

Pathways

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"it is so beautiful not to get caught up in a story"

Will Morris

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Fear

So imagine yourself standing on the edge of a cliff, attached to a rope, leaning backward about to repel for the very first time. In this moment, it has been my experience that you are probably going to experience one of two feelings: Something akin to impending doom or intense excitement. Then you push off, and amazingly, the rope doesn't break, you lean back into the harness and the vision changes.

So let me offer a suggestion; The greater the fear of loss, the greater the power of connection. Say what? Suppose for a moment, that fear is a call to awareness. Suppose for a moment that fear is a trigger point that holds energy in place, it is a place of stagnation within, it is a place for us to turn our awareness and ask what it is that we are being called to learn.

So let's go back to repelling, or climbing for a moment. During my life as a field geologist, any time I have faced a fear of impending death on a rock face (either with or without a rope, or a climbing buddy), there has always been an incredible sense of freedom that was associated with facing the fear in the moment and taking the next step. Now please understand this isn't the same thing as thrill-seeking for its own sake. We are not talking about being an adrenaline junkie here, we are talking about self-discovery and awareness. Thus far, I have survived every fear I have faced in life. More-

over, every fear that I have faced has resulted in a deeper awareness of self, a growth in understanding, and the discovery of new abilities and/or energies within.

Right.

Let's bring this one home them. Fear is a natural part of life. It is a gift because it shows us our points of inner stagnation. We can use the energy of total inner honesty with self, combined with the energy of intent, just like I might use a needle in acupuncture, or a question in coaching...to release the energy block and allow the energy of life to flow.

When I see the fear for what it is: An opportunity to see in myself that there is hidden potential behind the fear, then I enable myself to embrace the notion of opportunity and the gift of freedom. Being honest with myself is tough, especially when I don't necessarily like the truth that I might see within. But this is the call of mindful awareness. Mindful awareness calls us to be honest and responsible...take ownership for all of who we are and learn from the opportunities that the insights offer.

So the next time you find yourself hanging off the edge of the cliff of life. Laugh, step off and the rope will be there for you, because there is potential in stagnation, opportunity in freedom, and there is freedom in opportunity. ☺

Opportunities

Following hard on the heels of the last article....let's discuss the idea of personal challenges (or opportunities) for a moment.

When life throws up an opportunity to learn something important about ourselves, it often comes in a fashion that is not altogether comfortable.

A lot of times we are faced with things that we don't want to experience or we don't enjoy facing. Often our greatest opportunities to grow as humans being are attached to events that may be emotionally traumatic or painful. Notice I said 'events' here.

I am drawing a very clear distinction between a series of ongoing painful events that cause us to learn, and the willful decision to choose the victim's path of suffering. Pain is a natural result of an event, suffering is a choice to remain stationary, stagnant...for whatever reason.

So with that said, let's move into the meat of this article.

When we are faced with places to learn about ourselves and recognize the action of old personality programs at work we often do one of several things. Invariably we choose to either: A) back down, B) blame, or C) distract. There is, however, a fourth choice: The choice to (as Pema Chodron so accurately puts it) "lean into the spikes." This path is never easy, but offers the highest potential for personal growth and insight.

So let's look at the choices:

- A. To back down. This is the path of the gremlin voice, which keeps us safe, secure and small. To back down is to fall back into the patterns of programmed behavior, and that is a very comfortable place to be.
- B. To blame. This is the path where we look outside of ourselves for someone or something to blame, which is a darn sight easier to do than taking

ownership and responsibility.

- C. Distraction. We all know this one, it is so natural to distract ourselves with food, entertainment, sex, work, drugs, anything that takes us away from the painful place that looms ahead of us.
- D. Leaning into the spikes. Here is the path with the greatest potential. It is intensely painful to step into the unknown, to dare to find out that you are indeed stronger and more capable than you might have thought.

When we dare to question our preconceived notions of how the world is supposed to be, we are challenging our entire experience and a lifetime's worth of programming. Much of the programming was written when we were very young and could be running in the background, almost like a reflex action.

Let me give an example...

One of the easiest and hardest things for me is patience. Put me behind a camera lens and I have the patience of an oyster. Put me in a deeply personal stressful, mentally or emotionally painful situation, and I want resolution. I want to fix the problem, I want the pain to go away and I want answers. My problem-solver self goes into hyperdrive, supposedly on my behalf, and I push for resolution...at any cost. It's part of my program. In reality, what I do is push until I get the answer that is most congruent with my inner gremlin voice, which tells me that I am unworthy. Inevitably, I push until I get the rejection that my gremlin believes that I deserve.

Not exactly the smartest choice available to me under the circumstances. Saying that, however, doesn't make it any less painful though. Allowing patience to emerge and allowing things to unfold in their own time is waaay harder for me to do, and takes an incredible effort of

will.

