

The following are a collection of articles Julie wrote for
The River Journal magazine.

A Smile

You know how gum tastes when you've been chewing it long past it's productive, sweet flavor? You should have let it go a long time ago. It's stale and your jaws hurt. A spiritual practice can be like that too at times. And a spiritual practice is simply whatever you do to nourish your spirit; whether it is taking a ride in the country, meditating, praying, fishing or performing religious rituals. Sometimes you just get to a place where it feels stale, and no amount of meditating or praying or seriousness seems to change the feeling inside. The spark is dull. The desire is still there to feel connected and loved, but the wires seem frayed.

There is a simple recipe that works like a miracle, and that is a smile. What? A smile? That is supposed to do *what*? Well, it works like this. The staleness of spirit comes generally speaking from not feeling connected to something divine, but a feeling of being isolated and unguided or separated. It is truly only a *feeling*, but it is valid if it is yours. We are always connected, whether we know it or not, just most of the time we don't know it. So, herein comes the smile. A smile is an unspoken gesture of connectedness and love. No strings attached (well, not always), just touching souls in a simple body language way.

Try it. Go to the post office to start. I love the post office because it is one of the last remaining places where you can actually hold the door for someone. Every place else has automatic doors, or so few people going in and out it never matters. Anyway, at the post office, after you have held the door for someone holding a heavy package, smile at that person. And hold the smile a little longer and mean it a little deeper. Don't just turn away with a half curl kind of thing. Go ahead with the Cheshire Cat smile. In that one moment, which actually may only last 3-7 seconds in Earth time, you have made a spiritual connection that says an infinite amount. It says, "I don't know you physically, but I think you are divine." It says, "Just for this moment, I am going to show you my insides and they are not as messed up as I may otherwise attest." A smile says, "In some way, we are all the same, we long to love and be loved." You're saying, "My spiritual practice is real, not serious and boring, but practical."

Many people have told me that someone's smile changed the mood of their whole day, or suddenly brought them out of a depressing reverie to connect with the world again. A smile, received or given, brings connectedness with it. It can't help it, it is the nature of a smile. In fact, if you don't believe me, ask someone to smile at you right now and see how it changes your chemistry. A little warm thing starts happening around the heart area and then *you* want to smile too. A smile cancels out separateness and separateness is the cause of so much grief and depression, so not only are you spitting out your own stale spiritual chewing gum, but you are instilling some sweet joy into someone else's jaw too!

Earmarking a Memory

Julie Hutslar

About 12 years ago I was sitting down below in our sailboat on a cold Sunday morning. It was so cozy, I had the little ceramic heater pulled up to my legs and my slippers on. I was eating a toasted piece of buttered Hauska, a delicious sweetbread my mother makes at Christmas. Nothing could have been more perfect, I was thoroughly enjoying each bite and every moment. I distinctly remember every smell, flavor, visual and auditory sensation and especially the emotions. How, after 12 years, can that be? I decided to *earmark* it for my mental photo album to go through before I die. Now, 12 years later, my husband says I will take as long as Franco to die, because my album has so many lovely memories.

It really works. When you consciously choose to sort something and store it, especially when it contains identifiable and strong emotions, your brain functions just like a computer. The other day I decided to open it in my mind and see if they were all intact. And sure enough, the buttered, toasted hauska was on the first page. There were also moments with my grandsons in those tender vulnerable times, my dear friend having chai and passionate conversation, my daughter as an adult sharing private stories, gazing into the spectacularly colorful and soft sunrise, hiking to the top of a mountain rise with an unexpected, surprise view. They were all magical moments of delight and joy.

As I was going through this pictorial album of emotions and senses, I wondered if there were a theme. How did I choose to save or leave, to delete or just decay naturally? The one thing that I found in *each* case was the feeling of being present, completely in the moment. The other thing I noticed was the overwhelming sensation of pure joy, in its many various forms, but they were all joy. Unabated joy! I closed my eyes and reviewed some more of these precious memories. They brought that joy to me as I recalled them. I had forgotten about some of them, and others I had not remembered for a long time.

