

sister who's perspective

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Overview

I confess I often find people's aversions to dealing with problems more objectionable and obnoxious than the problems themselves.

Humanity is uniquely and amazingly equipped to address and resolve challenges insurmountable to nearly all other species. In wisely embracing our challenges, therefore, we affirm the best humanity within ourselves.

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

Problems of Normal

I recall reading a quote attributed to one of the aunts within the movie "Practical Magic," that queries, "When are you going to learn that being normal is not a virtue? If anything it suggests a lack of courage." I find a lot of truth in that, which is why I find it irritating whenever I encounter persons with unique orientations, disabilities, or characteristics, who nonetheless are striving to be "just like everyone else." I much prefer the treasure hunt inspired by a quote attributed to Barbara Sher: "Maybe we all think we're special--and maybe we all are."

I insist that there is in fact something unique and inspirational about anyone living his or her life with deliberate awareness, purpose, and conviction, specifically because this is not the general practice of the human species. Overcoming one's disabilities rather than getting stuck in despair is absolutely an accomplishment of which one can legitimately be proud. Anything that sets one apart from a prevailing norm, can in fact be considered a disability, because ultimately in practice this word does not mean that I cannot get things done; it simply means that I must do them in a unique way that contrasts sharply with the methods presumed by surrounding human societal contexts.

Experiences of disability are ultimately most created by the predominance of certain

societal expectations and assumptions--often grouped under a label of being normal.

Discerning one's own unique qualities and ways of being special is no easy task and thereafter devising ways of constructively sharing these with a surrounding community is a never-ending job inherent within actively and constructively living one's life. This is the wisdom I discovered years ago within a quote (the author's name of which I unfortunately do not recall) that simply declared, "The problem with life is that it's so daily."

We can all be inspirational to each other by our presence as much as by our activity, because in light of how daunting life can be, just showing up for the challenge is something many people will go to great lengths to avoid.

That is why living one's life honestly, openly, and with integrity is not presently a normal activity of humanity--but it's precisely what is needed if the future is to unfold within a world fit for habitation.

From yet another perspective, normal is just another buffer that many use to shield themselves from true engagement with the struggles inseparable from being born, living and growing through a spectrum of diverse experiences, and finally embracing closure and physical death. Life was never designed to be painless, comfortable, or convenient and if any gospel anyone preaches claims that a pursuit of bliss is as blissful as its goal allegedly is, it is a lie and absolutely not to be trusted.

For those who wish to live life truthfully, normal is yet another adversary; a diversion and a distraction from the truer substance which has the power to make life worth living.

The only recommendable definition of normal, consequently, is that which is written by one's self for one's self and not applied to anyone else without modification. To truly love others includes supporting each person in writing his or her own empowering definition.

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

Problems of Pedestals

A primary difference between inspiration and admiration is that while a response to the former is active, the response to the latter is passive at best. When I am inspired, my own creativity springs into action. When I merely admire, I remain calm, composed, and merely a member of the audience rather than any sort of collaborator in ever-greater works.

Looking up to someone implies being less than that person, which means that any greater abilities one has will be less likely to be seen, whereas placing one's self on a pedestal implies being responsible for hiding any and all weaknesses that would be inappropriate within someone on a pedestal.

Additionally, placing someone else on a pedestal puts distance between one's self and that person and essentially denies that person the ability to be every bit as humanly fallible as one's self--placing them in the position of hiding inappropriate weaknesses. From the other's perspective, there is most likely also a strong desire not to disappoint admirers, that may ultimately be impossible to satisfy.

Yet another consideration are the ways that language is constricted by defining one's relationship to another as being something other than equal. There is a long list of topics, comments, and questions which are generally held to be inappropriate unless one is more or less equal to other participants within the conversation. Without the ability to speak openly, some problems can never effectively be addressed.

None of this, however, should be construed to mean that pedestals should not exist. They do serve a purpose of making things visible, but common expectations and dynamics associated with them are seriously in need of revision.

Among the qualities often overlooked is that pedestals are limited by time. Winning an award is a joyous occasion, but once the ceremony has concluded, even the persons most directly affected must come down off of the pedestals in order to go on living. Ideally, therefore, the experience of being placed on a pedestal should always be brief.

To live only within the moment within

which one has received an award and been placed on a pedestal, is to stagnate and forego all future growth and development--essentially, to altogether cease truly living.

A more recommendable dynamic would be to use the pedestal as a launching pad for even greater future accomplishments. Like a diving board adjacent to a swimming pool, however, doing so requires an embrace of uncertainty, intimidating transition, and perhaps even serious risk in order to move from the pedestal into the next phase of life experience.

The more effort, personal sacrifice, and dedication expended in attaining the particular pedestal, however, the more difficult will be the experience of releasing its temporary security.

Nonetheless, one cannot long remain within any moment constrained by time. The moment will either be released or it will be taken--perhaps even forcefully--but it will nonetheless pass away.

An oppressive and unpleasant moment may thus in actuality be simply an ingredient of a transition to or from a pedestal. The intensity of the present may even be blinding, because one is standing too close to see anything else, but one can even then be certain that change will remain the one constant in the universe that it has always been and bring something new--often just as one is finally adjusting to the particular qualities of the current situation.

Within that moment of intense struggle, however, I confess that I often wish for that sense of certainty to be much stronger than it usually is. More typical is the confusion, the perception of being punished, and the tunnel vision of standing toe-to-toe with some unique challenge that discourages such recall.

Metaphorically, therefore, pedestals can be interpreted as personal mountains to climb within an individually unique succession, as if following a range containing many distinct mountains, from one peak to the next. Most summits are not equipped with any sort of shelter, allowing for safe ongoing residence; the summits are thus to be only visited and never regarded as "home."

