

# Self-Empowerment

Summer 2009

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## TRANSCENDING “BAD NEWS”

We usually see the news media focus on *bad news*, mostly crimes, disasters, disease, and a tough economy. What is the focus of *your* attention throughout the day? Are you mentally replaying personal problems or global disasters? Are you often feeling sadness or fear?

Many of us know, at least intellectually, that no matter how small or large a problem seems to be, we have a choice about our response to it. But what do we usually do when confronted with *bad news*? How do we transcend it and respond from Inner Wisdom or peace?

There are habits that can be established with practice that make a huge difference. It is best to practice with the smaller issues, and then the habits will kick in when needed for the larger disasters we might need to face.

Do you remember the good luck/bad luck story?

### Good Luck? Bad Luck?

*There is a Chinese story of an old farmer who had an old horse for tilling his fields. One day the horse escaped into the hills and when all the farmer's neighbors sympathized with the old man over his bad luck, the farmer replied, "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?"*

*A week later the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills and this time the neighbors congratulated the farmer on his good luck. His reply was "Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?"*

*Then when the farmer's son was attempting to tame one of the wild horses, he fell off its back and broke his leg. Everyone thought this very bad luck. Not the farmer, whose only reaction was, "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?"*

*Some weeks later the army marched into the village and conscripted every able-bodied youth they found there. When they saw the farmer's son with his broken leg they let him off. Now was that good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?*

This story illustrates that over time everything that seems to be undesirable may be “good in disguise.” And everything that seems good on the surface may

lead to an undesirable event, and yet may even still eventually lead to a greater good. The farmer in this story recognizes that one cannot judge what is good or bad. This is a state of mind that many would like to achieve, but instead struggle with the emotional ups and downs that are the consequence of unexamined beliefs.

Those who would like to have greater freedom from the negative dramas that take place every time something seems to go wrong, may benefit from examining the beliefs that are really the culprit.

### The Spiritual B-Line

A proactive process is shared by author and counselor Dan Joseph (DanJoseph.com). The method that he calls the Spiritual B-Line is based on the work of psychologist Albert Ellis.

His ABC model is a framework in which **A** = Adversity, **B** = Beliefs, and **C** = Consequence. This model can show us that our **Beliefs** are like an invisible connect-the-dots line between our **Adversities** and possible **Consequences**. The adversities can be any triggering event or perceived problem. The consequences can be any catastrophic thoughts or emotions.

Try this: Write down a problem for **A** and a reaction for **C**, leaving space for a list of beliefs that lead to the written reaction. For example: **A**=Lost Job and **C**=Depression. In this example, your beliefs that could lead to depression might include: *The economy is horrible. Nobody can find jobs now. I'm too old to start over.*

But what if you write a different reaction for the Consequence – Relief or Peace instead of Depression? You would come up with a different list of beliefs that would lead to relief or peace, for example: *I really wanted to leave that job. This is a good opportunity to nurture my creativity and faith, and acquire some new skills.* You could find many more beliefs, especially if you try this with different consequences, like gratitude anger, or creative problem-solving.

When my anger is triggered, I ask myself “What are my beliefs that lead to feeling angry?” From practice, I know it is not the event, but rather what I am *believing* about that event that is causing the emotional

consequence.

Recent experience: My husband Rick bought a used Mini Cooper with a manual transmission (stick shift) while I was out of town. That was my **A** – the event that seemed like an adversity upon my return home from a lovely peaceful retreat. My **C**'s were all the thoughts and feelings that bubbled up when I was faced with his newest purchase. I was aware of good feelings (happiness), bad feelings (anger & resentment), and a wide variety of thoughts and potential arguments.

I took some time to bring the **B**'s to my conscious awareness, so I could communicate honestly with Rick. Some of my Beliefs: *The car is really cute. I don't like to shift gears when driving. He was too impatient to wait for my participation in the decision.* So my first response to him was basically, "I'm happy you got a car you love, and I feel resentful that you didn't wait for me to have any input in the decision which might have led to buying one with an automatic transmission."

I looked at more of my **B**eliefs so that I could have a greater choice of **C**onsequences for myself. Some beliefs that lead to resentment, frustration, and attempts to manipulate: *I can't shift fast enough or calmly enough in certain traffic situations. I can't learn where all the control buttons are. If I act mad enough, he'll be sorry he bought it.* Are these beliefs that I want to hold on to? I can if I want to be right instead of happy. Quite a few of my beliefs lead to my own unhappiness, a consequence that I do not want. I would rather forgive him for handling the purchase the way he did so that I could be at peace. In the process of examining my beliefs I was able to recognize that I, too, make some decisions without Rick's input. How interesting! We are both "guilty" of doing what we want, sometimes without concern for the other. This process has many valuable payoffs. I can now forgive myself and Rick for the ways that we can be selfish. I can extend love and forgiveness, and set my intention for my own actions to be sensitive, considerate, and compassionate.

