

sister who's perspective

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Overview

The reasons justifying social isolation are by no means new, nor are the apparent benefits of doing so. Nonetheless, new ways of remaining relational must be invented, specifically because of how interconnected and interdependent life persists in being--by its very nature. Among the fundamental components of mental health within such times is self-reflection. May these essays empower such moments of pause for you.

Remaining Relational

It has often been said that, "The show must go on." What I have always added to this is that the show--that is, what is seen or somehow perceived--must mean something and that meaning, by its very nature, is assigned rather than inherent. That which is lacking in meaning, is somehow incomplete.

What continues to amaze me, is how often individuals, groups, and categories of humanity seem to have made themselves perfectly comfortable with remaining to varying degrees incomplete. It's as if the fullness of themselves, their expressions, and their potential historical reality is in some way or another unimportant. Yet time has repeatedly shown that even the smallest expression at just the right moment, can make an absolutely profound difference.

Yet this difference never occurs within isolation, but always within relationship. In fact, no example of individuality is even able to survive without a constellation of various kinds of relationships. That is why making whatever effort is required to nurture one's relationships is so very important.

What is and always has been the most painful, often in silent and secret ways, is being shut out of another's life; being in any way excluded; or being treated as if one's contribution were in fact non-essential. As

much as this is something far too present throughout my life, I have never forgotten for even one moment that it is still essential for me to make every effort to be fully present that I can, while respecting that I am still human, have limitations, and sometimes cannot--for various reasons--do so. It could be said that my contribution may even be profound, but I must equally remember that within the larger unfolding of life, what I could say or do may not be absolutely essential; that others' contributions have just as much potential as my own to create a constructively pivotal moment or experience.

I need to allow others their opportunities and moments and never enable an unhealthy competitive dynamic to characterize our truly symbiotic relationships. I may wish for the recognition and opportunities which others experience, but if that is simply not the role that history has chosen for me to play, my contribution is not for that reason diminished in its importance. Even the smallest word, action, or presence can be essential.

Ultimately, I must have sufficient faith in myself to go on being me, regardless of the recognition--or lack thereof--that others may express. This too is an expression of true spirituality--having the faith that I was born when and where I was, to contribute what I can to whatever events unfold within that time and place, as if there is indeed a reality larger and more incomprehensible than any has ever imagined, that needs my participation just as much as anyone else's. Yet it remains my responsibility to make that contribution the very best one that I could possibly make.

I cannot wave a magic wand and revitalize a community without collaboration--others' participation is required and they may decide to withhold essential response. Yet I remain an agent of renewal. A primary concern, however, is how much I live as if I know this and how much that is obvious to others.

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

Persistent Positivity

First of all, let me be absolutely clear that I do not find false positivity to be in any way truly positive. It is not a matter of "always look on the bright side," as if the dark side did not exist--but it is equally not a matter of unproductively dwelling on opposition as if that were the only reality either. Being truly positive is embracing the full picture and then selecting ways to constructively move from that state to even more empowering ones.

In some ways, it is a matter of believing that life is often wiser than one's self and not only hearing but also heeding the gentle whispers from the Divine that create better possibilities. This "voice" is often very subtle and easily (if unintentionally) ignored. This is one of the primary dynamics I had in mind in creating *The Tarot of Sister Who*.

In studying a problem, it is most important that I am seeking to understand its diverse components and dynamics without placing it on any sort of pedestal, as if no contrasting reality were available. On the outside, it may look to others like obsessive worrying. What is actually happening, however, are various forms of intellectual development.

Simultaneously, however, it is also not a matter of dismissing the problem as if it were inclined to fade away without any external response encouraging it to do so. Some problems do fade--like winter evolving into spring--but one must remain attentive. One must plant, cultivate, and reap in a timely manner in order to benefit from a harvest, but obvious indications of the "correct" time to act in a particular way are in most cases conspicuously absent--forcing one to guess or speculate as well as one can.

What makes the task all more daunting is the unwillingness of administrators and other participants to persist as long as necessary in addressing the particular challenge--or to respond to all additional considerations that come to light in the process. I have lamented to a number of others within the past month that "everyone seems to agree that the system is broken, but no one wants to be involved in fixing it." All too often, I and certain others are caught in the middle: being

victimized by the dysfunctions of the current system without the necessary resources to fix that system without others' contributions.

The sacrifices and efforts I have made which are yet unrewarded, are examples of wrongdoing or "social justice issues" that cry for resolution, but I struggle both to accept that resolution may never come and to remain as positive and proactive as I still can. Does it matter? Absolutely, but perhaps not in the specific ways I imagine.

Who I become as one who has survived the struggle, may be more important than the particular adversaries or struggles involved. I hasten to add, however, that I am usually way too close to a particular circumstance or situation to fully appreciate how it may have changed me. That being said, I do notice at times that a particular environment is having a negative effect upon me and interpret this as an imperative that I relocate.

"You move too much," I was recently told by a respected professional. I couldn't agree more, but remaining within an unhealthy situation or circumstance seems like a very poor alternative. Embracing the pains and struggles of relocation persistently remains preferable to being diminished by negativity within one's surrounding environment.

The added effect of this, however, is that I have met individuals I would never have otherwise encountered. I once commented that "I wish the house had burned down around us in our sleep at that point, rather than live through what I've experienced during the years which have followed." The immediate response, however, was, "If that had happened, we would never have met."

As horrible as certain experiences have been, I cannot wish away their complex realities, specifically because there are also positive effects I may have overlooked. I must also remember that the larger picture of my life cannot be contained within or defined by any particular negative incident. There is in fact no single moment which contains an adequate summary of my life.

