

sister who's perspective

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Overview

I continue to find that wisdom hides itself within relationships, but that we are so surrounded by relationships that we are prone to taking them for granted and failing to notice them at all. My hope, therefore, is that this month's essays will serve to constructively revive and inspire your awareness of your relationships—with others, with yourself, and with all that is seen and unseen around you.

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

Forward Together

I strive to always watch for metaphors and meanings, having recognized that these can pop into view in even the most unlikely or improbable ways. Among those ways, is the action of noticing the conversations I have with my dogs, as I attempt to explain more effective methods of relationship to them.

As a few of you already know, I now have five dogs, although some of them are rather advanced in age and may not be around much longer, relatively speaking. Nonetheless, in the interest of maintaining good health we go jogging together each morning—all of us at the same time. The unique leash configuration that I use places the three dachshunds running shoulder to shoulder, approximately three or four feet behind the two large dogs, and this entire assemblage running pretty much immediately next to me on my right side.

A particular challenge, especially for Gareth, the large Old English Sheepdog, is to refrain from leaping forward the minute the door opens and creating a tangled mess behind him. I have assured him innumerable times that the activity is not a race but rather simply a daily ritual of physical exercise, but this distinction appears to have not yet fully been integrated into his brain. So when the tangle occurred again this morning, I found

myself chiding him by saying, "I know you are ready; but the others are not. You must wait for the door to open all of the way so that we can all go forward together."

On a similar note, I have met many people who want the so-called "Law of Attraction" to be absolutely true so that they can race forward into easy manifestation of all of the rewards that have been therewith associated. It occurred to me this morning as I reflected upon the interaction with Gareth, that the problem may be that interpretations of this so-called law are being done narcissistically; that what is needed is a commitment to relationship, community, and inclusivity—to all moving forward together and not being willing to move forward until everyone else is also able to accompany us.

Sometimes there is nothing one can do to help others get ready, other than to patiently wait. Sometimes an alternate strategy will have to be utilized, because—like Tristan, the dachshund who hates to exercise but needs it most—some will never willingly move forward. I do not love Tristan any less, just because he hates to exercise, and I realize that he may never understand why exercise is so very important. Still, as his "owner" and care-giver, I accept that it is my responsibility to prompt, persuade, or push him into being his best.

If we truly love one another, we should demonstrate at least as much commitment as I do to Tristan. I make a point of responding in any way I can, therefore, whenever I receive a call for help. I do not wish to later hear of a negative event and have to live with the fact that I did nothing in response and thereby identified myself as an apathetic, narcissistic, or disconnected person.

We must therefore consider everyone who is affected by whatever so-called solutions are presented, because if we do not go forward together, we will not truly go forward at all.

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

Individually Together

It is fascinating to consider that each individual person is literally an entire universe within his or her self. From the perspective of a single cell, perception of the entire body is virtually impossible—it's simply too large for a single cell to comprehend the body's enormity, diversity, and integration. If one also considers that the wholeness of a person includes an integration of ongoing (historical) emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual processes, any notion of "having it all together" seems improbable at best. Generally speaking, however, this collection of diverse processes and parts can be grouped into merely three categories: body, mind, and spirit.

To be a whole individual, therefore, is to experience at least a modest amount of effectiveness in each of these areas as well as within the integrated combination of them. A great many of us are therefore at odds in one way or another with ourselves. Physically, we may be optimal, but mentally we may be deficient. Spiritually, we may be highly regarded and even sought out as a source of transcendent insight, but socially we may be completely inept. Additionally, the imbalance present at one moment and within one situation, may contrast sharply with what is experienced at a different time.

The most beautiful living of life is thus to be found within those moments when all of our best qualities converge and move with an extraordinary sort of harmony, that is quite difficult to consciously create. This is why particular ballets and operas have been performed for hundreds of years by thousands of dancers and singers. In rare moments, a perception of unified perfection is achieved that is extremely difficult to reproduce, even using exactly the same performers.

One perspective may insist that what is required is a perfectly trained athletic body; another may recommend a perfectly focused mind; and a third may insist that what matters most is the mysterious essence of a fully committed spirit. A holistic perspective recognizes that perfection of performance requires all three, just as a genuinely and completely healthy physical body requires an

integration of air, water, substance, and energy in a myriad of different forms and intensities, for the body to function at all. Unless such integration and harmony is achieved, the mind and spirit will be thereby limited and the wholeness of the person unable to make his or her best contribution to communal life.

More concisely, it takes all of each of us to be the unique, creative and living individuals whom we are. When I fail to think about what I'm doing, when I fail to notice and respect what I or another individual is feeling, or when I fail to tend to physical needs that anyone is experiencing, I contribute to the brokenness that individuals occasionally experience within a complex and crazy world.

Unconditional love offers better possibilities than this, but is generally not something that will occur by accident—any more than a dancer can skip rehearsals or a performer can completely ignore the script and still deliver an exceptional performance. It is specifically by investing one's time and energy toward an integration of body, mind, and spirit, that the best creative possibilities of humanity (individually and collectively) can be realized within daily life—sometimes even in ways that change the course of history. A most daunting truth for most of us, is that we could in fact be the one to create and nurture that change.

It remains—now and always—that one cannot run from truth without running from both Godde and one's self. In truthfully merging body, mind, and spirit, however, one stops running away from the greatest possibilities and begins to move forward with a sense of individuality that is truly together. In learning to also perceive and encourage holistic individuality within others, one encourages the creation of holistic communities, within which limitations may be regarded as temporary.

None of us is the embodiment of others' projections, expectations, or fantasies—what they wish we were, but in fact we are not. That would be an embrace of some piece of a broken image. Whenever our individual truths are holistically embraced, however, it is once again legitimate to describe ourselves as living and growing; as sons and daughters of Godde.

