

THE GUIDE

This Time I Dance! Creating the Work You Love By Tama J. Kieves

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Welcome to the “This Time I Dance” reading group. This group is designed for everyone whose heart sinks as they walk into their office. It’s a safe haven for any one whose has been laid off, down- sized or even fired from a job they hated, yet they still continue to send out resumes for jobs in a field they despise. This group is a secret hand shake club for those of you who find a three day weekend flies by at warp speed, yet your one hour Monday morning meeting drones on for eternity. If so, this book will set you free.

Tama Kieves, the author of “This Time I Dance” and your beacon on this journey, will guide you as you begin to “Choose to use your gifts and live the adventure of this lifetime”. Tama urges you to “Step into the larger scheme of following your dreams.” As Tama says in her book, “I wanted to share the journey, not just the map”

Shall We Begin?

Tama poses the same question to you that her friend asked her when she first dreamed of leaving her Harvard trained law practice at one of Denver’s largest firms, **“If you’re this successful doing work you *don’t* love, what could you do with work you *do* love?”**

Questions:

1. Take a minute and roll Tama’s question around in your brain. Really “be” with the question. Ignore the safe answers; be willing to listen for the answer that may not fit in with your mother’s, your spouses, or your co-workers idea of who you are and what you could do for a living. What answer comes to you?
2. (Centering Exercise) Next, be aware of your breath, breathing in and breathing out. Focus on the area around your heart; feel as if each breath is passing completely through your heart. Breathe like this for about 5-10 breaths. Ask yourself Tama’s question again. What answer floats to the surface? Was this answer different the first time you asked yourself this question?
3. What was this exercise like for you; does it seem strange to be vulnerable in a reading group? Could it possibly feel safer because of the group energy and support? Did ideas come up that were pushed away years ago, or did you feel “nothing”?

It’s More Practical to Be Magical

On Page 12 Tama says (have group read this together, ask a volunteer to read this out loud) “I know your predicament...A secret rattles your core, some outlawed prayer for

autonomy, mercy, and meaning. And every day you try to put a nice doily over your longing and just go on ignoring yourself like always. Only lately you feel like you're arm wrestling with a puma just to stay in control and not think those terrifying thoughts about changing your career. No offense, but I'm rooting for the puma. I'm all for the fierce love within you that will not let you settle for rationalization when a life of inspiration calls."

Questions:

1. When do you feel most inspired in your life? What time of the day? Where are you? Where and how does it feel in your body?
2. Regarding unfulfilling work Tama's response is "You know that emptiness you feel at your job. It's not emptiness. Its fullness repressed." Do you resonate with this quote? What have you repressed? What have you "put a nice doily over"? Whose voice do you hear reminding you that you can't or shouldn't try to unearth your creative dream?
3. In a perfect world, and it is what would you have chosen to do in your life or just for today, if you had not chosen out of fear or practicality?

On page 14 Tama explains why she chose the *Harvard Lawyer/Partner before 30 Track* and writes about her epiphany while on vacation. (Have the group read page 14-16 together. Go around the room with each person taking a paragraph. If they choose not to read, skip to the next person, no worries)

Start with the first paragraph, the last couple of sentences that begins with:

"Then the universe hushed into stillness, time paused, and the air seemed to tingle with imminence. And in between the sea's pounding intervals, my heart soared, whispered, roared, "Leave the firm. You can't go back. Honor your yearning to write."

Instantaneously my mind began screeching like the gulls harvesting the treats of low tide. "Now you're losing it altogether. You have an office with a view of the mountains; you're on track for partnership. Law degree from Harvard, remember? REMEMBER? You can't just walk out to sit on beaches and write pretty sentences."

How *could* I walk out? What would I walk out to? I didn't want another law job or a wacko, stressed out killer career. *I wanted another life*, one in which I didn't have to split myself between who I was in my bones and who I was at my desk. Come another ungodly Monday, I didn't want to have to jam myself into pantyhose, pumps and pretense. My soul cried out for congruence.

I had always, *always*, wanted to write. But I signed up for law because encouraging, well-meaning people told me it would be more practical than starving as a novelist or journalist or we-won't-even-discuss-it poet. And I

believed them because they drove nice cars and seemed to have a plan. Besides, I could practice law and write on the side, I reasoned, with the mind of a 22 year-old who thought she could do anything, please everyone and live forever.

So much for reason and practical plans.

In other words, I had chosen this career out of fear, with the strange conviction that somehow if I worked in opposition to the voice of my heart, I would find security and fulfillment. I fled from rainbows in search of pots of gold. Stifling my passion, I'd hoped for strength and satisfaction. No wonder I only found despair and a tiredness that seemed beyond repair.

Sometime after the beach scene, I did leave my position as a corporate litigator with Smith & Hudson. And I did not seek out another "good and reasonable" job. This time I decided to listen to my heart-not as though it were some crazed dangerous trickster or pipe-dreaming fool to avoid-but as though it knew something and held some fabulous customized direction for me and all the strength I would ever need to follow though. I began with a desperate hope and tenuous curiosity. And on the greatest adventure I have ever known, I ended up discovering not only another way to work, but another way to live.

You can too.

It all comes down to this: We can deny our hearts or we can deny our limits

We can choose to be "practical" Or we can dare to be magical. But if you knew where your heart could take you, it wouldn't even be "practical" to choose practicality.

Only inspiration offers you a life of passion and of safety. There is another way to work. And no other way to choose."

Questions:

1. Did you resonate with Tama's inner calling to leave her career with the law firm?
2. Have you heard the voice of your heart and denied it out of fear? Have you ever in your life stood up to the fear and denied your own limits?
3. If you could change one decision that set off a chain of events in your career life, what would it be? How would you re-write the story?
4. What are the similarities between your journey and Tama's? When in your life have you created the space, (no matter how small) to follow your dreams and feed your soul?

