

Word of the Year 2009 – Soar

By Sue Ludwig

Last year at this time, I wrote this post about my 2008 word of the year: Clarity. That's important to note. My year of 'clarity' enabled me to clear away the clutter in my life, discover my priorities, voice my intentions, and learn to be truly present. Living with that level of clarity was like removing a blurry film from my eyes. I stepped into myself.

That year prepared me for the word I chose in 2009 – SOAR.

I didn't know, of course, what choosing the word soar would mean for me. In fact, I was surprised I chose it. 'Soaring' seemed a bit out of character for me. I've always been more of a 'go with the flow' sort of person. Historically, I don't make waves. I don't try to stand out. I just do my thing, do it well, and go on.

But each day there it was, this word soar. Soaring invoked visions of flying, so I thought, "Wow, I better get moving if there's *flying* to be done!"

But I didn't feel some huge lift-off. There was no 'wind beneath my wings' experience. As it turned out, like many things, soaring was a process. But 'soar' was my constant behind the scenes motivator-sometimes it was like a whisper, sometimes like a kick in the hiney.

Whenever we do something on a bigger scale, the rest of the world only sees the end result. They see the 'soar'. This year taught me that there are a million steps to soaring, and sometimes I felt the energy of that word in the smallest moments.

In the end, what I created this year was the National Association of Neonatal Therapists. This had been a vision of mine for a long time. It was a soar-y vision. It was out of my comfort zone. And that's exactly why my word was so important. It guided me into something amazing.

This is what I learned this year about what it means (to me) to soar:

- To soar, I needed a very clear vision. An unclear vision would've felt more like floating than soaring, and would've produced scattered results.
- There was so much to do to prepare this association for the world. Sometimes the pretty picture I had in my head of 'soaring' looked instead like numerous tasks involving banks, lawyers computers, and writing. I spent hours upon hours becoming educated and mentored. There were days of overwhelm where my laid back self was challenged to continue to act on my intention. But then I'd finish my list for the day, think about the big picture of what I was doing and literally squeal with excitement. My word was there cheering for me.
- Soaring, for me, also involved dedication to balance. I can't soar from a place of exhaustion or extreme stress. I can't feel good about doing anything if I'm not also able to spend time with my

husband and kids. So sometimes it was about putting all the work away and shooting hoops with the kids, walking the dogs, going to bed early, and having time everyday when my husband and I shared the best and worst of our days with each other. I exercised imperfectly. But I did it anyway. I kept my doctor's appointments, dentist appointments and went to acupuncture. We vacationed as a family. I read about 15 books.

- Occasionally when I was stuck in a rut I swear I'd hear my word say, "Is this what soaring looks like?" And I would take at least one small step to move out of that rut. And really, that's all it ever takes to begin again. I realized I could choose to soar in those individual moments.

So, on the inside it was the culmination of those 8 bazillion little soaring moments that led to the outside picture that said, SOAR. Kind of like watching animators create a movie one frame at a time.

I was mostly prepared for what my word would help me create in the end – the National Association of Neonatal Therapists. What I wasn't prepared for were the gifts it brought with it.

Because I chose to soar, I was able to stand in front of a room of therapists just like me and tell them I had a gift for them. A way for us to finally exist in the world as an entity. They blew me away with their energy, gratitude, and excitement. They took me by the shoulders, looked me in the eyes and thanked me! I stood in front of a table that bore the association's banner, logo and name, which also held the huge vase of red roses my husband had sent to congratulate me.

I have never experienced that level of excitement-gratitude-relief-completion-joy in my life. I had chills down to my toes.

I was soaring.