

# Self-Empowerment

Autumn 2013

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 21, Number 1

A publication of  Agape Interfaith Ministries

## To Be Continued...

I am inching closer and closer to my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, which I will celebrate before the end of this year. And I *do* mean *celebrate!*

In the past I looked young for my chronological age, was pretty healthy and energetic, and took pride in my ability to multi-task. I didn't smoke or drink. I practiced forgiveness and gratitude and had a positive attitude.

My spiritual studies and practices made me neither immune to disease nor to loss. Yet, I can happily report, spiritual practices have made all the difference in weathering illness and loss with grace, peace, and the willingness to receive the blessings of others.

So much can happen in a short amount of time. There is a phrase, "When it rains, it pours." Well, into my life there was a heavy downpour this past Spring.

On April 29<sup>th</sup> my 90-year-old mother fell in her own apartment on a carpeted floor, shattering her shoulder. I was there at the time, visiting my parents. Gert was taken by ambulance to the hospital, admitted, and surgery to repair her shoulder was scheduled. She was in her usual upbeat spirits, complimenting nurses on their nail polish, pretty jewelry, and appreciated services over a 3-day period. Sadly, she did not survive the surgery. While on one hand it was a shock and a grievous loss, there was a part of me that understood fully that she made an elegant exit from a body that was becoming burdensome to her.

I told the sad news of her death to my father, her husband of 70 years, and held his hand while he sobbed and wailed. Family and friends came together for a memorial service to honor Gert's life with love and laughter. She had been extremely generous, thoughtful, funny, controlling, quirky, and entertaining. She had a flair for the artistic in home decorating & fashion. A career bookkeeper, she enjoyed taking family members to shows & vacations. She was an outspoken defender of the rights & dignity of minorities. One of a kind, Gert had a powerful loving impact on many!

Within 48 days of my mother's death, I moved my dad to a safe and comfortable assisted living home and

also coordinated the emptying of the apartment my parents lived in for the past 21 years.

It was during that 48 days of handling my father's financial and legal matters that I became aware of a serious medical condition of my own: a mass in my breast that will require surgical intervention. Oh, my!

I have had to shift gears and re-balance the focus of my attention to greater self-care. I am asking myself deep soul questions, as I reach out to others for support and help. I continue to deepen in my awareness of my soul's purpose and the gifts offered in the current process of medical care and holistic support of body-mind-spirit. I look forward to sharing more about my personal journey back to full health in a future issue.

Meanwhile, the spiritual journey continues....

### One Size Does NOT Fit All

This past April, I gave a talk at the Sunday service of Circle of Miracles entitled "One Size Does NOT Fit All."

Circle of Miracles ([www.CircleOfMiracles.org](http://www.CircleOfMiracles.org)) is a wonderfully empowering spiritual community. Guest speakers offer different experiences & points of view. Those who attend are encouraged to nurture their own access to inspiration. What a blessing! They affirm that we are "Free Spiritual Beings" and that we are opening to "Divine Consciousness within" - in whatever form that takes. The weekly service's closing song expresses the aim of walking together "in perfect harmony." That suggests that although we may each hold a different tone, these tones harmonize together rather than conflict with or negate one another.

As the way to inner and outer peace may look and feel different for each individual, my message of "one size does not fit all" was an exploration of some of the ways those differences might show up.

In any spiritual teaching or practice, like a recipe, there may be an ingredient or two that won't agree with an individual at any given moment...or a person may acquire a taste for that ingredient at another time. My message was to re-validate that *only you know* what's right for you in this moment regarding your spiritual path!

My experience is that there's a difference between our ego desires vs our Soul's Knowing. I see it as

having two different impulses within us – the ego’s job is to maintain a separate identity & our soul’s impulse is to commune with all of life. Free will comes into play while we decide how much of each impulse to yield to or to integrate.

When we keep as open as we can to Inner Guidance for our current perfect recipe, the results can be delicious. Since our recipe might change & evolve, depending on our unique, ever changing needs, I made a list of some ingredients (or components) that might flavor your spiritual journey choices, resulting in a richer, individualized spiritual experience.