Tama explains “It’s easy to “see” ourselves as trapped when we listen to fear instead of inspiration.”

Caterpillar Blues: No Way Out But Transformation

On page 19 (have group read from 19-20 together each taking a paragraph) Tama suggests that:

“Something in us longs for the impossible because we know it’s possible. A caterpillar gazes at a cloudless azure sky with a sense of longing and belonging. Yet this low-bellied being cries “No way, there just no way I can get from here to there from the earth and grass of history and familiarity to the sky of delicious flight I ache for.” The caterpillar guesses right and wrong at the same time. So do we.

When we look with caterpillar eyes, we can’t reach our dreams, can’t disregard gravity and the challenges we see before us. We can only scrunch up the oak one inch at a time, years and fears from blissful sky. Yet the moment you crave that sky, you’ve recognized the presence of another life within. It is this inspired self that know the exotic ways of wind and breeze and sudden rampant ease.

Our hearts have called us on to completion and evolution on the embodiment of our hidden thirst and ceaseless hunger. The butterfly fluttering within causing the stirrings and restlessness will not be stopped by our assumptions and habitual limits. The mountain that obstructs a caterpillar daunts not his winged incarnation. The awakening of the unbounded one within us will awaken panoramas all around us. *The possibilities change as we do.*

That’s why your dilemma doesn’t matter. Your bills and bothers and history. Merely problems of perspective. The restrained self will always see a restraining world. The thwarted one can’t ever see exalted ways. We who crouch in darkened hallways cannot see the pink of newborn light upon the ocean and fettle landscapes gleaming.

Albert Einstein explained the paradox something like this: A problem cannot be solved at the level of the problem. He could have said a caterpillar will never figure out how to handle a butterfly’s path. Neither can you. No matter how much you think it all the way through.

Trust the process. A calling calls to remind you to enter the mystery of instinct and the metamorphosis of an inspired life.

Honor your passion to emerge. Say yes to a supernatural, all natural self within. Then let creativity transport you to the borderless places, the magical spaces, where caution cannot tread.

This is the ride of your lifetime. Say yes to this sacred invitation, and let the birth and realization of your life and work begin.”

Questions:

1. Can you relate to Tama’s comments on perspective (When we look with caterpillar eyes, we can’t reach our dreams...” Any comments?
2. How have you honored your passion to emerge in the past? In what ways have you trusted “the process” in the past and how did it impact your life?

Nothing Stops a Whole Heart

On page 21 Tama introduces idea the of an average size mother lifting a one ton car off her crying child, she explain that love fills the mother with her mission: “I’ve got to save my baby.”

Tama say’s “that’s how you will do work you love. Your primal heart will override common sense, knock you off your fence and have you raging and storming for you trapped desire instead of *against* its “temptations”

According to Tama,

“You will never realize your dreams by focusing on passion-sucking, brain-distracting, imaginary, and mutating obstacles. This dream – birthing process is not a cool and rational process of sipping iced tea and considering alternatives. Instead you might say it’s the recognition that you have no alternative, want no alternative and can no longer wait for reason and thunder to catch up with the lighting flashing and clairvoyance of your heart.”

Questions:

1. What’s your opinion of Tama’s comment about “your primal heart will override your common sense”? Has anyone experienced that “heart override” in any area of their life?
2. Tama writes “Decide to live your dreams before you can foresee the means. You can feed attention to your obstacles or you can feed attention to your desire. One gives you magnified obstacles. The other brings you fire”. What does it take to actually decide to live your dreams? What emotions have you gone through and what demons have you wrestled (or are you still wrestling)?

Critics Only Rattle the Rattled

Tama shares that she squandered a lot of energy stewing over other peoples opinions and insisted that she’d feel better if only they could see the light. She believed that everyone who unglued her is a “secret doctor” on a special mission from the universe sent to diagnose a self-inflicted ache within her psyche. She explains that she spent lots of time

blaming her mother for being unsupportive, and concluded then she could avoid acknowledging and dealing with her inner unsupportive self.

Questions:

1. What kind of support would you like to ask for from your unsupportive self?
2. In what ways do you avoid answering questions from your unsupportive self?
3. What secret doctors have you encountered?
4. The experience Tama had with Richard the owner of the Chinese restaurant left her feeling like she replayed a dream and got the ending just right because there was no one left to convince. Can you share an experience where you felt triumphant in that way?

Tama says “Let people have their opinions, their theories, suggestions and impressions. Choose not to fight. Live your life.”

One Size Does Not Fit All

Remember the story on page 32 where Tama shares her thoughts about visit with the Paxtons, the older, well-to-do couple? The couple commented that someone in their family sold a book and was a pauper, and they never made a penny.

In the last paragraph on page 32 Tama writes:

“In bed that night, I tossed and turned thinking about that penniless author. How did the Paxtons define “pauper”? Less than a six-figure income? Driving a red Volkswagen? Still renting? Okay, even if Rachel and Richard knew the history of this woman’s bank account, could they know here heart’s account? Did she sleep better now? Did she write a line in that book that made her jump up and twirl on her hardwood floors singing, “for this I came, for this I came,” to a cracking ceiling and the diaphanous membranes of the heavens? Did her penniless manifesto pave the way for her next book, or maybe her next career, lover, or therapist? I don’t know. I had no clue whether she’d say she felt empty or full, bitter or blessed, trashed or transcendent. Neither did the Godlike Paxtons. They simply evaluated everything in terms of money. But I looked for the honey.”

Questions:

1. Tama says “It doesn’t matter what we can buy, It matters what we buy inside.” What do you buy inside? What do you believe about yourself?
2. Tama poses the questions “What will you live for? What you look like to others or what you feel like to yourself? Appearance or experience?”
3. Remember the after life fantasy Tama wrote about. She explained that beings in white robes showed her a movie of her life. In the movie it is revealed that Tama had chosen not to follow her path. One of the angelic beings in the fantasy says to Tama “You were meant to write books, we thought you knew.” If you were to

view a movie of your life, what in life would you realize you were meant to do?
What path should you have taken?

