can always hear the surprise and appreciation in their voice, and suddenly they don't seem so far away at all...

Special occasion calls are also extra special. Perhaps you were a bridesmaid at your friend's wedding, and you call her on her wedding anniversary just to say, "Happy Anniversary!" On the other hand, maybe your friend started a new job, and you call her after her first week on that new job just to see how she is doing. Showing your thoughtfulness or support is what being a friend is about, and when we are able to do that, it makes us happy inside, and our friendship grows...

Calls for help can also be extra special. Knowing that your friend is there for you in good times and bad, knowing that you can trust their guidance and support is priceless. Spirit to spirit, and heart to heart, it is our friends and family that get us through tough times. If you are the one reaching out

for help, your spirit is uplifted and comforted by their words. If you are the one called on for help and guidance, your spirit feels good because you are able to help a friend.

So, call a friend whether it is for a special occasion, just to say hello, or for needed help – I like to think of these calls as a, "Spiritual Call Circle of Love and Friendship"... a place where spirit is responding through an outpouring of kindness, caring, and love...

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Bond With Your Pet – Pets are nature’s instruments of love, they love us unconditionally, and they touch our spirits in amazing ways. Dogs and cats are by far the most popular pets, and they provide love and companionship to the entire family. I am a dog person, and I live in a townhouse where I can’t have a dog. Being a 68 year old widow (living alone), and still working at a full time job I really don’t have the time or energy to have a dog, and I’ve accepted that. However, I do miss the love, and happiness that a dog brings to a home. I miss the tail wagging when I come home, the snuggling, and the love in a dogs eyes. I’ve told myself that maybe when I retire and move, I’ll get a dog. For now, I enjoy my daughter’s miniature longhaired dachshund Rosie. I notice how I good I feel after being with her, and I miss that...

There are many ways to bond with your dog.

- Take your dog for a walk every day.
- Take your dog along when you jog.
- Play ball or Frisbee with your dog.
- If you live by a lake, you might want to take your dog for a swim; that is if he or she enjoys swimming.
- Take your dog for a ride in the car – most dogs love that.
- Take your dog to a dog park if there is one close by.
- Treat your dog to some special dog cookies or a chew bone.

Most of all love your dog, treat him with kindness, and I’m sure you will receive lots of tail wagging and dog kisses in return!

Cats are more independent than dogs but they still like the attention that you give to them. I’ve never owned a cat. However, I lived with my daughter for a short time and she has two cats, Boots and Dudley. Dudley was quiet; in fact, you never even knew he was there except at treat time, or when it was dinnertime. Boots on the other hand, liked to be petted (sometimes), and I learned very quickly not to touch her stomach. They both enjoyed catnip, and playing with the laser light.

Yes, pets provide our spirits with endless amounts of love. They truly are nature’s instruments of love...

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Be Spontaneous – I'll admit that I have never been a spontaneous person. My life is extremely regimented. For instance, I clean the house on a Saturday morning, not on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning. I have cleaned house on Saturday morning for years. When I say years, I mean years! I always clean the house before going away on a vacation, even if it is just for the weekend. When I return from a weekend trip or from a lengthy vacation, I unpack and put the suitcases away that day. (Now, that is just one example of how regimented I am.) I plan everything, and I rarely deviate from the plan.

My daughter on the other hand is just the opposite. She cleans house when she feels like it. Spur of the moment plans are fine with her, and she never feels guilty – unlike her mother. She is my free spirit, she can live spontaneously, and she can do something on an impulse and love it!

I have tried to be spontaneous, believe me I have tried... Guess I need to try harder because there are times when I dread Saturday mornings, times when I cannot finish cleaning quick enough, times when I do not do a very good job because my heart isn't in it. There's the clue right there, "my heart isn't in it." I think my spirit is trying to tell me something. My spirit is whispering to me to enjoy life, and I whisper back, "I promise I will try."

Ways to be spontaneous.

1. Break your routine, and be open to doing something spontaneously. Maybe it is a friend calling asking you out to lunch at the last minute, or a neighbor that

invites you over for coffee when you are out working in the garden. Maybe your grandchild asks you to read a story to them when you are in the middle of something. Those moments, those invitations are what make life interesting. Spontaneity frees your spirit, and adds joy to your life.

2. Break your own rules, have an ice cream sundae for lunch. Let the kids stay up late during the week. Leave the dishes until morning, and watch that movie with your family. It does not hurt to break your own rules occasionally, kind of gives you a sense of freedom.
3. Sometimes your spirit just needs to do something just for fun. There are days when playing hooky from work is just what you need. Relax, enjoy the freedom, and do something just for you – get a manicure or facial, sit around in your sweats and watch the soaps, maybe take an afternoon nap. Enjoy your day free from deadlines, traffic, and the routine. Your spirit will thank you!