Here are 10 possible avenues to explore as you continue on your spiritual way:

1 – What are your current **motivations** as described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs? Universal needs, as listed by Maslow are Physiological needs, Safety needs, the need to Love/Belonging, the need for Esteem, and the need for Self-actualization. These basic needs include the need to understand, aesthetic needs, and transcendence. Different levels of needs are addressed by churches and spiritual communities.

2 – **Four levels of consciousness**, as described by Rev Michael Bernard Beckwith, include Victim, Manifestor, Channel, and Unity. Letting go of blame, letting go of control, and letting go of separation are the steps to higher/deeper levels of consciousness. The kinds of spiritual practices and exercises will vary with the level you are working on.

3–Various systems of **personality type**, including Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, Astrology, and others may greatly impact one’s focus of attention.

4 –**Right brain or left brain dominance**. During my talk, I shared my fascination with neuroanatomist Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor who wrote the book “My Stroke of Insight” and spoke on an online TED Talk in which she shares her experience of having a left brain stroke. Are you aware of your right or left brain dominance? Do you seek balance by nurturing the qualities of the weaker side?

5 – Any **past trauma** from your childhood (or past life?) may define much of your life story and focus your spiritual life in a particular journey toward experiencing your wholeness.

6 – A **shock or shift** might have served to move you into an altered state of consciousness. Eckhart Tolle and Byron Katie are two notable examples of spiritual

teachers who experienced awakening/enlightenment when they “hit bottom” psychologically.

7 –A **calling, gift, or purpose** for which you are here to serve or express. It could be an action, an accomplishment, or simply holding the “tone” of an essence quality that contributes to people’s well-being. Some individuals exude patience, peace, enthusiasm, joy, gentleness, kindness, or any other divine quality and are a blessing to many.

8 – **Attitude** or **how you relate to negative ego thoughts**. There are no new thoughts, they have all been thought before. How you relate to your negative thoughts results in different outcomes and your quality of life. While some people focus on affirmations and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, others delve deeply into the dark places to find the gifts there. Some focus on reclaiming projections and do forgiveness work to heal them.

9- **Readiness for “Home/Awakening”** We say we want to give and receive unconditional love, but obviously we’re not fully ready for it, or we would be there already. The extent of our willingness/readiness has a great impact on our journey. Setting one’s intention for enlightenment is a good beginning step. The next steps include the dedicated discipline of making choices that support that goal.

10 – What **image of divinity** lights you up? Jesus, Krishna, White Light, Angels, Nature, Animals, Universal Mind, God-Goddess-AllThatIs are only a few choices. We can have sacred experiences while holding different concepts of divinity, until the concepts fall away.

There is a range of possibilities and blending within, and between, each of these and other potential components/ingredients. A pinch of this, a cup of that, a tablespoon of the other, and it’s your recipe of the individualized expression of divinity for, and through, YOU!

It gives me great joy to share with you in this way, where each of you is supported on your own path. May we continue to enjoy a dialogue supported by respect, freedom, and love.

Blessings!

Your fellow traveler,  
*Rev. Jill*

## The Joy of Old Age. (No Kidding.)

By Oliver Sacks

LAST night I dreamed about mercury — huge, shining globules of quicksilver rising and falling. Mercury is element number 80, and my dream is a reminder that on Tuesday, I will be 80 myself.

Elements and birthdays have been intertwined for me since boyhood, when I learned about atomic numbers. At 11, I could say “I am sodium” (Element 11), and now at 79, I am gold. A few years ago, when I gave a friend a bottle of mercury for his 80th birthday — a special bottle that could neither leak nor break — he gave me a peculiar look, but later sent me a charming letter in which he joked, “I take a little every morning for my health.”

Eighty! I can hardly believe it. I often feel that life is about to begin, only to realize it is almost over. My mother was the 16th of 18 children; I was the youngest of her four sons, and almost the youngest of the vast cousinhood on her side of the family. I was always the youngest boy in my class at high school. I have retained this feeling of being the youngest, even though now I am almost the oldest person I know.