For that, we must reach beyond all pedestals to inclusively loving one another.

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

Problems of Proactivity

Specifically because every individual is inseparable from a constellation of surrounding relationships, there may often be times when one feels absolutely ready to go, but must wait for corresponding opportunities and resources.

My immediate experience of this is my awareness of the many possibilities of support groups, workshops, and spiritually oriented gatherings that I could offer within my current home, which must wait until all repairs are completed. Specifically because I am always so proactive, I now struggle with feelings of being stuck, limited, and perhaps even imprisoned in ways that feel like cruel and unusual punishment. I need love and meaning sufficient to balance recent experiences of loss and the most obvious path to this lies within reconnecting with non-material possibilities.

It is very possible, for example, that as prepared as I may be to offer certain creative works, others are not yet ready to receive them. It is possible that the works I envision would be empowered by the integration of specific collaborators who are currently busy finishing up other projects. Another possibility I must concede is that specifically because of how resistant I still am to letting go of creative involvements of the recent past, I may need a transitional time within which to release what has been, in order to make room for greater things yet to be. As true as this may be,

*"In my experience,
the greatest challenge
to loving the whole world,
is that with relatively few
note-worthy exceptions,
the world usually
doesn't love me back--
but the only thing
that makes any sense
is to continue loving."*

-- Sister Who

however, I strongly recommend against anyone attempting to tell me so. I very much doubt that I would respond positively to such a statement, specifically because of how fulfilling I experienced communal relationships of the recent past to be and thus how emotionally and psychologically invested in them I was.

If life is primarily concerned with the growth of the soul, however, one must accept the inevitability of occasional renewal. Snakes shed their skin, deer drop antlers and grow new ones the next year, birds molt in order for new feathers to grow, and in only a few months my dogs will be shedding their winter fur.

An important thing to remember about renewal, however, at least in each of these instances, is that there is nothing one can do about it. One can support the process, but one can not initiate, conclude, or coordinate such shifts with any goal-oriented plan or preset schedule. Life happens--and it remains now and always bigger and wiser than any of even its most well-intentioned participants. At the moment, I seem to be stuck in arguing with Life about the progression that has unfolded, but no concrete reward has validated any of the energy and attention I have thus invested.

Should I therefore stop arguing? To do so would be out of character for me and thus lacking in integrity. It may in fact be that Life is redirecting the energy I contribute by arguing, toward a more positive outcome than anything I have thus far imagined. By remaining engaged in the struggle, I protect my muscles from atrophy and weakness and maintain a state of preparedness I would not otherwise have.

More concisely, by sustaining struggle, I am protected from complacency; I remain alert, rather than "dozing at the wheel." Each day is filled with noticing more and more details of my current experience, which had no opportunity within preceding circumstances.

Yet while I persist in naming all of these things "problems" specifically because I relate to them in an adversarial manner, they are also neither bad nor good, but rather occupy that middle ground of liminality within which life persists in becoming something new, inviting me to creatively and constructively respond.

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

Problems of Patience

An old adage advises that "all good things come to he who waits," but fails to offer any suggestion of how long one may wait--or if one will live long enough for certain things to happen. Similarly, one may be so patient with the evolution of a particular circumstance or person, that no action of accountability or nudge in a positive direction is ever employed.

To love someone includes being so interested in positive development that one's enthusiasm for moving in that direction may at times seem even a little bit irritating. It is not so much that one needs to push others, as that one prevents positive future possibilities from ever being forgotten (while remembering that more than one possibility is available).

I have often wondered if on some level humanity is not so much inventing new things as much as remembering things forgotten long ago. Patience has its place, but it can also create unnecessarily long delays. Genuinely loving someone includes remaining alert and engaged in deciding how much is enough.

If patience becomes merely a habit that is lacking in greater awareness, one can fall into a pattern of being consistently passive--always waiting for a more opportunistic moment than the one currently available. If I have waited for the time to act, I earnestly hope that I do not fail to do so when at last it arrives.

Conversely, if being constantly active has become habitual, a desirable problem of patience is being confronted with my own obsessions and/or distractions and indirectly being challenged to respond more effectively.

Time within our physical lives is limited and patience is the virtue of valuing each moment enough to integrate it with all of the other moments. The measure of success in this and certain other areas is whether or not I have utilized my time in such ways that what I have created will outlive me. Love, especially, has ways of doing that.

We must not run from our problems, if we wish to learn from them. We must also not wallow in them, however, if we are ever to become more than we currently are.

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

On a Personal Note

My situation is confusing. One year ago today I was in a moving truck with three dogs, headed toward upstate New York, having no idea what I would find when I arrived. I still have not been able to make any sense of the fact that when I left Colorado, no one even came to wave goodbye as we drove away.

The list of significant losses throughout the past year is devastating to contemplate, but I am equally aware that the future remains, as always, filled with infinite possibility.

I am also aware that perceptions of facing my challenges alone are always partially true and partially false. I suppose one could say that life is an ongoing struggle to come to terms with one's own multi-dimensionality.

Spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, developmentally, professionally, physically, socially, creatively, economically--how shall any moment of life be measured, considering that every dimension is equally real?

Some may regard any measurement at all as being a meaningless activity. Personally, however, I find that in collecting such measurement accurately, honestly, and truthfully, I become aware of the resources available to future endeavors and I thereby empower myself to persist--even within those moments when doing so makes no sense.

I do not need to be the small self that is visible within a single moment; I can instead be the larger self that is only visible within all of them integrated into a mysterious wholeness.

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

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*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS
97 Granite Street, 2nd Floor, Berlin, NH 03570
email: dn@SisterWho.com*

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

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