Something that emerges for me in the space that patience creates, however, is the idea of trust.

Trust invites me to truly examine one of my coaching principles: That there are no mistakes. Now if I truly buy into that one, then even the most painful and emotionally challenging events in my life are there to teach me something, and create opportunities for me to emerge wiser, more loving of both self, and other, and to take one step closer to profound awareness.

Placed in context, each challenge that I face is an opportunity to embrace a larger, more aware version of myself. It is an opportunity to delete some of the older programming that does not serve me. It is an opportunity to upgrade the system to a more user-friendly program.

The event then, might be massively painful in the moment, but in its fuller context, it is simply a call to action, an invitation to look within, and within self to find the hidden potential that allows me to emerge more richly human.

There is one last aspect of this that I want to unwrap too...the notion that even in the moment of intense proximal pain, there is a component that suggests to me that the event is merely a symptom of something larger at work. In this moment, I am invited to take a step backward, and put the event in the context of the fabric of my life. In what way is the current event merely a fractal of the larger picture? And...if I can see that, what is the larger opportunity that is being presented to me?

To step beyond fear, to step beyond old programming, to embrace the possibility of potential takes courage, commitment and trust.

When an event comes up in your life ask yourself: How pointy are the spikes?

“What makes a cup useful is its emptiness”

Taoist proverb

Transformation

Most of this newsletter has been about inner transformation. It is the work of a lifetime, and the call of our lives, moment-by-moment. How we choose to respond to that calling is as variable as the number of people who are invited to make that choice.

So what does transformation do? What's the point?

Ultimately, I guess I have reached a point in my life, where I believe that our inner work is what allows us to manifest our greatest potential within this lifetime *in service of the planet*.

Well, that's just ducky.

No really, look at it for a minute...anything that prevents us from unleashing our potential is depriving the planet of something vital. It doesn't matter whether I am an engineer, a bricklayer, or a painter, janitor, circus clown, or a doctor. Each of us has hidden potentials within, potentials hidden behind energy blocks of one kind or another. If the energy blocks are removed, the potential can be unleashed and we can step into a more vibrant world with a greater sense of power and presence. I can move from being a bricklayer to being an extraordinary bricklayer. But stepping into our potential is downright scary...and so it should be. The mere notion of power and presence is a call to take ownership of every choice you make

in the world and at the same time to see yourself as a component of something so much bigger than yourself. Embracing personal responsibility can easily be a double-edged sword...I can take so much responsibility that I make everything about me, when often it isn't...but of course...it is.

Conundrum: It's my universe...I am the only one who can see through my eyes or feel with my emotions, or understand through the filters of my own experiences...so yup! It's my universe and therefore everything is always about me. On the other hand there are roughly seven billion other humans on this planet who justifiably feel the same way about their own lives...if they have stopped to think about it at all.

All of which means that as the inner transformation takes place we step into a larger sense of self within a larger sense of reality.

Our inner work therefore involves the process of dismantling the ego self, seeing the softening of ego boundaries. Of course to do this, you must first know what you look like on the inside...and the instant you ask yourself this question, the inner work has begun.

So you have a couple of choices here: You can retire to a cave and ponder your navel for several decades or you

can immerse yourself in the process of living with passion. Remember...there are no mistakes here, so let go of the desire to make a judgment about that one.

Either way, eventually we begin to understand who it is that we are and then we can begin the work of transformation.

So what's getting transformed in this process? I would suggest that all inner transformative work, whether physical (health & wellness) psycho-emotional or spiritual (assuming that those separations actually exist in any real sense) is about removing and resolving any energy blocks that hold us within our pre-set boundaries. As we remove the energy blocks, we are removing stagnation from within the system and allowing our energy to flow more freely. In essence, we are opening pathways for growth potential. We are finding stagnation, releasing it, and creating opportunities for transformation and the dissolution of both the energy block and part of the ego wall. Do it once...and do it again...and keep doing it.

Your life is an onion, sometimes it will make you cry from pain, sometimes from joy...either way those tears are opening energy dams and creating opportunities for insight and personal growth. ☺

“Know that you will change over time, and commit to living in the here and now with honor and integrity in so far as you understand the terms and are capable of doing so right now.

Expect the best from yourself and be gentle with yourself.

Love the world and as best as you can, do no harm...understanding that the statement means different things to different people.

Honor others as they would want to be honored without compromising your own values”

Anonymous

Six Rules for How I Coach:

- There are no mistakes.
- There are no problems or challenges, merely opportunities, if we choose to see them as such.
- An issue can only be resolved by a higher order of thinking than that which created it.
- How we do anything, is how we do everything.
- We are greater and wiser than we think we are.
- We are all doing the best we can with what we've got, in the moment.



**For a 10% discount on a three-month coaching package
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