I thought I would die at 41, when I had a bad fall and broke a leg while mountaineering alone. I splinted the leg as best I could and started to lever myself down the mountain, clumsily, with my arms. In the long hours that followed, I was assailed by memories, both good and bad. Most were in a mode of gratitude — gratitude for what I had been given by others, gratitude, too, that I had been able to give something back. “Awakenings” had been published the previous year.

At nearly 80, with a scattering of medical and surgical problems, none disabling, I feel glad to be alive — “I’m glad I’m not dead!” sometimes bursts out of me when the weather is perfect. (This is in contrast to a story I heard from a friend who, walking with Samuel Beckett in Paris on a perfect spring morning, said to him, “Doesn’t a day like this make you glad to be alive?” to which Beckett answered, “I wouldn’t go as far as that.”) I am grateful that I have experienced many things — some wonderful, some horrible — and that I have been able to write a dozen books, to receive innumerable letters from friends, colleagues and readers, and to enjoy what Nathaniel Hawthorne called “an intercourse with the world.”

I am sorry I have wasted (and still waste) so much time; I am sorry to be as agonizingly shy at 80 as I was at 20; I am sorry that I speak no languages but my mother tongue and that I have not traveled or experienced other cultures as widely as I should have done.

I feel I should be trying to complete my life, whatever “completing a life” means. Some of my patients in their 90s or 100s say *nunc dimittis* — “I have had a full life, and now I am ready to go.” For some of them, this means going to heaven — it is always heaven rather than hell, though Samuel Johnson and James Boswell both quaked at the thought of going to hell and got furious with David Hume, who entertained no such beliefs. I have no belief in (or desire for) any post-mortem existence, other than in the memories of friends and the hope that some of my books may still “speak” to people after my death.

W. H. Auden often told me he thought he would live to 80 and then “bugger off” (he lived only to 67). Though it is 40 years since his death, I often dream of him, and of my parents and of former patients — all long gone but loved and important in my life.

At 80, the specter of dementia or stroke looms. A third of one’s contemporaries are dead, and many more, with profound mental or physical damage, are trapped in a tragic and minimal existence. At 80 the marks of decay are all too visible. One’s reactions are a little slower, names more frequently elude one, and one’s energies must be husbanded, but even so, one may often feel full of energy and life and not at all “old.” Perhaps, with luck, I will make it, more or less intact, for another few years and be granted the liberty to continue to love and work, the two most important things, Freud insisted, in life.

When my time comes, I hope I can die in harness, as Francis Crick did. When he was told that his colon cancer had returned, at first he said nothing; he simply looked into the distance for a minute and then resumed his previous train of thought. When pressed about his diagnosis a few weeks later, he said, “Whatever has a beginning must have an ending.” When he died, at 88, he was still fully engaged in his most creative work.

My father, who lived to 94, often said that the 80s had been one of the most enjoyable decades of his life. He felt, as I begin to feel, not a shrinking but an enlargement of mental life and perspective. One has had a long experience of life, not only one’s own life, but others’, too. One has seen triumphs and tragedies, booms and busts, revolutions and wars, great achievements and deep ambiguities, too. One has seen grand theories rise, only to be toppled by stubborn facts. One is more conscious of transience and, perhaps, of beauty. At 80, one can take a long view and have a vivid, lived sense of history not possible at an earlier age. I can imagine, feel in my bones, what a century is like, which I could not do when I was 40 or 60. I do not think of old age as an ever grimmer time that one must somehow endure and make the best of, but as a time of

leisure and freedom, freed from the factitious urgencies of earlier days, free to explore whatever I wish, and to bind the thoughts and feelings of a lifetime together.

I am looking forward to being 80.