What a great resolution to make this year, I decided. Earmark more moments of joy and presence. In fact, I thought, if I can't find any worthy of earmarking, I will *make* some! Instead of sipping my tea too hot and burning my tongue because I want to get on with the next activity, I will let it cool, maybe add honey and even froth some milk. Then I will transform a simple mundane event into a delicious moment filled with joy. I will pause a moment longer, walk around to the other side of the house with the best view of a gorgeous sunset, and make the effort to earmark. So whether it is a sleeping cat on your chest, a teen unaware they are being observed while they exhibit they are still children inside, a look given or received in genuine love and compassion, a snowcapped mountain radiant in alpine glow, or simply sipping tea in the winter sun streaming through the window, they are all moments which embody joy. And that joy coupled with presence equals peace.

So I invite you to share my New Year's resolution. Find or make as many earmarkable moments as you can this year. Fill your life with more joy and by doing so, you truly are bringing peace on Earth.

River Journal Faith Walk August 22, 2007

Food for the Soul

By Julie Hutslar

This has been a summer of abundant art. There have been the Art Walks, the Artists Studio Tour, POAC showings and countless other displays of wonderful original art coming from the Sandpoint area. If you have had a chance or made it a priority to go and see any of these, you will agree with me in saying that art is food for the soul. The reason this is the case is not just because many of the works of art are beautiful or exquisite, but because they were created with creation energy. Creation energy bears the energy still of the creator, and the energy that inspired it. And creation energy is God energy, it is the energy that creates all things in this universe, it is the life-giving energy of all that lives. This is the same energy that is invoked when producing a work of art. A voice is given to the soul through whatever medium the creator or artist employs.

So when you as the viewer are participating in this creation experience, you are feeling the creation energy as either inspiration or attraction for an unknown reason. And as the creator, you are channeling divine energy through your particular voice to express godliness in your own way. So to diminish your work of art is to diminish your own expression of god, no matter how mature or immature it may be at the time.

What I have found is that each painting or sculpture or woven piece of art carries some message for me. It may be joy, it may be redemption or it may be whimsy. It isn't just a decoration for my wall. It is a tool along my spiritual journey. Each time I spend a moment gazing into it, connecting with its energy, I am awakening something in my soul. I am feeling the energy of God. Spending money, or placing value on art is a whole different mind-set. It isn't like going out to a restaurant, which is over completely in 24 hours, or a new out-fit which wears out or becomes out of style. Art is something that continues to express godliness for as long as it exists. You can regard it your whole life, then your children's children and their children's life. The value is expressly for you, depending upon what kind of energy you receive from it, what inspiration it bestows, and how much you love it. So whether it is socially ordained as worth millions, or it has a modest price tag on it, the value comes from *you*. How much value do you put on feeding your soul? What is the price of a rare and spectacular sunset or a drop of dew on a spider web? What would you exchange for a glimpse of fondness expressed between two old spinsters or the sweat on the hairline of a sleeping child? Only you place value.

So next time you take the opportunity to be in the presence of art, look at it with eyes anew. See it through the lens of the soul. What is it inspiring, what is it offering, what message does it have for you? And to simply view, or not place enough value on it to take it home and make it part of your daily spiritual inspiration is akin to just looking at a dessert buffet without putting anything on your plate! So feed your soul!

River Journal Article

February 28, 2007

Give Yourself a Boost!

One day while amusing myself, I sat quietly and started repeating words with a specific flavor. I said them slowly to myself and tried to imagine the feelings as I said the words. I began to repeat them and as I did, I found that they had begun to change the way I felt. I was feeling calmer and my mind was not filled with its usual chaos.

The words I chose to repeat were: infinitely loving, eternally peaceful, unconditionally allowing, graceful and gentle, kind, joyful, accepting, generous, honest, patient, fulfilled, and childlike. I especially liked it when I let the words become their meaning and as I slowly enunciated each word, I allowed what they stood for to seep into me and fill me up. Before long, I felt like the strongest muscle man couldn't lift me from my chair, I was so grounded in peace.

That evening I was sharing this intimate experience with my husband and he asked me if other words would have a similar or reverse effect. So we tried a few on. We began with guilt, hatred, anger, worthlessness, hopelessness, judgmental, blame, and separated. Before we had finished the short list, we were feeling depressed. Just the words alone had the power to bring our energy down, or depress us.

Years ago while managing in a large firm, the term "Loser" became popular and several of my friends and employees started calling each other that whenever someone did anything half bumbled. I noticed the effect on the "loser" and outlawed the word inside the building. I didn't know if I really had the authority to do that, I mean, can your boss keep you from using a certain word? Anyway, it worked. I think people didn't really like being called a loser, even in fun. So one guy who wanted to kid with me, but not break the rule, began to hold his hand up to his forehead in the shape of an 'L' for Loser in place of the word. Somehow, that didn't seem to bother anyone. The word was what held the power. And a word is simply the symbol of what it represents.