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Personally Together

I imagine there are literally thousands of hugs and handshakes exchanged within even just this country alone, each and every day, that in truth involve nothing more than the external surfaces of physical bodies—thereby showing themselves to be counterfeit forms of genuine good will or perhaps even love. Does this mean that such behavior should stop? No, because even an exchange of counterfeit cash testifies to the existence and possibility of more genuine exchanges, within alternative times and circumstances. One might even say that this sort of "play acting" could serve as an invitation to search for that which is more genuine. Such a search only begins, however, when one recognizes and learns to distinguish between the counterfeit and the real.

Specifically because the relationships of my youth were lacking in depth and substance, I received an extended education in what real relationships would include. A difficulty of my present life, however, is coming to terms with the fact that most others did not receive such a thorough education in this area. While I may have thus learned the material, I'm still learning how to teach it to others. Within each forging of a genuinely effective teacher-student relationship, is an invitation and opportunity to move forward personally together.

In considering what in fact is a genuinely effective teacher-student relationship, the first important point to consider is that the teacher's subject area is continually evolving and that new insights frequently appear within unlikely contexts. That being the case, a classroom session may include as many moments when the so-called teacher is learning from the so-called student as vice versa. A video recording of a teacher instructing his or her students within the first year of teaching professionally will thus look quite different from a recording made ten or twenty years later.

We shape ourselves and each other

*"Genuine and enduring love
can only arise from truth."*

-- Sister Who

through every interaction we have, regardless of whether or not we are aware of doing so. As easy as it might be to live life mechanically, robotically, or unconsciously, none of this can change the fact that we are living multi-dimensionally and that the conscious mind records only a small portion of the larger experience. Within each moment, a sequence or history of emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual shifts is occurring, within each and every one of us.

The fact that we are not aware, for example, of increased heart rate in response to encountering a threatening person, does not make that shift any less real. We may feel depressed or exhilarated on a particular day, without remembering that this is the anniversary of a particular adversarial or inspiring event. More specific to interpersonal relationships, one may not be aware of emotions shifting in response to those of another person nearby, but the effect is real.

Rather than interpret this, however, as a recommendation to avoid certain individuals and thereby contribute to the membership of what I often call "The Happiness Cult" (those who believe that every moment of life should be happy regardless of circumstances or cost), I suggest viewing such moments as invitations and opportunities for either self-development or interpersonal education.

I may, for example, learn more about either my limitations or my abilities to affect a particular situation, by the ways I choose to respond. Perhaps something about the situation or interaction will empower me (the one who thinks he's "fine") to see some aspect of myself which needs attention, but which I failed to notice. I might even be so focused upon responding with compassion to a person in need, I am innocently unaware of the development of more maturity within myself.

Within the palette of emotional colors available to paint the moments of our lives, are light and dark shades which can provide both dramatic contrast and peaceful wisdom—if we are committed to painting the larger picture of life together. As such, the resulting work is not something any of us can paint in isolation.

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Divinely Together

I occasionally encounter persons committed for various reasons to believing that Godde does not exist. Thankfully, the fact that someone else has not experienced what I have, does nothing to persuade me that the truth of my life is not whatever it is. Similarly, however, that Godde has revealed Godde's self to me in the ways that Godde has, is no confirmation that Godde will ever reveal Godde's self to others in an identical manner.

Nonetheless, I persist in recommending openness to Divine Mystery, regardless of what name one may wish to employ. In so doing, one remains open to whatever is undiscovered; consequently being also open to ever greater possibilities. To claim that something does not exist simply because one cannot perceive it, is truly and foolishly arrogant. Conversely, however, to demand that others base their decisions and behavior upon what they do not (for whatever reason) perceive, is synonymous with requiring them to live a lie.

It may be, however, that someone believes what I say not because of what I said, but because I'm the one who said it. I insist, therefore, that truth is accountable to itself. If truth cannot demonstrate that it is true, the result of forced compliance would be slavery.

I am honored if someone considers me to be a reliable source of truth; I certainly strive to live up to that. I do recognize, however, that any human being can be wrong and that it is therefore prudent to repeatedly request in whatever ways we can, that truth reconfirm itself to us. I sincerely doubt that Godde has any objection to this, considering how much is dependent upon the maintenance of truth within our world and the myriad of opportunities for truth to be compromised.

Thus it is that I persist in moving forward through my life with a standing invitation and openness to divine collaboration. Perhaps Godde is as interested as anyone else in watching to see just what it is that I will do—especially within those moments that I feel overwhelmed and confused and am unaware of how present divine guidance nevertheless is.

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

On a Personal Note

With high hopes, I traveled to Belgium to participate within an archery competition of the World OutGames. Upon arriving and reporting to the sign-in location, I asked whether there were any place within which to practice. A volunteer made a phone call and thereafter informed me there would be a single practice session the following afternoon from 2-4:30 p.m. at the location where of the actual competition. Had I not asked or had she not answered in that manner, the outcome of my trip would have been radically different.

As it turned out, there was no practice session and I soon found myself surrounded by six police officers using a language I didn't understand, who were not particularly concerned with treating me as anything other than a criminal; I was even included in local television news reports. When after more than an hour they had satisfied themselves that there was no danger, I was transported by police vehicle back to where I was staying and told to conceal the bow during all further public appearance. As I began to more fully realize the hostility of the encounter, however, I became too afraid to leave the building at all for the next two days and was only able to relax a little after securing an early departure at enormous personal expense (I will likely be paying for this trip throughout the next year).

So for now I'm doing my best to recover and hope that things get better. It seems life sometimes pitches rather severe curve-balls.

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

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*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS
3170 West Longfellow Pl., Denver, CO 80221
email: dn@SisterWho.com*

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

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