

ARAMAHOSHI - BIG PLEASURE IN SMALL THINGS.

Daily Delights - Living and loving simply.

At this time of year, the media is full of articles urging us to improve ourselves. It seems that every paper and magazine and every social media account I see bombards me with pathways to a better life. From diet and exercise tips, to decluttering and improving the home, we are urged to improve, restructure and generally get a grip on ourselves, our relationships, hobbies and surroundings. Wearying and somehow laced with a thin veneer of criticism, the implication seems to be that we aren't being our best selves, but need to sharpen up our lives and all these pointers of theirs will lead the way to improve, look better, feel better and generally BE better in 2024.

I'm all for improvement and believe that change is imperative. Some changes, both good and bad, will occur without our input and some will need thought and effort to implement. But January can be a tricky month. New year can easily bring feelings of accountability. The empty diary needs filling and there's an air of unpredictability in those blank pages. No wonder we are urged to better ourselves and look to improvements over the year just gone. Social media can really get into the cracks of worry, and reinforce feelings of inadequacy.

Sadly, it's all too easy to soak up images of seemingly perfect others who post their effortlessly gorgeous, glamorous, creative and fulfilled lives. And then our own existence is all too ripe for the January blues and feelings that improvements are essential if we have any hope of keeping up with the pack.

Comparison is said to be the thief of joy. Can we believe there's contentment in having just enough?

January trickiness extends in many directions. The greyness of daytime that, although lifting, is still moving painfully slowly. For many of us, the post holiday financial deficits are compounded by the half yearly tax bill. Germs are rife and trousers are tight.

So let's now look at the ways through this that don't sap our energy, bank accounts, or feelings of self-worth.

A couple of years ago we were encouraged to lean into Hygge - the Danish way of self care based on comfort and feelings of cosiness derived from an ancient Norse term meaning 'to embrace'.

Cosy, safe and harmonious, this can easily be achieved and much has been written to help us to apply it to our everyday lives.

Taking up the concept of achieving a better balance without the stress of those pesky 'New Year, New You' articles, this blog explores Aramahoshi the idea of joy in small things.

Translated as 'Desirable Ideal', Aramahoshi is about finding peace in imperfection and learning that simple living is enough.

A 14th Century term, it originated in Japan described by the poet Kenko. So many moons ago he was already looking for contentment in a precarious world. Sadly, centuries later we are still trying so hard to find this peace.

Uncertainty is all around us and coming to terms with a lack of resolution is the goal here.

He wrote that 'The only constant in life is change' and explores the idea that we have to lean into the things beyond our control. Rather than focusing on what is lacking, he urges us to turn our attention to the seemingly small things that are within our grasp.

He celebrates the ordinariness and the everyday.

Things that are easily attainable but often overlooked may not be the same for all of us, but the meaning is clear - we are looking at things which are probably easy to find, need no significant investment and just make a day better.

We will all have our own list of what impacts us this way, but the main thing is creating small pockets of contentment and being aware of them. We have the power to find our own moments of Aramahoshi.

It's the tiny everyday pleasures, the small daily delights, and the ability to see and hold on to them that really counts.

Christina Fraser

JOY

Joy does not arrive with a fanfare,
on a red carpet strewn with the flowers of a perfect life.
Joy sneaks in, as you pour a cup of coffee, watching the sun hit your favourite
tree, just right.
And you usher joy away, because you are not ready for it.
Your house is not as it must be, for such a distinguished guest.
But joy cares nothing for your messy home, or your bank-balance, or your
waistline, you see.
Joy is supposed to slither through the cracks of your imperfect life,
that's how joy works.
You cannot invite her, you can only be ready when she appears.
And hug her with meaning, because in this very moment, joy chose you.

Donna Ashworth