Count on Support You Can't Account For

On page 42 Tama suggests you may have had to claw and grapple to create a life that barely felt all right. But once you listen to the larger direction within you, you stop swimming upstream and the flow of life changes in your favor.

She explains that Joseph Campbell put his findings this way: "I even have a superstition that has grown on me as the result of invisible hands coming all the time—namely if you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you."

Tama talks of her wish for a mountain retreat to write at, but, how she was limited by her resources and could not afford the rent on an alpine getaway. Her friend Lucy knew an older woman with an in-law apartment that she never wanted to rent. But she decided to let a "quiet writer" friend of Lucy keep an eye on her and pay less than two hundred dollars a month. Tama was thrilled to escape to the mountains to let her writing unfold.

Tama tells us "Trust the unseen networking of all of life. Those invisible operators are standing by to take your call and place your order. Life does work in your favor, when you do."

Questions:

1. Tama says "Okay, coincidences, luck, providence, cosmic woo woo, voodoo or grace. Something unusual happens when we choose to follow our inner connection." What instances of synchronicity have occurred for you when you were listening to your inner voice?
2. What "order" would you like to place with the invisible cosmic operator?

It Takes An Intermission To Give Birth To A Mission

In the previous chapters Tama covered most of the blocks that come up before you even let yourself consider a dream but then she says there is still the inertia thing.

"You know, "I'd leave my job in a heartbeat, if knew what else I wanted to do." Thump. The ball drops. No lasting focus because you don't have the time. **Your job has your time.** The foul monster is shredding hours and weeks in its rotting, dream-stealing teeth even as we speak."

"Draw a line, Take back your time, you can't wait for your heart to bloom with a vision in the middle of days teeming with madness and maintenance. Nothing flutters into a clutter life. The frantic and exhausted mind does not possess the energy to inspire a love-filled path. But you can find a way to curb or flee the madness. And when you do, your dream can find its way to you."

On page 52 Tama says “we have to leave our prisons to find the keys to our freedom. ...we only tend to find our mission once we take an intermission from the work life that doesn't work.”

Tama shares the story of Carol who works in word processing but longs to find her path. One day she buys the latest career search and “do your dream” book and flips through it one day after work. The book suggests writing exercises, Carol yawns and passivity sinks it. She flicks on the television and that becomes her evening.

On page 53 Tama explains Carol's internal dilemma.

“Great, she thinks, I can't even get myself to do one exercise. How will I ever create a whole new life? I probably don't have the commitment and the drive. Maybe I'm luck to have the stupid job I have. But Carol forgets what she feels like when she hasn't worked all week in an environment that demands she hold her true nature in a high-security check as though she secretly contained plutonium. She has denied herself for so long that she can't exactly remember what it taste like to expresses herself, honor herself, embody herself. Carol forgets what it feels like to feel interested, engaged, rested, centered, and once again connected to an incandescent composition of life. That's why Carol needs a time-out to recover from her own self-misuse----breathe big, rest large, and recall the forgotten strength that can accomplish what seems impossible to an exhausted and denied self.”

Questions: (from Tama)

1. Who are you? What do you believe you can achieve? What do you believe you deserve? Can you trust yourself? Can you trust your world?
2. Tama says that the above questions can't be answered on your lunch hour, while visiting the post office or calling your husband? How can you create space in your life to begin to answer these questions? Are you living a less expressed life?

What about those of us who can't leave their full time work? Tama relates the story of a client on page 54.

“Another client of mine couldn't leave her full time work, so instead she used her weekends to research the idea of opening up her own boutique. Meanwhile she squirreled away money for her “escape route”. More important, during her work week she no longer stayed late or said yes to extra or last-minute deadline assignments. As she put it, “I do what I have to do without giving away my soul anymore. I've given up my attachment to this job. I'm saving my energy for what I really want” You might say she took her “time out” while still putting time in to a necessary livelihood.”

On page 55 Tama's advice is to "Consciously let go of what tires you, and what inspires you will take its place." Do you agree?

Sometimes You Serve Onion Rings to Serve Your Journey

On page 56 Tama explains that:

"Most of us will need a monetary lifeboat. Your life boat isn't a way of life, but an ad hoc vinyl vessel that somehow helps cross you over to an economically sustaining creative life. I often suggest leaving behind your real job and securing a "dropout" job, work that covers some expenses, maybe not even all your bills, but definitely, definitely, definitely does not consume or define you. You want something transitory and loose, not another noose that constricts our identity or steals you brand fealty." Let's read the three paragraphs on pages 59-60 where Tama describes her choice to wait tables.

Questions:

1. How difficult would it be for you to leave a job of status for a life of substance?
2. In what way would you nurture you talents if you had the space to explore their horizon?

Closing Meditation

Sit in what ever way is comfortable for you, Relax your body, release all tension and worry. Go back to the rhythm of your breath; imagine each inhalation to be nurturing fuel for your journey to your creative oasis within. Each breath supplies you with the energy and stamina you need to fulfill your destiny. Visualize each outgoing breath as a way to release your dream from your self imposed shackles of fear, and self-mistrust. Each breath is like a key unlocking your dreams that have been held hostage by self-doubt, fear, and a lack of faith. Focus your attention on the space in the middle of your eyebrows (the place the ancients referred to as the third eye); imagine your breath to flow through this space giving you the clear vision of an artist, the wisdom of a sage and the confidence of a warrior. Breathe through this sacred space and know the only permission you need to succeed on your journey is your own. Silently ask your wisdom eye to show you a symbol, a word, or a path. Treasure this is a message from your wisdom eye, because it emanates from your creative genius.

Closing Quote

"Go ahead. Step into the glory. You will find your way by going deep into the inklings you find. Trust me. *Trust you.* And have a nice trip."

