

What Is Your Life the Answer To?

If you're suddenly full of questions (*Where am I going? Is this all there is?*), rabbi and all-around wise woman **JENNIFER KRAUSE** gives you a new one to chew on.

"I'M STALLED," THE YOUNG

woman said, sitting mannequin-still in the bustle of the café where we met. Although grateful for a wonderful husband, beautiful children, and the valuable work she did each day, something was making her engine falter, and nothing could give it a jump. She called it a crisis of faith. Yet for her, as with many people I encounter in my work, it did not involve God or religion. It had to do with a broken trust in the meaning of her life—a struggle that transcends church, mosque, yarmulkes, and yoga mats; age, geography, and tax bracket. It's a trust that can break not only when you end up in a place you hoped you'd never be but also when you have everything you ever dreamed of.

"What's the point?" she asked.

"I know you want an answer," I said, "but what you need is a new question."

When you get stranded, the way to start moving again is not to search for an answer but to find a new question to which your life can be the answer. Whether you're celebrating the birth of your firstborn or marveling at her graduating in cap and gown; whether you've landed a dream job or hit retirement, are getting married or mourning the loss of a longtime love—every one of these moments is a starting line. Feeling stuck doesn't mean the meaning has gone from your life. You've just outlived one question and need to find the next—and the possibilities are endless.

True, it takes some searching to find your new question, but everyone has what I call an SPS—a Spiritual Positioning System—to guide them. This SPS is the instinct that makes you stop multitasking and lean in closer to hear what someone's saying because a sentence suddenly gives you the chills. It's the impulse to keep hitting replay on your iPod when

John Legend sings "Ordinary People," daring you to wonder what you're afraid of if you trade a "fairy-tale conclusion" for the "confusing" reality of everyday love. It's the headline that stays in your mind long after it fades from the TV screen, prompting you to think, *Do I have a talent or an idea that could turn this problem into yesterday's news?* It's the photo of you as a girl, writing a story on your grandfather's typewriter, that turns up in a drawer and makes you consider, *Is there someone I forgot I wanted to be?* As long as you keep letting life ask you another question—and reveal that there is always more for you to be and do—you are unstoppable.

The stalled woman who came to me for "the answer" didn't receive one that day, but she did get the jump-start she needed with a new question. While we sipped our coffee, her SPS suddenly engaged as the conversation turned to an organization she had created. I was marveling at how she'd grown it from a staff of one to a team of devoted people when she realized she was putting in the same amount of energy now as she had when its existence depended solely on her. The organization had become what she'd worked for so tirelessly, but it didn't need her in the same way—and although she certainly hadn't stopped caring about it, the passion that had driven her was gone. "I've been trying to find what's missing, figure out what I need," she said, "but the question is, What else really needs me now?"

It was only a beginning, but just sensing that there was a new answer for her to live out was the start of finding her faith—and her fuel—again. **1**

Jennifer Krause's book, *The Answer (Perigee)*, will be out in November.