If someone were calling you all sorts of horrible names in a language you didn't understand, you might simply smile and wave! But in your own language, complete with life-felt meanings, words have the power to create your mood, and enough similar moods begin to define your life.

So I guess the next question would be, what are your favorite words to use? Do they ground you in peace and make you feel loving and kind, or do they make you feel like not even trying? Makes you stop and think about how you speak to your children and pets, spouse, and friends, but mostly to yourself. And also, it gives you an idea of how to bring your mood up if you really want to. Simply start repeating your lovely list, and eventually you can call yourself those words. OK, precious, you truly are a joy!

The River Journal “Faith Walk” Nov. 22, 2006

Gratitude is Great, but Forgiveness is Paramount

by Julie Hutslar

This time of year, everywhere you go, everything you read, it’s all about gratitude, the time for giving thanks. However, I have also noted something else about this time of the year and that is the recurrence of severe back and neck pain. My husband and I in his health clinic have noticed that Thanksgiving time brings more flared up pain than any other time of the year by far. If we are all out being grateful, giving thanks and reaping the joy it brings, why aren’t we feeling exuberant and healthy, not burdened and painful?

My suspicion is that it is hard to truly be grateful while entertaining a houseful of people who bring with them unresolved feelings or experiences and the concealed negative emotions they store. The body is simply reminding us those tensions are still there through nagging pain. These feelings may be suppressed anger, resentment, frustration or a sense of worthlessness. Family can often be the most challenging characters in our own personal drama, since we stay related to them our whole lives, and we may carry unresolved negative attachments to them equally that long. So when they arrive, they light things up for us that we may have been keeping just below the surface. But as I see it, there are only so many options with family: running away, becoming emotionally unattached, forgetting to leave a forwarding address, faking your own death or...forgiveness.

It is important to first say this about forgiveness, forgiveness is *not* done for someone else. And it is *not* about condoning what someone else has done or said. It is only a way to free *yourself*. That’s all. It is a gift you give to yourself. No one else really needs to know about it, and yet, they will feel it when it happens.

The second thing I need to say about forgiveness is that it is not about relooking at your big ledger with everyone’s misdeeds on them and condescending to draw a line through one, only to come back later and squint through the scratch to remember again. It is about getting the big pink eraser out and rubbing it out altogether. You may want to come back later and hash through those old familiar wounds, but they won’t be there. And condescending to forgive isn’t forgiveness, it is condescension..

There is one more piece to this forgiveness plan. Forgiveness is a divine concept, therefore, we may get to a place where we have genuinely and truly given it all and simply cannot find it on our hearts to forgive. We still feel justified in holding the grudge. All is not lost. If you have the *willingness* to forgive, but cannot yourself, place the whole burden, in a package containing all the things this other person has done to offend you (or you feel *you* have done), in the hands of the Divine. The rest will be done *for* you. Later when you peek back inside the package, it will be empty, there will be no more stomach wrenching feelings, just peace.

Forgiveness lets you open a space back up in your heart for that person, or yourself, and lets the light of love envelop and heal. Forgiveness is the greatest gift you can give yourself as you feel an expansive love replace a constricted wound. As you genuinely forgive out of the compassion you feel in your heart, watch the gratitude swell and the joy return, then sit down to a pain-free meal of *true* Thanksgiving, sharing and love.

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I Divorced God

Years ago I divorced God. We didn't get along. I was sure He didn't like me and I always felt judged and watched. So I said, "Let's part ways." But I still felt him watching me, silent and aloof. And I felt empty somehow. I didn't want that God back and I didn't really even want to think I was missing God, but now what I realize I was missing was a relationship with my Creator. It's like having a good relationship with your mom and dad, it makes life nicer. And in some cases, it defines your self-worth.

