

sister who's perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue 211, February 2017, copyright

Overview

When I no longer directly feel the pain of an experience, I sometimes wonder whether it was really that bad--whether it may have been more tolerable than it seemed and served some higher purpose not immediately obvious. Yet once choices are made, there is no going back. I can only do my best to make sense of what happened, forgive myself for not being stronger, and do whatever good I can with whatever follows.

Painful Distractions

I've been told that pain makes one perfectly honest, because there is no energy available for the duplicity that dishonesty requires. If so, however, this is only the beginning. Having been inescapably confronted with the truth of one's experience, one must then look beyond the present moment of pain and remember the larger context and diversity of one's life--which remain every bit as real and true.

I am not only who I am now, nor only who I was within a particular past experience; I am all of that and more, specifically because I am still in the process of becoming--adding to the collection of memories, perceptions, and contributions that combine and form the fusion of unique consciousness and unique physical form that together are me. How can anyone encompass such diversity? Perhaps that is what makes human life a miracle--the interweaving of dreams, nightmares, love, hate, wisdom, and foolishness.

Perhaps the most common advice within the current time in response to misfortune, pain, or loss, is to "just move on." Is there anyone who doesn't understand how difficult this can sometimes be to do? From another perspective, however, it is also unwise.

This particular advice suggests that anything and everything can be left behind

as if it didn't really matter, but is nearly always employed only within circumstances that matter so much that one will never be the same from that moment onward. One has been changed--for better or for worse--by the experience. What is often overlooked are the possibilities for directing that moment of transition in positive or negative ways, by the choices one makes.

While standing too close to the moment itself, every choice looks relatively gray--that is, inseparable from a peculiar and unique combination of good and bad effects. While I can choose which package of outcomes are most probable, there is almost never any package that is exclusively good. This is when I often smirk and recall the witticism observed on a wall plaque many years ago, "No amount of planning will ever replace dumb luck." Even extensive prayer provides no guarantee that any future moment will be free from pain.

The goal of life, however, is not to be free from pain, since even the process of birth is inseparable from experiencing such. While we can diminish our awareness of pain and sometimes reduce its experience, detaching from it altogether denies us any participation in life's evolution and in the most holistic connection to its triumphs, which often justify all pain and personal sacrifice.

Was it all worth it? Are the contributions I made to others' lives by embracing the turmoil of the last two years of attempting to find affordable housing within northeastern places, worth the suffering and loss that I endured? I don't think I could hold the faces of those individuals within my memory and think otherwise. I can only hope that they will make good use of my contributions to their lives, becoming greater persons than they otherwise would have been--so that my pain ultimately doesn't matter.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Empowering Connections

Within moments when life seems stuck, I find encouragement in remembering that a single phone call can change everything. It may be a new resource, opportunity, or insight. It may be someone needing my help, who unintentionally thereby gives me a greater sense of purpose. Conversely, it may be a call that I initiate, to offer someone else a chance to engage in problem-solving, thereby building self-esteem. Once again, "Life is a collaborative effort: we all take turns being the one in need."

Specifically because we all take turns, being in need is not in any way an indication of failure or weakness, but rather a validation of one's basic humanity--from which springs our greatest acts of healing and creativity as well. Each person is a combination of such opposites that it is possible to spend one's entire life crafting and constantly improving one's particular integration. Yet I remain quite baffled whenever I meet someone who has given up trying.

Time is running out, I and others are inviting interpersonal connections, and yet some choose to allow past failures to stand in the way of all future attempts. It bears repeating that sometimes we are the best resource we have; meeting a new person--any new person--can open the door to whatever relational miracle is needed. No matter how much the world may enslave us to one or more of its many systems, we retain the ability to act independently whenever we choose.

Perhaps that is one of the obvious but overlooked qualities of connections that are genuinely empowering: they all require an act of choice, regardless of whether one initiates the action or receptively welcomes and accepts an action initiated by another.

As much as every choice has a cost, however, and the greatest choices risk the greatest costs, there is no regret if the choice is congruent with one's deepest values, goals, and dreams. Living life as much as possible without regret, testifies to an empowering connection with one's self, which generally comes only through time

spent in contemplation and self-reflection. In times past more than within the present era, perhaps, a primary tool of this was regular attention to a personal journal.

This may be a bit perplexing to some, since keeping a journal usually requires quietness and isolation rather than conversation or interpersonal interaction. In recognizing how interconnected and interdependent everything is, however, I have learned to take my times of isolation all the more seriously, because although I do not know the effect the thoughts and words I express in private will have, I have no reason to doubt they will have a profound effect upon others through my words and actions which follow. Foundations for empowering connections are more often constructed within hidden interior spaces than within noisy public forums.

It is ultimately who we are and who we have made ourselves to be, that shapes and influences any community in which we ever participate. As important as it is to hold leaders accountable and thereby maintain a specifically empowering relationship with them, it is equally essential that we do the same with ourselves. If I do not tell myself the truth, I cannot tell it to anyone else--but any truth that makes me sad is never the whole truth. The whole truth includes my ability to transform whatever I touch.

Christianity likes to speak of humanity as being created in the "image" of the Divine, but debate about what exactly is meant by this word will probably never end. It remains nonetheless true, whether one wishes to ascribe the source to divine conceptions or scientific evolution, that an empowering connection is an ongoing relationship, which ceases to be empowering the moment it is no longer nurtured. Among the pitfalls of institutionalized religions is the possibility of stagnation within such relationships.