Tama J. Kieves

THE GUIDE

This Time I Dance! Creating the Work You Love. By Tama J. Kieves

Welcome Back! Welcome to week two of the “This Time I Dance” reading group. Has everyone been reading the book and allowing their dreams of right livelihood to blossom? Let’s come together in a brief opening meditation.

Opening Meditation

Let’s relax, and focus on our breathing, connect with yourself through your breath, leave your job, your journey by car, bus, train or on foot to our group. Leave all your obligations behind and just be here. Be aware of any tension in your body and gently guide your breath to that area and imagine your breath clearing away all tension, worries and fears. Once again bring your breath to the area around your heart and breathe as if your heart is a set of lungs bringing each breath into your body and allowing it to pass through your heart. Upon each inhalation imagine your heart to be filled with light and this light acts as a beacon to open you to all the creative possibilities that lie before, with each breath your heart lights the way to creating the work you love and the life of your dreams. Now, send your breath out onto that path before you. Imagine your breath following the light from your heart to the space which your dreams reside. Be aware of any symbols, words, sounds or images that may come to you from the space where dreams reside, for these are a message from your heart.

Questions:

1. How did this last week go for you? Have you all been reading the book? Is there anything anyone wants to share about this last week?
2. Has any experienced any resistance, either from themselves or family, friends and co-workers?

Full Hearts Inspire Fit Budgets.

How do we handle the feelings of deprivation as we embark on a new life and leave the shackles of expense accounts and impulse buys behind? Tama says that;

“This path is about real freedom-not just the “freedom “to be rash because you’re bored and you have cash. Relax; you won’t have to hold yourself back from what you want. Instead, when we gravitate toward the dream we really want, the feeling of completion feeds our covetousness and stimulates our health. Then we naturally turn away from inadequate extravagances because vanity, excess, and insanity no longer feel like wealth.”

Let's turn to page 68 and read together continuing to page 69 starting with:

"I remember the blue ceramic vase in this Olde English store thick with cranberry potpourri and Debussy, on tourist Georgetown. Priced to impress or depress, depending on hour perspective. That night, I wanted to lord my well paying job over the way-too-pleasant sales clerk with pimples and every happy person on earth, because I resented my workdays and had to have something to show for my misery. Like, perhaps, a vase.

"This vase." I whipped out the credit card, my jaded partner in crime. "See how well she's doing" I heard guests whisper in my mind as they spied this object d'art in my apartment and tittered appropriately among themselves. For an instant I warmed, and it almost felt like love. "I deserve a reward" I said to myself, my latest mantra of self-denial. I needed a bribe to endure any unbearable success.

By the time the ceramic royalty had sat on my end table for a week, I decided it didn't match a single picture, table, chair, couch, lamp or wall in the house. It sat aloof in its corner and became an animated, inanimate reproach. Okay I'd wasted more money. My buying euphoria had settled into a now-familiar shame and private decadence. "Good thing I make a steep salary," I'd think to myself again, never noticing the link between my joyless job and my elevating expenses. The wrong career creates the need for money. Only the repressed turn reckless. The expressed have better things to do.

Face it. We live with ache until we live our dreams. Ache costs. We "reward" ourselves, distract ourselves, and spoil ourselves and survive ourselves, because we cannot bear to feel ourselves. An unlive dream will sit on your heart like a sumo wrestler. We can fail ourselves in silence, but not in ease or peace. This discomfort triggers us to search for lures, cures, drinks, parties, cruises, bunging jumping excursions and good department stores. Substitutes for passion and fruition. Deprivation gnaws us to excess. Still, the need for a heartfelt life does not pass and the sumo wrestler does not budge or ever go on a diet.

Live your dream and you will live in balance. It's some kind of organic law of the universe. As your days become sweet, you will not seek distraction or relief. Your own creativity will fill the emptiness and still the pain and it will also tickle you silly and sane."

Questions:

1. Could you relate to Tama's story of about drowning your lack of passion in your life with extravagant purchase, outlandish trips and binges of all sorts?
2. Have you ever felt so in alignment with you life, so balanced, that the newest, latest, hippest, tastiest, chicest person, place or thing didn't matter.

3. What created that feeling of living your dream? Was it love, working with passion, an interior retreat to your spirit? How would you begin to find your way back to that connected centered self? What would your first step be?

Ushering in the Exiled Love

For many of us trying to decide what we are meant to do, create, be, embody is the most difficult of all questions, what *do* we love?

Tama's journal entry reads like the message from an ancient sage:

“The shifting voices of a thousand selves eventually must tire and dwindle. One voiceless voice dwells in the void and discerns. Wait and you shall have the knowledge you seek. Rush and your own anxiety will answer you.”

On page 79 Tama encourages us to ease up on our pursuit for clarity.

“The vagueness will clear when you decide to embrace whatever you hear. I like to remember that I don't have to struggle for what I already possess. You came with instincts and imperatives and they will thrust through the mud and bud in their own glad season. It's not your answers or ideas that you need to worry about. It's your resistance to your ideas, and immediate reaction to choke the strange and uncomfortable. Take care of these weeds and the creative seeds will take care of them selves.

There's nothing to choose. Just something to set loose. Meanwhile relax, and receive. Receive and believe. The heart always knows. You have everything you need.”

Questions:

1. What do you hear, what are you afraid to hear, what is your something to set loose?
2. Did you resonate with Tama's quote?
3. Tama's friend asked her “What would you do just for the joy of it on the last day of your life? How would you answer that question?”

Drop the Gun and Have Some Fun

At the top of page 88 Tama vowed:

“Today, I explore my interest with attention, not condemnation.” She goes on to say that for too long she listened to the joyless voice of the joyless way. That's why I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I only knew what I definitely didn't want to do.”

According to Tama:

“It’s the unencumbered mind or child self that retains our joy and the connection to things unseen, but known. It’s our first nature that knows the code in our bones.