So anyway, I didn't really go searching for God, I went looking for a relationship to something greater than me, something that may not really be outside of me, but something that could act as a shining light, a ray of hope, an example of the best I could be. One day I realized God was not what I thought it was. God, or the Divine, as I prefer to call it, is a river. I use the metaphor of an energy river of pure love and infinite peace, and it flows continually. It does not judge who flows with it, it simply flows because that is the nature of the Divine. It cannot do anything else except flow in love and peace. If you want to experience God, go to the river of pure love and infinite peace, and you can experience God. But God cannot be something *other* than this divine river, even if you really need it to be. It cannot come out of this pure love to punish you, or send wrath down to your enemies or anything actually that does not involve pure love and peace. God vibrates in pure love and it cannot come out of that vibration to be something else, or it would cease to be *love*. And God is only love! Wrath, judgment, punishment and disappointment are all specific vibrations, but not love.

So I realized the responsibility fell upon me. I had to venture to the river, whatever that meant. I was not a victim, and delays were my choices and all obstacles to that river were mine. Then I realized I didn't have to go anywhere, the river was *inside* of me. It had been there all along, flowing like an underground stream. I could dip in it any time I chose. I could have a relationship with my own godliness. I could choose to allow that vibration to become more evident in my life, and I could share it with others. Suddenly, I found that emptiness was filled. Love started dripping out of my ears and my words were wet with loveliness. It was my own highest self filling me up and spilling out. So the days I cannot find my connection, I know the river has not hidden itself from me, I have simply chosen not to live in love and peace, that's all. God has not abandoned me. That isn't even possible, when we have always carried the Source of Divine waters within us. *Go with the flow!*

Faith Walk article for May 23 issue

People are not their Politics

While I was in Italy last month, I met a Frenchman on a ferry from Corsica to Sardinia. We chatted in French awhile and then he asked me if I was English. I replied in French that I was an American, not English. He immediately responded by saying he hated Americans. I assumed it was because he disagreed with our current political administration, but we went on talking for another half an hour. We shared our views on more spiritual matters and I think he was surprised that an *American* could have such open views. For as much as he hated Americans, we connected very nicely heart to heart. I asked him if he had ever *been* to America and he said he would never set foot in the country.

The following week as I was returning to America, I found myself very happy to be coming home. Instead of flying directly home though, I ended up flying to Cleveland, Ohio and driving 2100 miles across nine states. I originally didn't get very excited thinking about this trip, but after a day on the road, my perspective began to change. I met people in cafes, road stops, small stores and gas stations and was always greeted with friendliness and openness. The accents were a bit different and the hairstyles were not swanky, but the people were truly genuine salt of the earth specimens. You could tell from the land these people believed in hard work and generosity. These were Americans; dairy farmers, cattle herders, tradesmen, grain farmers. Maybe they're a little bigger than people from other countries, and a little rougher around the edges, but they are still people. They want to have joy, a little happiness and like everyone, they want to be loved.

I thought of this Frenchman who hated Americans. He has never been to America, he has never seen the sun rise over the stark plains of South Dakota, he has never seen the thunderclouds over Wyoming or the shadows of the mountains of Montana. He has never seen the red barns of the dairy farms of Wisconsin or the rolling hills and ever present lakes of Minnesota. I was especially saddened for him as I entered Idaho and was draped by lovely cedar trees framing snow-capped mountains in the near distance. To think he would never experience this awesome place.

All because he believed Americans were their politics. Politics is simply one game of many in this physical incarnation. It is no more who we are than the color of our hair. Americans are people, with hearts that beat and brains that think and hands that give. They are not their politics. Most Americans watch their political administration like they are watching a movie, some wish you could turn it off, others know it will end and another program will replace it. In all the places I have traveled, I have found that people are people. They have core desires and basically are loving and kind, if you can separate them from your preconceptions about them and their politics, surpass all boundaries, political and otherwise, and connect heart to heart.

River Journal Faith Walk Nov. 7, 2007

Satisfied with Doing the Best You Can

Do you ever evaluate an experience based on the perfect response, or the perfect outcome? You look at what could have been *if you hadn't gotten angry* or *if you hadn't lost your patience* or *if you hadn't become overly-emotional*. Then as you review the experience in your mind, you layer on guilt to the thing that has already transpired and is over. Now that it has guilt dripping all over the memory, your mind wants to pull it out and recall it as if it were a bizarre tabloid headline. And the more you recall it with the initial response which wasn't what you had intended, which means you *failed*, the more self-loathing will then find its way into the mix. Then what was originally an innocuous experience that challenged your peace has now become an energy bubble of blame, self-loathing and guilt.

