

Take a hike - for good

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You're stressed. You're unhappy. You're feeling out of sorts.

Here, in six simple words and two easy sentences, is the way to solve your woes: Get outside. Go for a walk.

There. Wasn't that easy?

Now, this isn't my theory (although I tend to subscribe to it). I got this advice from a woman named Sue Kenney. Kenney is a Toronto-based author, filmmaker and storyteller who has spent the last five years trying to guide people to greater self-awareness and enlightenment.

She's made a film (it's called *Las Peregrinas* and it's being screened in London tomorrow), recorded a CD, performed a one-woman show (including appearances at the London Fringe Theatre Festival) and written a book. She's been interviewed on radio and TV and for newspapers and magazines. She leads workshops, delivers speeches and offers coaching and consulting advice.

That's a lot of words, images and energy. And to be fair, Kenney's message isn't something you can completely explain with just six words (Get outside. Go for a walk.)

But I know you're busy. I'm trying to save you some time here.

If you're truly interested in Kenney's message (and it is truly interesting), you should see her documentary, *Las Peregrinas*. You should probably read Kenney's book, *My Camino*. You should probably check out her website (www.suekenney.ca) and subscribe to her newsletter.

You might even want to keep reading this column.

Because once upon a time, Kenney was a high-flying executive with a big-bucks telecom company. She had kids and a successful career and had attained the pinnacle of her chosen sport by winning a gold medal at a world masters rowing championship.

But two of her kids moved away. And then she lost her job.

"Suddenly, my identity was gone," recalls Kenney. "So I wanted to get back in touch with myself."

So Kenney got outside and went for a walk.

But not just any walk. Kenney flew to Spain and for 29 days trekked the 780-kilometre Camino de Santiago de Compostela -- the legendary trail travelled by pilgrims for more than 1,100 years.

And Kenney discovered something: herself.

"When I started out on the Camino, I had all these fears," she recalls. "I was afraid of falling off a mountain, I was afraid of getting lost, I was afraid of being robbed, I was afraid of being alone.

"And I faced all of those fears," she says. "And then I realized that my deepest fear was facing the truth about myself and what I was put on this earth to do."

Kenney decided to dedicate her life to teaching others about the lessons she'd learned on the Camino. Then in October 2005, she returned to the Camino with five other hikers. That trek -- and the personal epiphanies experienced by the novice hikers -- forms the basis of her film.

But Kenney emphasizes the Camino is only a metaphor and you don't have to trudge 780 kilometres through Spain to learn the important lessons of life -- things such as simplicity, compassion, courage, discipline, awareness and love.

But you might want to try the walking part. According to Kenney, even a 15-minute walk, particularly in a natural setting, can transform us.

"Mindfulness is about the balance between activity and surrender," she says. "So walking is the activity, and the surrender is the idea of letting go of your thoughts and being present with what's around you."

But don't try to "work things out" in your head. "If we go for a walk, the mind will work things out without trying. It's all about clearing the mind to allow the thinking to take place."

Go ahead, see her film, read her book, visit her website. It's all good. But also remember that, at its core, Kenney's message isn't all that complicated: Get outside and go for a walk.

LAS PEREGRINAS

- The film will be screened tomorrow at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. at King's University College, 266 Epworth Ave., in the annex to Dante Lenardon Hall.

- Tickets are \$10 and should be available at the door, or call Joan Mortimer at 519-636-3294.

Proceeds will fund dance therapy programs for cancer survivors.

Illustration:

photo

Guide: sue kenney has spent the last five years trying to guide people to greater self-awareness and enlightenment.

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