Tama says if you want to find work that feels like play, you do have to play. *You do have to play.*

“Take your young heart to a toy store and have a look around. Call it research and development. Tama asks “what is the toy store for you? A wellness or nutrition center, a computer chain, craft and hobby store, a trail where a wild rose grows?”

Questions:

1. Where would you go to explore and unearth your dreams? Where is your toy store?
2. What would you do if your friends, family, or co-worker wouldn’t question your sanity?

Only the Real Dream Has the Power

Tama invites us to “choose gloriously. To seize our wild want, not that freeze dried politically correct mild want. Only the real dream has the power.”

Let’s read pages 92-93 together and join Tama as she struggled with wanting to legitimize her writing versus writing the work her soul wanted her to share.

I know that once I stopped trying to fit what I wanted to do into some kind of real-world form, what I wanted to do sprouted urgent feathers and took flight. I didn’t care where it led because I could never go back to a life of limits on my love. I know it sounds preposterous to choose something when you can’t imagine how it could work. But on this path, it’s riskier to see how it can work and how lit will taint your love. Choose the storm instead of the form.

Desire will take you beyond limitation. *Unless you limit your desire.* How much do you burn to do the work you love? Will you let yourself want this want with all your heart? Or will you hold back a ripple of enthusiasm to “protect” yourself?

“What we hold back holds *us* back. It’s too easy to quit when we don’t really want the prize. Weak tea doesn’t warm the bones like the brandy of desire, and soon a bitter cold can send us running for cover. It takes more than reasonable plans to unleash unreasonable strength.”

“Submit to your hearts most wondrous desire even when you do not know how to translate this delicious nuisance into a career that buys Purina for your cat, Cheerios for our children, and that paper with the want ads-just in case. Feed your want. It is your strength and the source of a rollicking creativity. You can move mountains if you are moved.”

Questions:

1. Could you relate to Tama’s story? Have you tried to legitimize your dream only to extinguish it?
2. What moves you to move a mountain?

How to Skip through Fog

On page 95 Tama says that “I know of no other way to find and follow your calling than to take the next visible step before you. Clients come to me hoping for maps, Triple A “TripTiks” and other itineraries, and I tell them they must enter the shadows of their mythical forest and stalk their infallible breadcrumbs.”

Let’s read the paragraphs together beginning on page 95.

“I look back at the trail of breadcrumbs I’ve followed with fascination, mirth, and a hearty salute to the unpredictable and incomprehensible. Basically, I left law to write poems and unravel the mystery of myself. While writing poetry, I decided t write a non-fiction book to put my message out into the world and to carve my word sculptures into prose. Work on the book spilled into offering support groups in my living room, then workshops and retreats, then coaching private clients. Radio shows. Interviews. Travel and speaking engagements. Meanwhile, the adventure romps on.”

“Yet I never consciously set out to do any of this. Not any of it. And thank goodness for the foresight to have no foresight because I could never have mapped out this unthinkable tapestry of grace. “Where can writing poetry ever take me in life? I groaned and wailed in journals and in coffeehouse to nodding and wide-eyed friends. So glad I wrote poems and found out.”

“But, but, but, we all say. We want a plan, a program, a blueprint. “We want a double-decker bus, a schedule, and a campy tour guide. We want order, control, and a telescope into the future, not some firm and feel-good step on a mushy murky route into bewilderment. We demand a static definition for this ecstatic evolution. That’s nice. But no dice. It’s just one foot in front of the other on a road your intellect may never understand, and your heart will never doubt. The path of inspiration defies navigation. We arrive by way of revelation.”

Questions:

1. What did you learn from Tama's story, can you relate this story to times in your life that you had things unfold for you serendipitously, have you ever had seemingly minor moments unfold into magical outcomes?
2. When reading Tama's story did you feel like the challenge was to walk on the tight rope of our dreams without a net, it seems like we all want permission not to have a air tight plan of attack to approach our dreams, what would it take to give yourself permission? What first step could you take with an open heart *knowing* that miracles are just around the bend?

The Year of Sleeping Dangerously

On page 100 Tama begins the chapter with a journal entry:

“Letting go is death. People think leaving a job is about leaving a job. It's about leaving a life, a history, a context. A cubbyhole, the only person you knew how to be, and the one everybody loved”

Tama explains that “Two minutes after you make your grand entrance into a bold new life, don't be surprised if passion and anticipation give way to a divine sludge.” Tama refers to this as “...The transition zone” Her response is “Congratulations. Collapse is progress”

Questions:

1. Remember when Tama asked herself on page 102 “Was gazing at my walls for hours “following my bliss” ...And how would I pursue “the hero's journey” if it took me three hours to get up and brush my teeth?” Can you relate to her experiences of paralysis?
2. What types of avoidance tactics are you using to prevent you from finding yourself? (Snacking, cleaning, sleeping, shopping, talking on the phone, over-committing?)

Let's go to page 102 together and read starting with “This undoing process...and end with the paragraph on the top of page105 ending with the sentence “All work we love come from the love we give ourselves.” Do you resonate with Tama's perspective?

Tama says that:

“Today I speak in front of crowds of people, but that doesn't take near as much fortitude as undoing an intact identity, deciding to die midstream to a life you've always know. I know who the real hero is. I owe every triumph I experience to a tender part of myself who years ago, got under flowered quilts, yawned, and surrendered to a process that didn't look like progress. It took that kind of inner revolution, maddening and frightening, for me to discover a unified self that moved with love and prowess.”

Questions:

1. What part of your life are you afraid to let die so that you can begin to surrender to your new life?
2. Can you relate to Tama's quote about the difficulty of undoing an intact identity?
3. If you could think of one word that describes your new life (the one that you are hoping to create) what would that word be?

You No Longer Have a Label, but You Do Have a Ticket

On page 105 Tama explains that:

“Just months before I'd had a business card, letterhead, people who recognized me in the mirrored elevator and a set of circumstances that met with immediate acceptability instead of eyebrows raised, throats cleared and usually, poor advice offered.”