I am transcending the "bad news" of the day by bringing my beliefs to conscious awareness for the purpose of nurturing the ones that serve me and considering the release of the ones that do not. The ego loves to keep the negative drama going while Inner Wisdom prefers peace, love and joy. Which consequence shall I choose?

So Rick has a cute 5-speed Mini – Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*



## A TALE OF TWO PATIENTS

By Jude Henzy

It was late, near midnight, and the 25-year-old patient was barely conscious, just waking from surgery after sustaining a gunshot wound to his leg. Hours earlier I had sat with his anxious parents in the surgical hospitality area. They told me about their son, how they hoped he would be able to walk again, that he had "tried college" and was currently "between jobs." Now, as I stood at his bedside, I did my best to comfort him. He was clearly in a lot of pain, and I mopped his brow and offered ice chips.

Another patient had been in a terrible car accident. He had to be cut from his vehicle and his legs were badly damaged. The following day he would undergo surgery to begin to repair the injuries. He was fuzzy from pain medication and trauma, so our interaction was brief.

One week after the first patient had been shot, I went to see him for the third or fourth time. Since the incident, his parents had taken time off from work, made arrangements for pets and younger siblings, and lost countless hours of sleep worrying about him. Their concern was compounded by the painful discovery that the shooting was connected to the patient's involvement with drugs. During our visit, the patient complained that he was bored, in pain, and had nothing to do all day but think. I asked him what kinds of things he was thinking about. "Oh, you know," he responded, "how much it hurts, how much I hate physical therapy . . ." When I asked him about the impact of the shooting on his family he replied, "I haven't really thought about that. I'm just thinking about my leg."

Later, I paid another visit to the car accident victim; I could see that he was in a good deal of pain. The surgeons had made some repairs, but it was uncertain whether he would walk unaided ever again. This patient, too, told me that he'd been doing a lot of thinking. When I invited him to share his thoughts, he talked about priorities and meaning. For him, the accident had been a wakeup call. "I think I had some things all wrong," he confessed. "I was stressing about work and fancy cars and a big house as if all that stuff really mattered. Now I can see that what's more important is relationships with people you love and especially with God. I wasn't paying enough attention to those things, but God has fixed it so I can't run away." A tear slid down his cheek. "This might sound crazy, but I think what I'm supposed to learn from this is gratitude."

So you can probably guess where I'm going here.

These two patients have taught me that we all make choices about how we respond to the circumstances of our lives. Sometimes we get stuck feeling victimized; other times we are able to make meaning from our pain. What makes us able to move from “Poor me” to “What can I learn from this?” is our connection to something greater than ourselves. If all we can focus on is our hurt leg, then we’re just a person with leg pain. But if we can see a purpose in the hurt leg, the pain is still there, but so is the motivation to heal both physically and spiritually. Our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world is broadened. Victim, or spiritual seeker—the choice is yours.

In faith,  
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## **TWO MORE PATIENTS: TRANSCENDING THE FEAR OF DEATH**

Two people I know have recently shared their experiences when faced with terminal medical conditions. Neither one feared their death. Both have lived life fully. One has passed on, and the other is still at home with his family. Both are awesome examples of “Let Go, Let God.”

### **Lee Hedge**

I attended the memorial service of Eleanor “Lee” Hedge. It was quite an inspirational celebration of Lee’s life. Lee was 74 years old when she made her transition. I had known her for the past 12 years as an assertive, helpful, dependable, outgoing, social woman who was at death’s door several times. She amazed the medical professionals, speaking affirmations and surrounding herself with prayer partners while she was in the Intensive Care Unit, and then getting well enough to be released so she could get back to all the activities that filled her life. Her medical conditions did not stop her from helping others or having fun.

At her memorial service, friends and family members spoke of the impact she had on them, including two family members who were motivated by her to attain sobriety. Others shared about her years of dedicated volunteer work, church service, and her enthusiastic pet sitting. Another relative read a letter that Lee wrote, specifically to be read at her own funeral. In her inimitable style, Lee wrote that she knew that prayer works and wanted to encourage all who would hear her message to continue to learn and grow in their spiritual life. Her message was both fearless and inspirational.