*Oliver Sacks is a professor of neurology at the N.Y.U. School of Medicine and the author, most recently, of "Hallucinations." Visit [www.OliverSacks.com](http://www.OliverSacks.com)*

---

## On the Building and Tearing Down of Walls, Part One of Two

by Joseph Anthony



People build walls when they need a safe place to live. Animals build shelters for the same reason. Some say we build psychological/spiritual walls after we've been hurt or betrayed. Some say the thing to do once we're emotionally and spiritually mature is to tear down these walls. Some people believe they build walls and never come out, they're too afraid; they always stay in.

My take on walls is different. I believe building walls is wisdom in action. I believe we build walls when we're children not because we've been hurt, we build them *before* we're hurt—we build them out of *play*. Give a child a cloth, a bed sheet, a large piece of silk and watch them almost instantly build a fort or wrap it around themselves. Watch them transform the space underneath a table or in a closet, in a tree—almost anywhere—into a safe, magical place. Teens even love their own space.

In other words I believe building walls is natural, creative, holy, and necessary. Inner stress comes when we go inside and have trouble coming back out, or when we are unable to invite people in, or when we outgrow the space and don't make proper renovations,

or we don't tend the space and it becomes cramped, isolated, filled with shadows. As this happens over time, our inner space can become unhealthy and we in fact do need to come out or let people in to help us clean. Perhaps we sense our inner space has become too confining, restricted, or narrow. It's now that someone might suggest to us that it's time to tear the walls down. And there are some of us who need that type of violent gesture to free ourselves and feel empowered. That's OK. The walls came tumbling down in Jericho after all (with the power of commitment and music, no less).

And if you find yourself telling yourself (and others) that you never come out or you always stay in your wall and that you can't come out, know that words like *always*, *never*, and *can't*, are simply not true. If you had never come out of your wall you wouldn't know to even want to. Anytime you genuinely laughed—you were outside the wall. Any time you wept in front of someone you were outside the wall (or you had invited them inside). So you *can* come out. The way might be cluttered, but you can, if you choose.

I suggest a gentle approach to walls—in building and transforming them, and choosing when to come out or let others in. It is an approach infused with the overarching idea that the wall was built in the first place for a reason, a holy, and healthy reason. It was built out of the spirit of play and to keep ourselves safe. Know that the word *paradise* means a walled garden—a safe, beautiful place surrounded by a wall. Did we use our paradise as a place to hide and to withdraw from painful people and situations? I hope so. Did some of us become addicted to the inner space, the isolation? Did some of us neglect our inner gardens and let them become over grown with weeds? Yes. We all do to one degree or another and at one time or another. But when we know it's time to move out or let others in, there is a way to do so that honors both your wisdom for building it in the first place and the wall itself. And I will share my thoughts on this process in 'part two'.

For now, be with the idea that inside of you is a *paradise*. That's a wonderful idea indeed.

*Joseph Anthony, author of "Following Your Heart's Desire" is a teacher, writer, musician, songwriter, storyteller, certified life-coach, certified self-esteem specialist for children, an educational consultant, an ordained minister, and offers healing work with Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). Visit Joseph's blog at <http://blog.thewonderchildblog.com/>*

## *Interfaith Ministers*

for Weddings, Memorial Services, and other sacred life events

*Blessing you and yours*

Rev. Jill Sabin Carel  
Phone: 215-742-0552  
Jilleroni@juno.com  
Northeast Philadelphia

Rev. Rhetta Morgan  
Phone: 267-262-1079  
RhettaMorgan@yahoo.com  
West Philadelphia

### **Reflections on Aging**

“In terms of days and moments lived, you’ll never again be as young as you are right now, so spend this day, the youth of your future, in a way that deflects regret. Invest in yourself. Have some fun. Do something important. Love somebody extra. In one sense, you’re just a kid, but a kid with enough years on her to know that every day is priceless.”

— [Victoria Moran](#), *Younger by the Day: 365 Ways to Rejuvenate Your Body and Revitalize Your Spirit*

“It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone.”

