

When Life offers *Lemons...*

In the depth of winter I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer. A. Carnus

In every person's life there comes a time when s/he is faced with what appears to be insurmountable challenges. At such times life seems unfair, as core values, faith, patience, compassion, even the ability to carry on are challenged. While some individuals are incapacitated by these events, others use such trials and tribulations as opportunities to expand and grow.

Problems are the gymnasium of life because they make us stronger. It seems we need challenges and stimulation to grow. It is through contrast that we become clear on what is most important to us. Richard Bach says, "There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands. You seek problems because you need their gifts."

Illusions

One can learn a lot about handling stressful times by studying ordinary people who survived extraordinary stress. Dr. Julius Segal author of *Winning Life's Toughest Battles* spent 30 years studying concentration camp survivors, POWs hostages, refugees, victims of rape, abuse, bereavement, financial disaster and spoiled careers. Instead of being permanently devastated by trauma,

these survivors were able to use experiences to enrich their lives and the lives of others. When life presented lemons, they found a way to make lemonade.

Dr. Segal compiled five keys to assist anyone to emerge from the toughest battle as a victor instead of a victim.

Communication. It is healing to put feelings into words. By talking with others, one can gain support and learn how other people manage crisis. It may be a comfort by realizing our reactions to stress are common to others.

Control. When we are in crisis we feel out of control. We need mastery over our existence in some way. Routines and rituals are important to continue. Dr. Segal found that prisoners of war still shaved and exercised.

Conviction. During overwhelming stress, we need a purpose for our pain. Survivors find a way to direct their grief in a positive direction.

Clear Conscience. While it is normal to blame ourselves after a trauma, guilt is not productive. Self-recrimination leads to feeling of hopelessness which stifles our capacity to prevail over stressful situations.

Compassion. During our trauma, our tendency is to become self absorbed. This is good for awhile as we cocoon and take good care of ourselves. But at some point we need to turn attention outward. Find a way to help others. This does serve as a balm for our personal wounds.

During times of crisis, it is also important to let yourself grieve. Grief is different for each person and the time frame for grieving is also different.

Remember to look at life through a wide angle lens. Will this matter in a year? This too shall pass. Banish worry and have faith in a Higher Power. Remind yourself that everything on earth changes, but God the Creator is always present. Many answers will come to you as you clear your mind and rest in the silence.

Louise Hay reminds us: All is well. Everything is working out for your highest good. Out of this situation, only good will come. I am safe!

****Great Oaks don't grow with ease, the stronger the wind, the stronger the trees.***

Namaste!

Jane Zoltek, ssj-tosf, Editor

What does your heart say?

What does your heart say about your life? Are you a joyous, jolly, jubilant spirit on a human journey? If you live in your heart, you know that you matter and are as important to our Earthplane as any ambassador, president of a country or other visible personality. Because someone else is on TV, magazine covers etc. does not make them any more important in the eyes of God than you or myself.

We matter greatly. But we have been conditioned to believe that we are not as good as other people. True power comes from recognizing who we are and living from our heart. When we do so, e honor and bless everybody and stop the ego's constant judgment of everyone and everything. Everyone is as is, every job—we all matter.

Living from the heart means that we take responsibility for our actions. Living from our heart means we pay attention to how we tell another person something we feel we need to say. We take the time to think about our words instead of having verbal diarrhea. We come from the premise that giving and receiving are the same. And as we give love even if the other person doesn't appear to receive it, we remember that as a result of extending love, we have given it to ourselves. We let go of what the other person should or should not be doing.

Place your hand on your heart and ask yourself if you are being loving, kind and generous to yourself. If the answer is no, then change your mind right now, tell yourself that you are a loving and wonderful child of God and that you matter deeply to all of us here.

Anytime we feel our self sinking to a lower vibration, we need to place our hand on our heart and ask it "what it feels and what it wants to say." Then we need to take the time to listen, to honor ourself, to respect ours and other's boundaries, to love and appreciate who we are regardless of who can or cannot do so. Let's practice together staying in our heart, remembering that we matter and that we are precious and loved far beyond what the physical eyes can ever show us.

Valentine's Day is not just for lovers. It's a time to tell those you value and appreciate that you are grateful that they are in your life and thank them!

A Friend

Around the corner I have a friend in this great city that has no end.

Yet days go by and weeks rush on and before you know it the year is gone.

And I never see my old friend's face for life is a swift and terrible race, yet s/he knows I like him/her just as well as in the days when I rang his/her bell and s/he rang mine.

We were younger then. Now we are busy tired persons. Tired of playing a foolish game, tired of trying to make a name. Tomorrow I'll say I'll call on him/her just to show I'm thinking of him/her. But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes, and the distance between us grows and grows.

Around the corner, yet miles away, here's a letter Dear... your friend died today. And that's what we get, and deserve in the end; around the corner a vanished friend.

It's time to say "Thank you" to all your friends... for all that they have been for you thus far. Send them a card to show your appreciation!

Happy Valentine's Day to you!