### **Tom Catanese**

“Aunt Doris” is really my friend Pattie’s aunt, but we have adopted one another in a spiritual kinship. Doris and Tom, married for 63 years, have shared a life in music. Doris sent me a photo of their “last gig” when they were 75 years old, though you would never guess their ages from their vibrant appearance. Now they are 87 and both receiving hospice care. Doris wrote on the back of the photo, “We had a good run. Lots of love, friends, peace, joy, etc. Praise God.”

Neither Doris nor Tom fear death. They are ready to accept God’s timing, yet live fully in every moment while they are still here. I asked them to share something that I could share with my readers, so here is the letter I received from Tom. I invite you to take in Tom’s enthusiastic message as a beacon of faith-filled living.

Tom Catanese wrote:

*God is still living in this time, today and forever!!  
Do not take his silence as a reason to think he has forgotten us. It’s his time to make miracles. My miracle happened during the summer of the year “2007.” I was in the hospital for heart surgery. During the operation, plaque from one of my arteries broke into hundreds of small pieces and completely closed off the exit to my kidneys. For the next five weeks they desperately tried to open the kidney to no avail. Finally, they put me on a Dialysis machine. This is the only way to get the poison out of the kidney when the exit is blocked. Medically, there is no other way to do it. Usually, you go on this machine every other day and are on it three hours a day. Before this, ports are put into your body. Usually into the chest or into your arm to which the two plastic tubes from the machine is then attached to. The blood flow is then sent through your body. During this time the poison inside the body is removed and put into a large plastic bottle and then is discarded. When the kidneys are in good condition, this is all done by the kidneys themselves. (God didn’t miss a thing when he made our bodies.)*

*By this time I had lost over forty pounds and looked and felt like death warmed over. I talked to God and told him I was ready for the next life with him. The problem was, it wasn’t my time to go, and that’s when the miracle came to me.*

*For the next few nights I was aware that something was going on inside my body. Each night I was awakened from my sleep. God never talked to me but I talked to him. I just said to him, “God, I know it’s you inside my body, as no one but you could do this. I didn’t know that a miracle was being born. This happened for about five to six days in a row and then abruptly*

*stopped as fast as it started.*

*At this time, I “had it” with Dialysis and the way I was feeling. When the group of Dialysis doctors heard I was going to give up the machine, they told my daughter not to let this happen, as they said I would be dead within two to six weeks as the accumulated poison within my body would go throughout my body and kill me!!*

*But, remember, God was still in the picture. In those few nights that I was awakened, he had cured my kidney problem completely. This occurred in “2007.” I gave up the Dialysis machine and never looked back.*

*I am writing this letter in “2009.” My creatine level was off the charts in “2007,” but is now between 2.3 and 2.5, which is normal. I would not have the audacity to tell anyone to do what I did as only God can make a miracle. Why this happened to me I’ll never know unless God himself tells me in the future himself.*

*This letter is being written by someone who was given a miracle and to say “It can and does happen many more times than people may think. I had a strong prayer line to God from people who believed. Prayers can make miracles, so “Don’t give up.”*

*Sincerely, Tom Catanese*

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## **INNER WISDOM MESSAGE re: DEATH**

Blessings, Dear One. Thank you for your question about death.

You have asked for an Inner Wisdom message on the subject of death. I surely can speak to you of any concern, yet there is a real desire on your part to bring forth a message of faith and comfort in the face of what you call “death” – to be an inspiration to those with whom you share this message.

The experience of death is not an ending, but a shift into one’s next phase of life, for life is eternal. Yes, Dear One, life is eternal. But your concern is not so much for what your experience will be like after the death of your body, but rather how one is to live when death seems to be looming ahead.

Your question is really about life and how to live it when changes take place in your body, your vitality, and other aspects of your life experience. Know this – your attention to the ongoing expression of the many “flavors of Love” – patience, compassion, beauty, courage, gratitude, blessing, etc.– is the only part of life that has *Meaning*, with a capital M. The “quality of life” issues that you find yourself considering are not about fixing one’s body, finding the perfect assisted living community, or overcoming fear of letting go of one’s loved ones. It is about relaxing into

the awareness of Love’s Presence, what you call God, and feeling the fullness of Being. It is within you to yield to. You have intellectually accepted the concept of being a Child of God and the concept of your Divine Nature, but concepts are not the experience. FEEL the ground of your being by going within and communing with this heart-centered love-intelligence, the experience that brings this message forward to your mind in words. Rest in that feeling, with or without words being formed. Like plugging a power cord into a source of energy, allow the Source of your Life to extend its unlimited love-energy to you. Feel it, receive it.