— [Andy Rooney](#)

“As you get older; you've probably noticed that you tend to forget things. You'll be talking with somebody at a party, and you'll know that you know this person, but no matter how hard you try, you can't remember his or her name. This can be very embarrassing, especially if he or she turns out to be your spouse.”

— [Dave Barry](#)

“I've enjoyed every age I've been, and each has had its own individual merit. Every laugh line, every scar, is a badge I wear to show I've been present, the inner rings of my personal tree trunk that I display proudly for all to see. Nowadays, I don't want a "perfect" face and body; I want to wear the life I've lived.”

— [Pat Benatar](#)

“Today I am 65 years old. I still look good. I appreciate and enjoy my age. A lot of people resist transition and therefore never allow themselves to enjoy who they are. Embrace the change, no matter what it is; once you do, you can learn about the new world you're in and take advantage of it. You still bring to bear all your prior experience, but you are riding on another level. It's completely liberating.”

— [Nikki Giovanni](#)

## **Laugh Out Loud**

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%. The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again." The gentleman replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

Two elderly gentlemen from a retirement center were outside chatting when one turns to the other and says: "Slim, I'm 83 years old now and I'm just full of aches and pains. I know you're about my age. How do you feel?" Slim says, "I feel just like a newborn baby." "Really!?! Like a newborn baby!?" "Yep. No hair, no teeth, and I think I just wet my pants."

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, "Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly." The other man said, "What is the name of the restaurant?" The first man thought and thought and finally said, "What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know... the one that's red and has thorns." "Do you mean a rose?" "Yes, that's the one," replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, "Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?"

Morris, an 82-year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm. A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, "You're really doing great, aren't you?" Morris replied, "Just doing what you said, Doc: "Get a hot mamma and be cheerful." The doctor said, "I didn't say that... I said, "You've got a heart murmur; be careful."

---

---

*I hope you enjoy this issue.*

*Wishing you joy and beauty this season & always,*

*Jill*

---

---

## Daily Word

### I am transformed.

Everywhere I look, I see life in transition. God is in every part of this ever-changing world, and God is within me as I grow and change.

The books I read, the movies or shows I see, and the worship services I attend may provide insight and inspiration for my transformation, but the greatest influence is the presence of God within. The Presence nudges me to expand my view of life, to courageously step out of my comfort zone, and to respond to change with openness and enthusiasm.

Life's experiences spur my spiritual growth and teach me to rely on God's guiding presence. With faith, I move through transition, and I am transformed.

*Reprinted with permission of Unity®, publisher of Daily Word®, Unity Village, MO 64065. One year subscription \$14.95. One year digital subscription, including mobile app, online magazine and email is \$9.95. Call Customer Care: 1-800-669-0282 or visit [www.dailyword.com](http://www.dailyword.com)*

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Self-Empowerment is published quarterly (4 issues/year)  
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Jill Sabin Carel  
Editor: Michael P. Tunney  
Agape Interfaith Ministries, 1100 Friendship Street,  
Philadelphia, PA 19111 Phone: (215) 742-0552  
Email: [Jilleroni@juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@juno.com) Web: [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org)

Subscriptions are available without charge.  
Tax deductible donations are gratefully received.  
A suggested donation of \$5 or more per year is invited.

To be added to the Self-Empowerment mailing list, you may call, email, or mail your clearly printed name and address to Agape Interfaith Ministries. Newsletters in pdf can be emailed to you and/or found on the [AgapeInterfaith.org](http://AgapeInterfaith.org) website.

Submission of letters, questions and articles are welcome and encouraged. We reserve the right to edit. Please note on any correspondence if you wish your name to be withheld. We publish under One-Time Rights (rights revert to writer's ownership after publication).

Entire contents © 2013, Agape Interfaith Ministries.

Agape Interfaith Ministries  
1100 Friendship Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Love

Sent to you with  
Love & Blessings

**The mission of Agape Interfaith Ministries is to encourage, support and inspire a deepening conscious relationship with Divinity for the greater experience of wholeness, abundance, love and peace. We serve to elevate consciousness through individual and group educational activities, and community service.**