How do we learn from the past without beating ourselves up? Does it help to review an experience and see how we might have done it better? It sounds like a good idea, the problem is, once we 'review' something we go into judgment. We then feel the need to label good and bad, right and wrong. And that system only sets us up for failure or success, and nothing in between.

Have you ever watched a parent disciplining an out-of-control child in a supermarket? If you have ever been a parent, you know that to judge that experience is to not have a clue what you can be driven to with children at times. But when it is *you* that is losing your temper and raising your voice, threatening and scolding, after you have calmed down, you silently berate yourself for allowing a small child to raise your blood pressure like that. You swear that you will not react with that kind of animosity again. Then when it happens again, you add more guilt based on your inability to change responses. Then there's the resentment that will accompany the guilt, that someone drove you to this. So the more you see this side of yourself, the more you don't like what you have become. Someone is bringing out the worst in you and you don't like them for it. Maybe it is best not to evaluate your past experiences?

One idea is this. If you know you are doing the best you can at the time, and I am assuming you are, since it is what you are capable of given this exact circumstance, then simply rest assured that that was the best you could do *then*. *It was the best you could do*. Period. End of story, end of review, no judgment other than that necessary. And then you simply close the chapter on that experience by saying you *choose not to light the future with fuel from the past*. You don't hate anyone, resent anyone, need to blame anyone or feel compelled to carry guilt. Doesn't that seem like you have grown and learned in a way that reviewing does not allow for? You have done the best you could. Period. Now light your future experiences with unimaginable possibilities!

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Article for River Journal, issue April 11, 2007

Spring Fever

Along with warmer weather and lighter clothing, spring brings with it a familiar feeling of being more open to love, romance and flirting! A perfect time to clarify the many different types of feelings that all fall under the category of love. Not only does this help you define feelings for current relationships, it also provides clarity to the hormonal surges of spring fever.

Under the heading of love comes the following list of the many different ways it can manifest itself. I like to start with *lust*, which is hormonally based. It is when the chemistry of your body goes all wacky around another person. Technically, several different hormones are being released simultaneously in the body to produce a true high. With that high is the feeling of genuine levity, of elation and youthfulness. But the type of love that lust is does not meet the Greek definition of love at all. It is very needy, conditional and jealous. There is also the drug-like effect that the one experiencing it must have the chemistry of the beloved near, hear their name or voice, touch them or smell them to soothe the addiction. Induced by ancient biology, its purpose is generally to secure procreation. After a certain time has elapsed and coupling is complete, the drug wears off as the hormones resume normal balance.

The opposite of this kind of love is *agape* (pronounced ah-gahp-ey). It is genuine or true love. It is neither conditional nor needy. You have chosen to love this person because somehow your soul has elected it. Even if they live on the other side of the planet, you can still have a great agape love for someone and not limited to romantic love.

Other types of love include *protective* love. Expressions of protective love are watching out for someone and being concerned about their safety and welfare. There is also *loyalty*, which is the way a dog might love its owner, or the way a student might defend its teacher, or a fan support its team. Often found in couples are *maternal* love and *filial* love. Maternal love is the way you'd love a mother, deferring and allowing someone to care for you, needing to be nurtured, whereas filial love is similar to that of a son or daughter. Usually if you find this love outside siblings, you will find someone treating the other like a child; making decisions for them, allocating finances and doling out responsibility as they see fit. There is also *brotherly* love. This is a wonderful friendship type of love; equal and filled with great commonality and connection.

And last is *erotica* or romantic love. This is the kind of feeling you can have about a car, a guitar or a woman. It is when your eyes sparkle when you see that person or thing, you find them very attractive, they inspire you. Different from lust, there isn't a drugged-like need involved, simply an appreciation.

All these types of love can define most all relationships, or maybe a combination of them. My favorite for long-term love is agape and erotica combined. This leaves the sparkle in your eye long after spring has gone!

The End of Another Time Segment

December marks the end of another block of time by which we organize our lives. Most of us are plugged into time segments whether we are aware of it or not. They create anxiety if we feel we are not doing enough, they can cause stress if we feel the pressure caused by procrastinating or approaching deadlines, and mostly there is the feeling of lack of control as time flows by like water under a bridge even if we aren't watching.