In this way you will turn from questions about death to feelings that are the ongoing expression of your magnificently divine and joyful life in whatever form it is taking in the moment. Rest assured I AM is with you always.

Blessings, Dear One. Amen

*Inner Wisdom inspirational messages are shared with you through Rev. Jill Carel who has been sharing messages of comfort, healing, and guidance in private counseling sessions. She now offers group workshops and individual lessons to teach others to access Inner Wisdom for themselves.*

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## **Inner Wisdom Workshop**

You already experience Inner Wisdom – sometimes.

Learn how to access your Inner Wisdom consciously, purposefully, and consistently. Learn how to receive the support that will help you receive answers to your questions and meet your life challenges with intelligence, clarity, and peace of mind.

**Next scheduled workshop: Sunday, June 28, 2009**

**1 – 5 pm in Northeast Philadelphia.**

**Suggested donation: \$40**

**Registration: Rev. Jill Sabin Carel  
215-742-0552 or Jilleroni@juno.com**

**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.**

## Daily Word

*I am an expression of  
the joyous activity of Spirit.*

Anytime is a good time to stir up the energy of gratefulness within me. I begin by valuing where I am at the moment. This can be as simple as appreciating the cozy chair I'm sitting in. I begin by considering its qualities, the effort and workmanship that went into its design and creation.

I continue as I give thanks for the air I breathe and the movement and strength of my body. I bless the work that is before me and consider all that I bring to its completion. I am purposeful and valuable, and my work reflects the joyous activity of Spirit in and through me. Joy flows forth as I continue to appreciate every aspect of my experiences and everything I give to and receive from life.

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### **A Course in Miracles study groups**

Open your mind and heart to the consciousness and experience of miracles. Share in the peace and joy that results from changing your perceptions.

NE Philadelphia 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

Moorestown, NJ 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

For info call Rev. Jill Sabin Carel 215-742-0552.



## THANK YOU!

Thank you for your continued generous support of this newsletter and the work of Agape Interfaith Ministries.

Whether you sent a financial contribution, a book of stamps, a note of appreciation, or a prayer, please know that each of you is loved and appreciated.

**Thank you for your support!  
Blessings to you!**

## **TRANSCENDING NEGATIVE BELIEFS (ALLERGIES & OTHER ANNOYANCES)**

For most of my adult life, I have had the symptoms of seasonal allergies, with sneezing, coughing, and itchy eyes and throat. Many years ago it was much more intense. I would have long bouts of racking coughing spells. To sleep at night, the only position that allowed any rest was to be propped up in a sitting position in bed.

The past few years have not been as intense. I still have some of the symptoms, but to a much lesser degree. To my delight, I can even sleep laying down.

Am I "healing" the allergies? Maybe. Let's look at the ABC model (page 1). **A** = Sneezing, Coughing, and Itchy Eyes & Throat. **C** = Gratitude and Peace. What are the **B**eliefs that could result in such wonderful Consequences?

*I love myself exactly as I am.*

*I take appropriate care of my body.*

*I can use this experience as an opportunity to learn compassion for my suffering brothers/sisters.*

*If there are emotional triggers to my symptoms, I can experience relief by committed spiritual practices of forgiveness and gratitude.*

*I forgive myself for being "imperfect."*

*I forgive myself for whatever I may have done or neglected to do for myself and others.*

*I forgive others for the actions that I thought were victimizing me.*

*I am grateful for any help and progress.*

*I am grateful for over-the-counter remedies, holistic practitioners, bodywork treatments, and any resources that bring relief.*

*I am grateful for the opportunity to slow down from my ambitious To-Do List, and be present with what is.*

*I am grateful for this moment to bring my attention to my experiences of forgiveness and gratitude.*

I feel pretty good right now. I did blow my nose halfway through this list, but other than that, all is well. Maybe my symptoms will lessen, or maybe they won't. Either way is fine with me. Allergy symptoms do not define me. With or without someone saying "Bless you" when I sneeze, I feel blessed. And that's the Truth!

The whole point of being alive is to evolve into the complete person you were intended to be.  
Oprah Winfrey

It is difficult to make a man miserable while he feels worthy of himself and claims kindred to the great God who made him.  
Abraham Lincoln

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt within the heart.  
Helen Keller

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.  
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Your life is calling for greater expression. There is a plan that doesn't come from you, but it will evolve through you. You don't know how to manifest that plan, but God does. And so you turn over this moment, this day, to God. Ask for guidance, and follow your highest leading.  
Mary Manin Morrissey

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