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Oh! WOMAN PROFILE

The North Carolina Arboretum



Oh! WNC Woman's New Look!

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THE TRAIL IS CALLING AND I MUST KNOW

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL. Lots of people dream about hiking it, but few actually start it (around 4,200 in 2017), and fewer still finish (around 20 percent). My friend, “Dilly-Dally,” and her partner, “Butt-Tape,” (their trail names) are two of the victors, completing the trail this past September.

The traditional route starts at Springer Mountain in Georgia and ends at Mount Katahdin in Maine. They did a flip flop thru-hike, starting their adventure in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, hiking north to Mount Katahdin, returning to Harpers Ferry, and ending at Amicalola Falls State Park, just south of Springer Mountain.

As they approached the park’s famous arch, Dilly-Dally said she experienced a myriad of feelings: joy and sadness, pride and humility, anticipation and fear. For the past six months, she had confronted numerous challenges—bears, snakes, black flies, rain, mud, etc.—but none compared to stepping back into “real life.”

It’s not that Dilly-Dally’s “regular” life was so bad. It’s just that it was filled with so many choices. It was overwhelming, especially compared to the relatively few choices she had to make on the trail.

Dilly-Dally compared the two existences to settings on a tape recorder. When she was in the woods, she said, her life was in “pause” mode, and, when she got out, it switched to “play” mode. Or, at least, her — or was it society’s? — expectation switched. And that’s what was troubling.

It was OK to be in pause mode in the woods, she explained. In fact, you’d drive yourself crazy if you always felt the need to be doing something. When she stepped through the arch, though, the clock started ticking again. Where would she live? What would she do for work? What should she have for lunch?

It’s now been a few months since her re-entry, and Dilly-Dally’s doing fine, though she struggles with the feeling that she should be playing more and pausing less.

Dilly-Dally’s experience got me thinking: What are “best practices” for living, in general? Should we always aspire to be in play mode, or should we pause from time to time? And, if pausing is, in fact, good, should we pause our whole life at the same time, or play certain parts and pause others? And how do we know when we’re pausing too long? We don’t want to miss out on life, after all!

I decided that, like most big decisions, the key is intuition. Our heart knows when areas of our life need attention. The problem is, we rarely take the time to listen — or have the courage to act on what we hear.

If your life feels a little off-kilter, and you’re not sure why, I’d encourage you to create a “Wheel of Life.” A version of this tool is said to have been used by the Buddha over a thousand years ago. While it has since been updated for modern-day application, it remains a simple, yet effective way to help people become more satisfied with their life.

To get started, draw a circle and divide it into eight sections. (The number of sections

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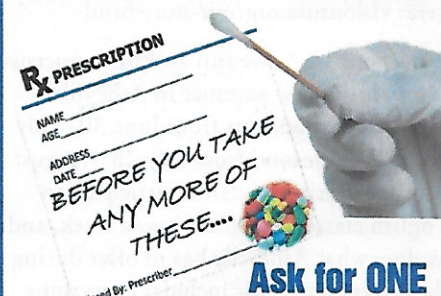
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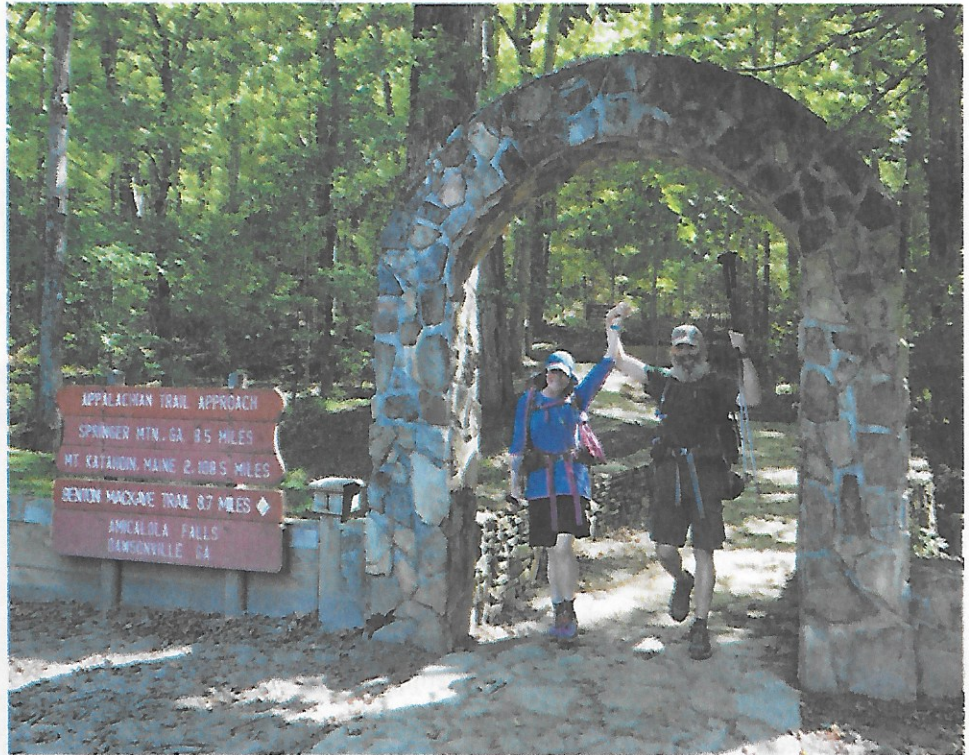


is really arbitrary, but eight is a good number for most people.) Then, label each section with an area of life, for example: Family and Friends, Significant Other/Romance, Fun and Recreation, Health, Money, Personal Growth, Physical Environment, and Career.

Next, using the center of the wheel to represent low and the outer edges to represent high, draw a line to indicate your current level of satisfaction with each life area. Don't think too much about it; let your intuition — not your mind — guide you.

After you have an idea of where things stand, pick one or two areas of your life that you'd most like to modify, either by hitting pause or play, and start envisioning what you'd like those areas to look like. You can draw, collage, or write your vision — whatever captures the idea and sounds fun to you.

Finally, make a plan. Brainstorm a few things you can do to change speeds, and then commit to doing them. When you've determined a direction, share your plan with a friend or relative to increase your odds of staying on the trail! *OK!*



Pam Robbins is a life coach and owner of Purple Crayon (purplecrayonavl.com), a shared play space for women hobby artists just north of downtown Asheville. She loves helping women "adjust" their lives and is offering a pay-what-you-want Wheel of Life Workshop on Thursday, June 28th, from 6:30–8:30 p.m. at Purple Crayon. Please email her at pam@purplecrayonavl.com to register. Seating is limited.

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