Since we seem to feel the negative aspects of time in things like our aging bodies, we may as well extract some positive ones too. You can choose to allocate a certain energy to the end of the year, as a way of closing out chapters of your life, or reviewing your successes and celebrating. For example, the end of the year can be seen as a time when you celebrate the people in your life you feel grateful for, instead of a time of year when you are obligated by tradition to exchange gifts. Think of Christmas as a time when you get to remember who accompanied you this last year and feel appreciative through gifts, words or genuine gratitude. Then after you celebrate these people, you celebrate your own life, on New Year's Eve. Choose the best way that expresses how you would like to honor yourself, either through a wild party or a quiet evening with candlelight. And after you celebrate and express joy for yourself and your loved ones, turn your attention inward. What was the main focus of last year? What did I accomplish that was my goal? What did I learn or embody that was unexpected, and may have come through challenges? Allow yourself to focus on the positive, those things that you can take with you as feathers in your cap, even if they didn't seem like it at the time. Discard the unnecessary. Keep the lesson, get rid of the memory of the effort of studying.

But here's where being plugged into time segments can actually benefit you. As the year opens a brand new calendar for you, complete with blank pages and infinite potential, choose what you want to write on those dates before they arrive. Set yourself intentions. Give yourself the power that comes from new beginnings and as you closed a year with gratitude, let the freshness of those positive acts lead the way into a year of miracles instead of problems to solve. The last day of December has a pair of scissors at the end of the evening, and all of 2007 gets cut off and left in what we call the 'past'. Let it go. Use your mind to redirect your creation energy into the now, no longer the past, but the blank slate that can hold any form of possibility.

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River Journal Faith Walk Feb 13, 2008

Valentine's Day at the Post Office

I remember reading about unconditional love a long time before I had ever really experienced it, but I knew it was a worthy goal. I recall an incident that propelled me along the love path exponentially. I wanted to express love to everyone I met, but didn't know how. I began staring at a man in front of me, watching him move, watching his mannerisms, his odd idiosyncrasies and I remember thinking, how am I supposed to have unconditional love for that man? I don't know anything about him and I really don't care for his looks. I tried watching some more, hoping some spark of enlightenment would land upon his head and I could find a place in my heart to love him. Mind you, he had no idea what I was doing in my head or even who I was. He was simply my guinea pig.

Then it occurred to me, someone probably loves him just like he is. I imagined a spouse or dog or parent that lit up when he entered the room. He was their Beloved. I put myself in the shoes of this one who loved the man with the thinning hair and the missing chin. I reviewed the characteristics I had already judged as lacking, but this time through the eyes of the one who saw him as Beloved. Suddenly every strange throat noise and lip licking became a recognition of love. The smell I deemed as unpleasant, the Other recognized as comfort or friendship. The more I imagined myself in the shoes of this one who adored my guinea pig, the more desirable he became to me, not sexually, but as a human, a friend, a loved one. He suddenly became someone I knew. I imagined that when this Beloved dozed off to sleep, his lover would simply stare at all his features, but instead of finding them lacking, found them adorable, precious, priceless. She would stare, like me, but not out of curiosity, but to memorize every wrinkle on his face, every mole on his skin, every piece of scaly skin on his forearm. He was truly loved, unconditionally, no matter what smells he emitted or odd habits he exhibited, it didn't matter. My heart had genuinely softened towards him. I found myself expressing deep love for him, like the one who saw him as precious. I picked another person and then a passerby and each one materialized in front of me as someone's Beloved. As I put my whole self into it, I realized I had found a way to love someone I didn't know.

It was my turn in line and I approached the counter wondering who loved this clerk. I smiled a smile of beloved recognition and the clerk lit up. So my epiphany on love didn't really fall on Valentine's Day, but it made every day filled with the joy that comes from truly loving, and it turned *everyone* into someone special and beautiful!

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What do you Fear?

Do you get to places in your life where you don't understand why certain things are happening and other things aren't? Do you feel like things seem random sometimes? Does it often feel like your convictions and beliefs don't really steer the ship?

As you shift and grow in beliefs and possibilities, you meet up with walls that have long been in place. If you are content with letting that wall remain, it will feel that even though you believe one thing with your conscious brain, another altogether opposite thing is happening in your life. These can actually be seen as opportunities to identify the walls and dissolve them, since they were mind created anyway.

A direct, yet commonly avoided way of locating the source of these walls is to follow this question, as you hold the problem in your mind, *ask what it is about this that you fear*. Are you afraid that if you truly embody the intuitive healer you believe you are, that you will be proved wrong and you aren't as gifted or guided as you think you are? Are you afraid that someone will discover that you are a fraud? Are you afraid of losing all your earthly belongings and be left destitute? Are you afraid of being left alone, that by embracing all you can be, you will alienate those who love you most, by believing something very different? For everyone the fears are unique, but there are always fears located somewhere way upstream from the wall and which helped create it. Identify the fear and you have found the key to dissolving the wall.