On the bottom of page 105 Tama shares an experience she had at her former colleague's home:

“I remember standing around at a former colleague's baby shower in her newly remodeled gawk worthy home...Like always the inevitable nightmare question came up either as” So what are you doing now?” or “What do you do for a living?” My face would turn plum and my fingers would strum my sweater as I'd aim for some slick reply and ended up sounding like a flower child gone to seed.

So I learned the hard way, the embarrassing painful, sheepish way to hush up, eat more olives, stop going to parties, and stop trying to explain in some inexplicable, soul-filled odyssey in an eat-some-peanuts-and-have-some-small-talk kind of way. At this point in my life, I did not have an identity or role. I had a gap in my life that was just plain off the map and I actually felt better when I didn't try to cover it up like a great big stain on the rug. I was there. I was there and I was definitely out there, in process land, the territory between safe places.

Many of us don't seem to know what to do with ourselves when we're in process. It's almost like we see process as failure instead of promise.”

Questions:

1. How does the state of “process” feel to you? What kinds of situations have come up for you in your life while you are dealing with your own soul-filled odyssey?
2. What is the most difficult part of this process for you? What is the most liberating part of this process for you?

Let a Tiger Guard the Temple of Your Time

On page 114 Tama reminds us that:

“Your commitment to time-out in our keep-hopping, no-stopping, lazy-phobic society will challenge you. Few of us “follow our bliss” without squirming and waiting for the productivity police to bust in mid-ease, and haul of us away to irresponsibility prison where we will eat gruel and master the rules of austerity. Not working the insane hours, and then on top of that spending good money on fringe-type workshops, books and tapes can sound like madness, especially when sadness has felt familiar and safe. But nothing is more important during this time than taking time to know yourself once again, giving yourself the space for self-revelations to take place.”

Let’s read the top two paragraphs on page 116 where Tama speaks to the process of guarding your time to allow for self discovery.

“A period of self discovery is a lot like falling in love. No one pays you for your commitment to wandering the old rose garden of your own enchantment and birth right. Yet you won’t find anything, at least not in this lifetime that provides more value.

Guilt wastes precious time. Guilt’s twin false “productivity,” eats hours too. I hate to break this to you, but you did not quit your career to organize your closets, help your husband with his business, sty on the phone with co-dependent friends, pick up the neighbor’s kid from school, hit the sales at department stores, or re-tile your bathroom. You do not have time for coffee klatches of gossip and lament. You do not have “free time’ but time you pay for excavating dreams and navigating means.”

Tama reminds of how important this period of self discovery is:

This is womb time, a time of safety and extra-rich nurturance, meant to feed a precious new life that grows strong and wondrous only when given what it needs to grow strong and wondrous.”

Exercise:

Fold a piece of paper in half vertically. On one side of the piece of paper write down “Dream Blocking” on the other side write “Dream Building”

Write down all the activities that block you from uncovering the forgotten “you” of your dreams, the life your heart yearns for, the obstacles for you as you navigate your path. Next under the Dream Building side, write down your triumphs, your discoveries, your inner and outer journeys that help you navigate the winding and sometime treacherous road to the life you were meant to live.

Questions:

1. What was that exercise like for you? Would anyone like to share from either side of their page?
2. What has been the single best and the single worst time for you while following this journey to your heart?

Master Approving Instead Of Improving

On page 130, (can we read this paragraph together) Tama remarks that:

“Our culture doesn’t exactly steer us in the direction of trusting ourselves. We are taught from an early age to guard against rather than revel in, our natural instincts. We are told we might get ahead of our selves or behind ourselves- or worst of possible fates—be blind to ourselves. But, of course, I’m about to suggest the blasphemous. I’m about to tell you that you don’t need improvement as much as you require attunement. And attunement comes from trusting more than self-adjusting.

It took me a long time to accept my creative process” says Tama, “My process was learning to approve of myself first before I tried to improve myself. I had to tell myself over and over, “You’re doing everything right sweetheart. Just give me more, more, more, more of you. Stop looking over your shoulder and look only to your heart.”

Questions:

1. How do you censor yourself? What ways do you disapprove of yourself that stops you dead in your tracks?
2. What can you do to support yourself?

Closing Meditation

Going back to your breath, be aware of the excitement you feel in your heart when you accept your creative self exactly where it is at this moment in time, unfolding like a small bud, but with the potential of a ripe blossom. Breathe slowly through your heart, with each breath you take you feel more centered and in alignment with your creative self. Imagine your heart to be a small bud and with each breath it slowly begins to open like flower, extravagant in its beauty, lush, colorful, fragrant and completely original. Petal by Petal your flower unfolds. Be aware of your breath as your flower blossoms in your own unique way. And be reminded how each flower in nature is trusting of the process of unfolding and accepting of its own original expression.

THE GUIDE

This Time I Dance! Creating the Work You Love. By Tama J. Kieves

Welcome to week three of the “This Time I Dance” reading group.

Questions:

1. How did this week go for you? Any breakthroughs or roadblocks?
2. Is it helping to meet with this group and share your journey?

Quixotic Means to Exotic Work

“Let the way that you work love you. Let the way conform to your own holy nature instead of squeezing yourself into tight places or giving yourself so much space you drift away” A Journal Entry

Let’s go to page 135 and read the first paragraph together.

“Now, no longer do we have to squeeze our aliveness into somebody else’s cubicle or work style or hours. But how do you begin to work and how do you touch the fire? Do you work in an evening gown or in your underwear, in an office, a warehouse, or a beanbag chair? I think we all want a clinical formula for productivity. Ditch any standard or expectation that doesn’t come from your heart. Just get to know yourself exquisitely well.”