So I must bring to each moment the belief that good has equal opportunity.

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

Empowering Alternatives

Please note: the title contains a noun and an adjective; no verbs. This is not a matter of helping alternatives that already exist, but rather of finding those which have potential; unfortunately, some do not.

The ones that do not, often reinforce any limitations or restraints with which one may be consciously or unconsciously battling. In contrast, those which have greater potential, are often overlooked and consequently unutilized while being nonetheless fully available. The fact that they are described as alternatives, often also includes that they have rarely if ever been able to "fit in."

Within virtually every instance of "fitting in" I have ever observed, the actual dynamic is akin to chopping off one digit of a finger at a time--only to have the one who made such an indecent request, require completion of a task which cannot be done without using all of the fingers which were previously available. The other persons are the ones who may be secretly conflicted--wanting both conformity and completion of a renewal-oriented task, yet refusing to acknowledge that their desires are mutually exclusive. It is not that one must empower the alternatives, therefore, but rather that one simply needs to listen to those which already exist--but have often been overlooked and under-utilized.

This is why I have been saying for several years now that the current time is one within which it is more imperative than ever, to rediscover each other. Empowering elements are already available within each other, but the more narcissistic and oriented exclusively to self that life expressions are allowed to become, the more disempowered and limited humanity ultimately is. Every

healthy example of relationship I have ever noticed, has been to varying degrees and in diverse ways, essentially symbiotic in nature.

Central to such relationship, is mutual respect. One cannot embrace the blessings of another without some degree of loving that one unconditionally. As long as one regards oneself as being in any way superior, vital understandings and lessons may remain unlearned and unheeded.

It is not ultimately the quantity of our lives within this physical world that matters as much as the quality. By its very nature, every physical being will ultimately die, but as has often been said, it is not the manner of our death that matters as much as the ways one lived, during whatever amount of time was available. Phrased another way, it is a bit of a myth to suggest that one owns life, as much as one is a steward of a portion of it and the measure of one's work is to be found within how one utilized whatever came within one's ultimately temporary reach.

To draw once again from my second modern "morality play," the lingering query is simply, "What sort of person will you show yourself to be?" From a contrasting point of view, one could ask, "What sort of person will one also allow others to show themselves to be?" Their limitations are not always what prevents good possibilities from happening

In viewing a couple of different television shows with a somewhat similar theme, the question that was repeatedly presented but at one point succinctly poised was, "Whom does censorship serve?" Curiously, one of the shows responded by transcending that dynamic, while the other reinforced it. Within theological and philosophical discussions, the question is more often phrased as, "How then should we live?"

Within embracing alternatives wisely and creatively, while persistently selecting those with greater potential, future life is given the ability to transcend all that has previously been experienced. If one does only what has already been done, in what sense does one truly and fully live? Not all discoveries feel good, but each one can still be wisely used.

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

"The difference between being used and being needed is whether or not love is central to the relationship."

-- Sister Who

Allowing Anomalies

Occasionally within a reading using *The Tarot of Sister Who*, a truly anomalous card will appear, that is more difficult to integrate into the apparent meaning jointly created by the others. I must be willing to wrestle within my understanding a little longer, if I wish to avoid missing important insights the anomaly is presenting. I need to also remember that this may equally be an illustration of my place within the larger picture of humanity.

I may be the anomaly that requires a little more work to integrate--which some people are willing to do, but many are not. To the extent that I believe that I am here for a very good reason--in spite of all contrasting appearances--the end result may transcend everything that has previously occurred. The final measure of my life will be not the ways that I embodied all that was previously done, but rather what was newly created, using the time and resources available.

Curiously, it is sometimes my routines that empower ongoing renewal and even invention. The maintenance of all forms of health is essential to remaining prepared to embrace opportunity creatively. Anomalies are not always the progeny of innovation, but rather sometimes arise from seeing traditions in a new way. More succinctly, one need not be different, to give birth to something new.

When and in whatever form that newness appears, however, communal support and developmental guidance becomes all the more essential. Everyone can be a teacher; it is not exclusively someone else's role to instruct. In most cases, the most significant contributions appear in ways that are remarkably inconspicuous.

In some ways, life is ultimately a process of learning to see all there is to see--but of course none of us ever do. There is always more. The fact that someone or something is in fact in any way an anomaly, may be a sort of divine prompting that it is time for an individual or a community to grow.

If that anomaly is one's self, then I can only hope that one will serve the work well.

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

On a Personal Note

I have tried to remember throughout recent weeks that weariness, pain, and even minor illness are insufficient reason to refrain from doing all the good that one can--while remembering that not all good things will be done, because of how overlapping and interwoven life is. Whatever manifests, will be a combination of innumerable and contrasting intentions and agendas. All that being said, I must persist in doing my best.

Requests for more television shows reach me through electronic communication from around the world. My response has been that I would love to do so, but far too much of my current time and energy is now being redirected toward challenges of basic survival. Among these is that of once again moving from one address to another.

From one view, I am more exhausted than I have ever been and very much question the limits of my strength, but the alternative of resigning myself to oppressive circumstances has never been acceptable to me. Indeed, I strongly suspect that future accomplishments depend upon me choosing not to do so. So innumerable resources are being placed in temporary storage and no neurological or physical condition is seen as sufficient reason to give up or stop, as long as I can still move.

Once again, "I would create so much more, if so much of my time and energy were consumed by struggles to survive."

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

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