If you knew there was a scorpion living behind your stereo speakers, every time you dusted or vacuumed, you would probably be a little squeamish. You might even fear that the scorpion had moved its home to some other location and that would be scary too. How many years do you live in fear that the scorpion is going to crawl over the back of your chair and sting you dead? But locating a fear is like moving the stereo speakers and shining a bright light on the sleeping scorpion. It isn't that fearful now. It is actually rather small and very interesting looking. You study it and as you see it in the light of day, it really doesn't seem like the atrocious monster you allowed it to become. That is what you do with the fear you locate as a result of a non-physical wall or barrier you have become aware of in your life. You shine a light on it. You choose to look at it and it doesn't matter where it came from, you simply choose to dissolve it. You don't call out the cavalry to battle it, you don't ignore it, you don't punish it, you simply notice what it is, understand the power it was having and you choose to dissolve it. It is all happening in the mind anyway, and your mind has that choice. It can choose to unravel and disintegrate the thought or fear that created this wall. You will notice the change in your reality within the very day you choose to do this.

Most of the fears are not conscious so you will need to keep being guided upstream until you reach the fountainhead of fear. Are you afraid of bear and mountain lions? Are you afraid of ceasing to exist? Are you afraid of hundred dollar bills? Are you afraid of making a mistake if you are entrusted with something of value? Are you afraid of being

useless because you no longer work for a living? You will confirm the fear because it is the one that evokes emotion. If you have no fear of bears, that choice will pass by easily. If you have no fear of thousand dollar bills raining on you, you will not feel uneasy. But the one you do identify will no doubt have threads to your self-worth attached to it. Get yourself a 1000-watt bulb and light it up, watch it dissolve and then watch your world recreate itself anew!

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River Journal Article for Faith Walk Column for July 11, 2007
By Julie Hutslar

What do you take with you??

If you have a curious mind, it is likely that you have thought of what happens to you after your physical body dies. For most people the after-life presents a myriad of unknowns, better left unthought about or, at least, unthought about until much later in life.

Talking about death can be very unnerving for some people because behind most of our nervousness is the fear of ceasing to exist. If you could grasp the impossibility of that, you might only have fear of the unknown, as opposed to fear of cessation of life. That which is essentially you is eternal, which means the body is not *you*, so when it eventually putters out and life escapes it, that only means you have vacated a vehicle. You have not ceased to exist. You, the essence of you, the immortal soul that is you, have simply moved on. Let me ask you, how many cars have you owned so far in this life? They serve you for a while, break down and die or you sell them for a newer model or decide you want a different style of vehicle altogether. No biggie, you as the driver simply get out and get in your new vehicle. It's the same with letting go of your body. The only death occurring then is of the body, which is simply a vehicle. The soul is only vacating that vehicle as it continues along its journey.

Then what part of us do we actually take with us? I've heard my whole life, "You can't take it with you." But are 'they' referring to the *body* that you can't take? What does the soul take, what experiences, what has value, what does not? It would be pretty obvious to think that your soul doesn't take material objects since it is eternal, and unlimited by time, space and matter. So that leaves thoughts and experiences, attachments, emotions, hurts or loves.

What if you knew what had ultimate value to your soul? Wouldn't you want to set yourself up with something valuable to take with you? You wouldn't want to get there and realize that you had forgotten your socks, would you? *A Course in Miracles* teaches that the *only* things that have value in the realm of the Divine are thoughts of love. That's it, *thoughts of love*. Can you imagine it? From this whole life over-filled with experiences and objects, acquiring and building, successes and failures, family and friends, jobs and lessons, toys and dogs, the *only* things that have value to your soul are thoughts of love. That certainly makes you want to look at everything you do and feel. Do you love what you do? Do you love your dog? Do you allocate any time to sit and watch your children or grandchildren play and simply adore them? Do you have thoughts of love about your job, your wife, your significant other, your surroundings, or your neighbor? Do you have thoughts of love for *yourself*? Imagine that each time you have loving thoughts, you are packing your suitcase full of things to take with you, then you won't be going alone, all those you love will be going with you.