The eternally available alternative, conversely, is engagement in fresh inquiry--with one's self, others, and all truth that is (perhaps only for now) beyond us.

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Enduring Contributions

As a writer, artist, and contemplative mystic, I have often noted that one's ideal audience may be a future generation, since perhaps the majority of creative persons throughout human history have been fully appreciated only posthumously. The works which have been sufficiently fortunate to be thus appreciated, for the most part, seem to have passed into immortality. Obviously the creators of such works are not around to enjoy any benefit from that appreciation, but it would nonetheless be erroneous to describe the works as unsuccessful.

There is something profoundly unwise and very sad about failing to value someone until after he or she is gone. Doing otherwise, however, provides opportunities for creative collaboration that have the power to magnify the scope, excellence, and positive societal impact to astounding levels.

What most often prevents such collaboration from happening, is simply short-sightedness. Specifically because one fails to see the potential of another or of another's work, the consequent result is that a long list of opportunities, resources, and support are denied and the only merciful characteristic is that the world is unaware of the wonders that never came to be.

My full name is Sister Who Does She Think She Is and as important as it is to consider my own beliefs related to my personal capacities, potential, and reality, it is equally important to consider what I believe about each person I meet. If I have foolishly categorized such persons as

*"A narcissistic life is
a wasted life;
it is in wisely bringing
all that one is and has
to all that others are and have,
that life expands to encompass
its most beautiful possibilities."*

-- Sister Who

limited, ignorant, or incapable, it may be that a long list of empowering contributions will never rise within them, to ultimately bless my life in more ways than I've ever imagined.

Genuine love is unconditional--on this, virtually everyone seems to agree. Failing to love may in fact be the greatest failing one can ever do, specifically because of the positive ripple-effects throughout the universe that never happen. This is why it is so very important to seize every opportunity we ever get, to do all the good we can ever do, and thereby make a positive contribution to the universe that will continue rippling outward from its point of origin, long after we are gone from our limited earthly lives.

All of our accomplishments stand on the shoulders of a myriad of preceding actions by others. If we similarly make our shoulders and our work into suitable foundations for others, our lives increase in significance, in scope, and in timeless relationship to the universe within which we live. It is not just a question of whether our work itself is good, but also of what others can build upon it.

Quality control is not merely the work of a particular inspector, but rather of every single person who has in any way touched each specific thing that is brought into being. In striving for excellence in all that we do and are, we make the world, ourselves, and those whom we love into greater realities than they could ever otherwise be. Yet we must do this not only with our knowledge of past experiences and methods, but also with the infinite possibilities residing within our imaginations and ever-evolving creativity.

In so doing, it is our eternal spirits which are being translated into manifestation through our limited physical bodies. Nothing physical has the capacity to be eternal, but each form is instead displaced by a more or less endless sequence of other forms. What we create out of non-physical substance, conversely, can live on and on and on.

It is perhaps among the greatest paradoxes of life, that a profound reason for being physical is to nurture that which is not.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Inspiring Visions

Even deep reflection upon grief and loss has within it innumerable possibilities for amazing transformation, so it is not so much a question of *whether* one ponders good or bad things, but rather of *how*--and more specifically whether one gets stuck on a specific point instead of moving through such contemplation carefully and constructively.

It remains as challenging to myself as to anyone to whom I've said it in the past, but it also remains true that even our enemies can teach us if we are truly listening. In virtually every case, there are deeper insights inviting discovery within even the most hurtful words, if we are able to perceive more than just the pain. In some cases, however, the insight may be exactly opposite of words spoken.

"God helps those who help themselves," I was told. I wondered if what the woman really meant was that her conception of the Divine helps people who unjustly help themselves to the fruits of others' labors, instead of holding her accountable for being a loving, compassionate, and relational person, concerned for the welfare of others beyond herself.

It would be easy to remain angry at her for being so short-sighted, but what her sad and small opinion makes obvious, is just how much we ourselves are the hands, the feet, and the heart of Godde, able to engage in healing. The most joyful and inspiring moments of life are consistently those within which one reaches beyond one's self and thereby embodies truly divine hands. The most loving and healing moments of life are those within which one reaches beyond one's self and embraces persons convinced that they are unlovable.

The most transformative moments of life are those within which--in response to any insinuation that all goodness has ended--renewal and rebirth open doors to greater possibilities than anything previously imagined or attempted. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of being human, is that rebirth and renewal are ever within reach.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

My housing circumstances remain more than a little precarious despite an enormous volume of innovative thinking, hard work, and prayer by myself and others. For now, I have managed to keep my family together and am exhausting every possibility that crosses my path, but (whether earned or simply given) a more solid and enduring provision within the immediate future (by March 7, actually) is absolutely essential.

Submission of all episodes for the last two years was completed within the past month or so, thus overcoming various delays and technical problems that occurred while I was living in the New England region. The annual calendar featuring Sister Who is now available, positive comments continue to be received from viewers of the YouTube online channel, and the monthly newsletter is of course ongoing also. It is not clear at this point, however, whether I will have sufficient resources to participate in the March 2017 Celebration Fair in Denver, Colorado--so I have not yet contacted the organizers of that event, having been away from there for just over two years at this point.

Through it all, I am striving to remind myself that what is most important is to shine whatever love and wisdom I can, into any and all moments of life I am blessed to live, while remaining vigilant for new possibilities.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS
POB 16074, Golden, CO 80402
email: dn@SisterWho.com*

Internet website: <http://www.SisterWho.com>

Additional Informational Internet Websites:

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