Tama quotes Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Dillard when she says “A schedule defends from chaos and whim, It is a net for catching days”

Tama reminds us about schedules:

“It can also represent a date with yourself or with destiny or with those crackpot goddesses who lit this candle in your heart and said you could rouse a fire that would glint its way through dimness

Now it’s up to you to experiment and invent. But mostly listen. Listen to what love would have you do. Fear and guilt do not belong in this equation. They have nothing to do with stirring up pots of inspiration. Forget your grim images of work and responsibility. Pick an approach that, moment by moment, brings you comfort and sets you free.”

Questions:

1. How do you create a schedule in your life to let you unfold?
2. How has creating more space in your life helped you? How difficult has it been to trust yourself and your process?

3. Remember the example Tama gave when she couldn't make herself write? Her friend Kir told her to just accept being tired; he reminded her that she was just fighting herself, demanding a certain outcome. Can anyone relate to that story that begins on page 140-143? Do you agree with Tama's conclusion when she said "I know it seems like sacrilege to stop trying? But I know no other way to begin to *fly*."

You Must Be Small To Be Great

Tama compared her writing to a kindergartner's when she measured her writing against famous writers. Let's read together beginning on page 158 and ending on page 161.

Questions:

1. Can you relate to wanting to become an "instant master"?
2. Do you agree with Tama when she says "grandiosity actually chains us to inferiority"?
3. What one step can you do to "be small to be great"?

Remember Tama's quote:

"If you wait for skill before you dare anything, you will only wait and ache. Yet proceed with simplicity and you will inch, then launch, toward proficiency. Don't ache to be great. Don't desire and wait. Care enough about your gifts to get there."

Nothing of Substance Happens From The Outside

Tama says:

"The hero's journey creates the hero. Heroes don't skip steps, bribe the bouncer, or jet off to lush destinations. That's tourism. Heroism doesn't mark a change in position—but a change in self. Real achievement occurs in our energy, in our chemistry, and in the way we hold ourselves even when no one else is looking"

Others can hand you their power, but they can never hand you yours. Transformation of any kind always exacts a holy tussle. The newborn butterfly struggles to open its wings so it can conjure up the strength to fly. So, too, with artists, inventors, mystics, and entrepreneurs."

Showing up Always Shines

On page 164 Tama describes the internal struggle she had with herself every time she sat down to write. Let's read these seven paragraphs together beginning with "If there's one conversation I've had with myself a hundred times..." ending with the paragraph on page 166 that begins with the sentence "We are drowning when we are disregarding the mission within us."

Questions:

1. Tama says “Avoidance likes to tell you that it’s saving you pain by keeping you from the one thing that will make you feel better”. What are your thoughts about that statement?
2. Tama offers the guidance: “Do the one thing, Face your work. Small deeds build strength. Take the tiniest step you can imagine toward your dream and you’re back on track.” What tiny step can you do?

Just Start Dancing and the Band Will Find You

In a journal entry Tama wrote.

“I don’t need a paycheck to give myself permission to work toward my goals. The market pays for mastery and professionalism, not potential. If an editor ever asks, ‘So, what have you got?’ I don’t want to mumble, ‘Nothing yet, I’ve been waiting for you.’”

Let’s read page 176 to the top of page 177 together (can each person take one paragraph?) On page 176 Tama says:

“I know so many creative soul friends who cloister their abilities like pearls oyster shells beneath the sea, praying, hoping, sinking, aching, and waiting, waiting, waiting. They wait for their chance like some kind of leprechaun to appear in the tall grasses with an embossed invitation from the queen. You *are* the queen. **And it’s not chance that creates our chances.**

You have enough opportunities to share, showcased, and refine your talents right in the here and now. Belt out your song, over the baked beans at the company picnic *now*, paint postcards to your friends, practice telling your stories t the Jewish nursing home where somebody’s mother sleeps in loneliness for most of the day, interview a fascinating person for your community newspaper, or design a website for a firecracker organization you believe in. Tiny actions taken with huge-heartedness awaken fortuitous breaks, and breakthroughs. Some of the richest opportunities await in the plainest of circumstances.

Fling those precious pearls like dandelion seeds to the breeze. Let life get wind of you. Sharing your gifts invigorates and promotes them. Talent intensifies with use. Meanwhile, guarding your gifts keep them in the dark where they do not grow or glow. Waiting until “the right time” usually means waiting in your sea cave until you have achieved artistic perfection in this lifetime-which you can never do. This can make it tricky to attract a clientele. Yes there is a time to go inward. But then comes the time to no longer hide your love.”

Questions:

1. Tama explains that we all have enough opportunities to share, showcase and refine our talents right in the here and now. What opportunities do you have to share your talents right now? What small step do you need to take to be prepared so that when someone asks “So, what have you got?” you’re prepared.
2. Tama reminds us that “Experience is power. Experience is exposure. Experience leads to experience that leads to expertise and glowing auras. And, boy, when you’re talking glowing auras, there’s no telling what you’ll attract after that.” Tama’s point is opportunity rushes to experience. Can you remember a time you “put your talents out there” and reaped the benefits? In what way can you step out of your comfort zone and step into your power?

Love is Your License and Your Highest Credential

Remember when Tama decided to attend the free workshop at CFU to recruit and screen potential teachers for proposed classes. Tama was mortified by her inability to articulate why she wanted to teach creative writing. She compared her class description to the slick descriptions that other prospective teachers described. Tama forged ahead in spite of her self doubt. When Tama met with the university’s program coordinator she was ecstatic when the coordinator said that every staff member had unanimously agreed Tama should teach her class. Tama wondered why the hiring committee had selected her. Years later the coordinator confided in Tama explaining, “When I hire instructors I don’t put much weight on experience. I look for the spark in the teacher. That spark will ignite a classroom”

Let’s read page 182 thru to 183 together and hear what Tama has to say about “the spark”.

“The gleam in our eyes and the beam in our hearts means even more than the diplomas and paperwork behind us. It’s nice to have the right qualifications. But there is no higher qualification than genuine inspiration.”

