



My girls are giddy, y'all.

The temperatures have reached a steady warmth and, despite the pollen dusted sidewalks and porch swings, we've finally felt safe enough to put up those bulky winter sweaters and pull out our pretty, flowy and fresh outfits for spring.

This means it's sandal season, too.

And pay attention, lads and gents. This goes for all of you, as well. It's time to peel off the mismatched athletic socks, trim the chipped nails and let those puppies breathe.

For my husband, this means he will be sporting the golfers anklet tan, which will highlight his blinding – and very large – bright white feet. Luckily, he tans easily. But there will still be a few weeks during which everyone can spot him 150 yards down the road a piece.

For us ladies, it's an entirely different ball of wax... or should I say paraffin waxing machine?

We must apricot scrub, slice, tan, trim, wax, lotion, loofa and sea weed wrap our feet on a bi-weekly basis so we look as good as all the foot coddling makes us feel.

I, unfortunately, don't have the patience for it all. I really, really wish I did. Unlike my glass-half-full, optimistic, get-over-it-girl, life-is-too-short girlfriend, Alicia.

Inevitably, come sandal season, our weekly lunches start to include a pedicure, or more specifically, a pampering pre-cursor before a leisurely, late lunch on a much needed day off with white wine instead of sweet tea.

Sounds perfectly amazing though, right?

For those Alicias out there, it is. It's an almost euphoric experience. Massage chairs are vibrating. Spa jets are a spurtin'. And the multitudes are controlling the universe and crushing candy or something from their smart phone while the tootsies are being rubbed, salted, sanded, painted and polished clean.

For me, I just can't subscribe... or even wrap my foggy head around the whole Zen-like foot-centric thing. It makes me nervous (and a nasty case of staph on my heel a few years back didn't help matters.) See, my first pang of anxiety happens when I simply walk through the door. Bells start jingling, incense starts wafting, burnt offerings are turning to ash and then they ask me, point blank, without circumstance, pomp or a complimentary beverage... what do I want?

Seems easy enough, right?

But I start to immediately get panicky. What DO I want? Isn't that one of life's most elusive questions? And I haven't even begun to figure it all out and now I have to submerge my feet in scalding water to let them simmer and stew much like my brain when posed with any kind of existential question.

What do I want?

So I now feel like I should be DOING something, or at least get chin deep . . . not ankle or shin . . . in figuring SOMETHING out . . . not just sitting there staring at my feet.

Sole Searching

Written by Laura Packard

I can't help it.

I guess I'm more of a barefoot hippy at heart.

But maybe that's the whole ingenious point. The answer's not in the something but the doing.

As a child, that's what those first warm, balmy breezes of spring were all about; a tickling of a ripple, a burst of cool water washing the soul.

Getting shoed outside.

The slam of the screened door behind you.

Barefoot in the grass.

Feeling, actually feeling, the squish of a mud puddle, the soft, downy pillow of blown dandelion weeds, the waxy path of a clover field; dipping your bare toe in a chilly spring, navigating the slippery, slick bottom of a lake, burying your heels deep into the salty sand of a shoreline, kicking up frothy waves.

There was also plenty of pain, at first, those first few weeks of outdoor living, running on tender feet.

We all have scars to prove it. We were hard-worn forest and backyard warriors, bearing our scraps, nips and wounds like aching-sore badges of honor.

Sole Searching

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The sharp wooden stab of a splinter from a weathered dock; the pin-hot sting of a red ant bite or two, or twelve, or twenty; the unbelievable torture of precious flesh touching burnt asphalt as hot as boiling tar-just to get down the street and to get where we needed to go...

Which was always nowhere in particular.

And was always a lot of fun.

So it's finally time to toughen up our feet as Mother Nature intended, first hand . . . or, more correctly, feet first.

Pampering is great no doubt about that . . . but don't forget to kick off those shoes.

Connect your feet directly to the earth.

Breathe.

And don't just be.

Do.