Yes, a little spontaneity never hurt anyone. In fact, it adds an element of freedom to your life!

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Go on a Picnic – Picnics are one of the most carefree ways to celebrate life. I will always cherish the picnics that my husband to be and I took the summer before we were married. We were so young and so in love, the weekends were ours and we spent as much time as we could together. That summer of 69, we spent almost every weekend up at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. I would pack a picnic lunch. We would spend the morning at the beach, and then put a blanket down at the park and eat our lunch. In fact, we were at that beach when the astronauts landed on the moon. We listened to the landing on the radio, a memory that I will never forget. Yes, I cherish the memories of those picnics. They are so special to me. Simple picnics that brought two people in love memories that have lasted a lifetime...

You can go on a picnic with your husband, your family, your best friend, or a group of friends from work or members of an organization. Picnics can be as simple or as fancy as you want. Be creative, and above all enjoy one of the simple pleasures of life...

There are endless varieties of picnic ideas.

The simple, no fuss, spur of the moment picnic. Pick up some fast food, find a scenic spot (park, near a pond, by a garden, along the riverfront), and enjoy!

Plan a romantic picnic for the love of your life. Prepare some favorite foods. These might be gourmet sandwiches, or fancy appetizers. Maybe bake his favorite cake or pie for dessert. Depending upon where your picnic is at you might want to bring a chilled bottle of wine. Don't forget the plates

and plastic ware, and don't forget a blanket (some locations may not have picnic tables available).

Incorporate a picnic into a day at the beach, and make it a barbeque. This would be great for a family picnic, with everyone taking part in the planning. Enjoy the outdoors, swimming, camaraderie, and some great food!

You can even have a breakfast picnic, and watch the sunrise. Alternatively, consider having a late night picnic and watch the sunset.

Above all, enjoy yourself! Take pleasure in the company and your surroundings. Relax and breathe in the fresh air, give your spirit a chance to spread its wings and find sheer joy in the occasion...

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Put on Comfy Clothes – Just saying the words, “comfy clothes,” makes me feel all comfortable, cozy, and relaxed. We all have our favorite clothes that we wear around the house, clothes that may have holes in them, clothes that don’t necessarily match, clothes that are too big or too small – clothes that are just plain comfy.

I think that our comfy clothes speak to our spirit and in some unexplainable inadvertent way tell us that it’s okay to be in a relaxed mode, it’s okay to kick back, it’s okay to not worry about how we look, everything is just okay...

Sweat pants – I love my sweat pants. They are not very fashionable but boy are they comfortable. I cannot wait to get home from work and put them on!

Old worn-in sneakers, notice I said worn-in sneakers and not worn-out sneakers – they are the greatest! Sneakers often hold a lot of memories, the vacation you took three years ago, the race you ran, or maybe the time you painted the house (paint splatters on the shoe is a tell tale sign). Not only are they comfy but they probably bring a smile to your face.

My old pair of painter’s jeans, with ripped pockets, holes in the knees, and ragged cuffs – superb! I will never part with them. Strangely, they make me feel young, go figure...

Then there is my husband’s old flannel shirt, I love it because it was his, need I say more?

That is just my short list of comfy clothes. I am sure you have your list of comfy clothes, and that you feel the same way about them that I do. In our comfy clothes, the world

looks a lot brighter, and our worries seem a little less worrisome when we are in our comfy clothes, and our spirits agree...

I hope that you will take time out of your busy life to get in touch with your spirit...

I hope that your dance will be as sparkly and magnificent as it can possibly be...

Yes, I hope all these things and more for you...

I am thankful that our paths have crossed...

There was a reason that you read this book at this point and time in your life...

About The Author

Paula M. Ezop is a spirituality commentary columnist. Her inspirational columns *Following the Spiritual Soul* have appeared in Oconee Today, a South Carolina Scripps Howard publication. They are currently in: Celebrating the Success of the Modern Woman, Esteem Yourself, and Open to Hope. She has contributed to such popular books as Chicken Soup for the Caregivers Soul and she has written the foreword to Whispers of Inspiration, a collection of both poetry and prose gathered from voices around the world.

Paula also co-authored a book in the Mommies Line, *Spirituality for Mommies*, and she has written *Sparkly Bits of Spiritual Wisdom*, which is a collection of her inspirational columns. However, closest to her heart is *A Widow's Journey – Healing a Broken Heart*.

Wiggles Press has published her children's chapter books, *The Adventures of Penelope Star and the Mystery of the Three Dragons*, and *Lee McKenzie's Summer to Remember* – both are the first in a series.

Paula holds the Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Elementary Education from Northeastern Illinois University. Her heartfelt and meaningful writing began as a means to overcome the loss of her husband. Paula has now written hundreds of articles and several books centering on life and faith. Her sustaining philosophy is that "we are more than the woman we see in our mirror."