“Trust the spark. Where you find your natural exuberance, you will find security. A sparkling heart attracts interest and opportunities and beams out messages that no resume ever could. “This is the one; this is the one who has the energy and devotion,” chants and whispers your enthusiasm.”

“The ordinary pales before the fire of genuine excitement. Love shines and even blinds- or maybe some darling cherubs do the hokey pokey behind you and make everything all right. Either way, your spark will blaze the way, enchant the gatekeepers, and save the day.”

Questions:

1. Have you ever had an experience where your spark blazed the way for you?
2. Why do you think “the spark” helps create opportunities?

Never Mind Marketing: Hit the Mark

Remember the story on page 184 where Tama shared about her experience at lunch with her friend Ralph. When Tama suggested to Ralph that she was going to write her book first without securing a deal with a publisher his response was total shock. Tama says she might as well have said “I’m climbing a wooden ladder to the moon. I’m running for president on a campaign of bubble gum wrappers. I’m learning how to speak to Martians via the Internet”.

Tama explains that many of us have well-meaning family and friends who let their fears get in the way of our dreams; they offer advice and warnings. Tama said she just smiled her “I’m so interested” smile while she hated those “right way to proceed” speeches.

Let’s share Tama’s thoughts and read together the paragraph starting on page 187 beginning with the word “Listen”.

“Listen to your desires and thousands will hear themselves. Express your individuality and it reverberates with universality. Your own will find you. But first you must sound the call. You must find you. Why guess at what other people prefer? You *know* the notes of your song. No other song will do. No other expression expresses you.”

Questions:

1. How many of you have doubted your dream when you heard “the right way to proceed” speech?
2. Did you overcome your self-doubt or was this roadblock a permanent detour from your dream?

You Will Never know the Way, but Go All The Way

“I never understood how moths could soar in to flames. Now I do. The calling turns irresistible. You don’t care what happens. Even the heat of fire is better than the cold and silent death of holding yourself back.” A Journal Entry

Tama shares that “Inevitably some “real world” event will challenge you, convince you that you are delusional rather than inspired, definitely dancing to a tune of your own, and alone in all the universe with no hope of success or redress. The mind can always find eight thousand reasons to turn back. And maybe you don’t have one good “reason” to go forward. Then one day it just doesn’t matter any more. You give up the thought that you will take your dream into the world in ways you know. Now you are most pliable and magical. And that’s a fine day. Because now you are willing to let the torrent of instinct float you all the way.

Remember on page 190 where Tama describes walking into her local bookstore and discovers someone had written “her book”. That someone had a Ph.D. and a forward by a famous person, and endorsements on the back cover. It made her question herself and wondered if she should continue writing her book? Tama wrote in her journal for clarity

and discovered that “It just didn’t make sense to believe that everything had gone this right, only to go sideways now” Then she experienced “an even bigger question sweeping in like the gust of wind that pushes the wildflowers in meadows to their thin green knees. *What about the outcome of giving up? Dying inside. Denying my insides*” Tama said she began to write one word over and over again: Trust. Trust. Trust.

Questions:

1. Have you experienced your own “real world” event that challenged you and your creative dream? Have you considered the idea of “giving up” and how that would impact your life?
2. What would it feel like to just “trust”? Have you experienced a feeling of “trusting” the path and the process?

Tama reminds us that at a lecture she attended the poet Maya Angelou talked about her own decision to trust at a difficult time in her life. Maya said “He would not have carried me this far to let me down now.” Let’s read page 193 together and share Tama’s wisdom about being called to the dance.

“Love does not call us the dance only to deny us chances. There is consistency in this journey. As in the beginning, so shall it be in the middle and the end. Love does not tempt us to leave what we know, only to level us without direction, resources, synergy, and flow.

Trust on and move on.

You have never known the way. You will never know the way. But the way knows the way. Remember, love would not have carried you this far to let you down. Love moves in mysterious ways, performs beneath a haze. But its unseen magnificent power takes us all the way. It may take us away from the way we assume. But it takes you all the way.

Keep going into the unknowing. Yes, each moment takes you farther away from predictability, but draws you closer to your sacred abilities. Each step equals a commitment to believe in your soul’s holy quest for recognition and expressions, more than to believe in failure of any kind. That is the choice. That is always the choice.”

Question:

1. What is different in your life since you started reading Tama’s book and exploring your creative self.
2. On page 202 Tama remarks that “You could say that, as artists and creative entrepreneurs, we become unwitting mystics. Though the process of creating, we personally experience the vastness, the power, the tenderness and the vitality of an inviolable presence we did not know before, or at least not on a first-name basis. Do you agree with Tama?

On page 207 Tama closes her book with divinely inspired marching orders:

Choose to use your gifts and live the adventure of this lifetime. Step into the larger scheme of following your dream. Let's deluge the world with the ultimate dancers, people who feed their souls with work and feed their work with soul.

Soul will see us through.

Does anyone have any comments or anything to share before our closing meditation?

Closing Meditation

Relax your body and become aware of each breath, breathing in and out imagine each breath liberating you from a life of mediocrity and allowing your spirit to soar to the creative heights you have yearned for your whole life. Focus on the rhythm of your beating heart; imagine the sound of your beating heart is a creative pulse, urging you on to realize your dreams. In your minds eye visualize a small pond residing in your heart, crystal clear, calm and reflective, be aware of the pond. Focus on the pond and imagine a small pebble falls into the center of the pond sending a series of small circular waves emanating from the center out to the shores of the pond. One by one, by one, they reach the shore of the pond until finally the pond once again begins to become calm, clear, and reflective. Slowly you begin to see an image, forming on the reflective surface of the pond, slowly it comes into focus. Remember this symbol, for this is a message from your heart guiding you always along your creative path.

Want FREE monthly inspiration? Check out Tama's website at www.ThisTimeIDance.com and sign up to receive her free email newsletter "Trusting the Journey Times."

