

# Self-Empowerment

Summer 2011

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## Response Ability

Stuff happens... then we have feelings, judgments, and reactions. Welcome to humanity.

Those of us who have given much energy to consciousness work have sought to temper our reactions, ease our anxieties, and end our suffering. We pray, meditate, chant, read spiritual and psychological writings, and/or follow whatever path calls to us.

The good news is that we grow and improve in handling what comes our way. We feel more centered and grounded. We find peace and equilibrium sooner than we did years ago.

The bad news is that we are still often faced with the fact that we are not in "control" and there is no permanent feeling of security. Stuff continues to happen; and again and again we are triggered.

Have you noticed an ebb and flow of feelings as we are witness to our lives and the lives of others? Challenges and disasters are often followed by rest and healing. Yet there are some losses and changes that remain painful. Some changes are devastating while others are transformative. What makes the difference?

Attitudes, intentions, openness, and flexibility make a huge difference in how we relate to the stuff that happens. Some of us may have cultivated an optimistic or cheerful personality style, but a more serious demeanor may just as well respond with compassion and forgiveness to very difficult situations. It takes all kinds to meet life's circumstances.

If we want to lead more healthy and fulfilling lives while handling whatever circumstances show up, we don't need to twist ourselves into a different personality type or follow any magical set of rules. There are many teachers who find ways to point the way to what seems to work for them. It is my joy and honor to share their words with you.

This newsletter has been described as a marriage of psychology and spirituality. My focus is on something that I think of as mind / soul / heart.

While my own language tends to lean toward a focus on Spirit, Inner Wisdom, and Higher Power – I see that there are others who seem to be in harmony with my thoughts using different wording. Words are

limited by complex combinations of meanings we give them, so I try to tread lightly through the minefield of hard and fast definitions. When talking about ways to meet our challenges, I want to be sensitive and respectful to those at various stages of learning and with those who have different levels of mastery. I probably have not walked a mile in your shoes, and cannot guess what you have weathered so far.

It is my hope that this newsletter continues to be helpful, inspirational, and validating. Feel free to let me know if I am on target or missing the mark.

Peace, Blessings, and Love to you and yours.

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*

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## Glad No Matter What An Interview with SARK

by *Edie Weinstein*

"Hello! This is SARK," bubbled the effervescent voice from cross country. "You can call me Susan." Thus began the phone call that would have me speaking to a woman whose words and images have inspired millions world wide, including this journalist. Author of such wonders as *Transformation Soup, Inspiration Sandwich, Succulent Wild Woman, Living Juicy* and *Change Your Life Without Getting Out of Bed*, SARK is a brilliantly colored work of he(art) herself. Her latest book is entitled *Glad No Matter What: Transforming Loss and Change Into Gift And Opportunity*. Since we teach what we need to learn, this book came from SARK's (Susan Ariel Rainbow Kennedy) recent experience of layered losses. The book is full to overflowing with healing tips like going on Miracle Walks and becoming a transformational change agent.

*Edie: Why is change so challenging for people?*

SARK: Most of us resist change and fear change, because it is the unknown. We can't control it and we don't know what's going to happen. I want to make a point to clarify; it is not about feeling glad when you don't. That's actually annoying to me. People say, "Oh

it's all about positive thinking.” Positive thinking is wonderful, but if you don't have positive consciousness and transformational practices to go along with it, sometimes people want to avoid the shadow work or deeper work and just try to fixate on what's positive, it's not productive.

*Edie: You talk about the concept of Pollyanna in your book, that she wasn't this witless ninny, but instead was able to turn things in her life around and be an alchemist.*

SARK: Not only that, but if you read the real story of Pollyanna; of course she was a fictional character, you'll see that here's a little girl whose parents both died and she is sent to live in a town with relatives she didn't know and actually, weren't very likeable. Instead of collapsing into that, she set about transforming the town by inventing something called The Glad Game. She went around interacting with all the people in the town and chose to see the good in them and chose to see what was working, instead of what was broken. The very important thing is that it doesn't discount the broken things. What it does is strengthen our ability to use the positive energy to help fix the things that are broken. Pollyanna got a bad rap. I'm out to transform it.

*Edie: How can we learn to trust change?*

SARK: I don't know if we ever learn to trust change, but we can trust our ability to respond to change. And that's different than reacting to change. Most people react to change by saying “Oh no, that's bad news.” We're the ones that assign the meaning to it. When we respond to change, we can trust ourselves to say “Ok...” For example, I was just audited by the IRS. When you first get the news that you are being audited, it is tempting to resist it and be in great opposition to the whole idea. That's what I did. As soon as I got the letter, I went into complete resistance and freaked out for five minutes. Actually, it was more than five minutes, because I cut my finger on a staple that I was trying to remove from the letter and didn't realize it and suddenly there were bloody thumbprints on the paper and I couldn't understand where they were coming from and I thought “It's already making me bleed.” I'm here to tell you that I did my transformational practices that I call Practical Gladness. I had a magical, successful audit. A friend asked “How could you have a magical audit? That's as anomalous as military intelligence.” I am going to write about it, because people clearly want to be shown how to have a magical audit. #1 is to be prepared. That sounds obvious, but I found out that 85-90% of the people who come in are

not prepared, so they are asking the auditor to do their work for them. #2 I've learned this from all my years of flying, if you're on a flight and want to completely delight a flight attendant, give them a magazine that you are done reading. It's as though you have given them gold and they will completely reward you with all kinds of snacks and treats and special dispensation. My equivalent to that with an IRS audit, is to tell them “This stack of copies is for you.” Make copies for them. The auditor must have thanked us six times for making copies.

*Edie: How can we see the gift in the pain?*

SARK: The best way is to see the whole picture of the pain. When my mother was going into hospice care, all I could see was the death of her. I forgot about the miracles of the hospice workers, of the neighbors who were helping, of my mother herself who was finally relaxed and saying “I understand that hospice is in my home now.” It was such a range of experiences and miracles to have in the landscape of the pain of my mother going into hospice care. When my cat was dying, all I could see was that my cat was dying and then I forgot that I had angels in every direction that camped out and lived with me as I tended to my dying cat, and sat with me as I helped him die and he died in my arms.

*Edie: I'm sure Jupiter appreciated that.*

SARK: He set the whole thing up and then became the most fantastic spirit guide afterward. He's so happy to be dead. My mother is so happy to be dead. Both of them bestowed such powerful gifts upon me and that was a purpose in their dying. I didn't know there was a purpose to the pain. I think we fear that this is here for no purpose.

*Edie: So those were two of the three major losses in your life and the third was the changing of an important relationship.*

SARK: Yes, the ending of a romantic love relationship and this one hit me the hardest for all sorts of reasons since it was the best relationship I have ever been in with another person. There was so much potential and that it would go on and on and we would live together or marry. It was so unbelievably painful when it became clear that it was not going to happen. Looking at the landscape and whole process, I was able to see how much love I have to share and I was able to reflect on the miracles of love that I did have with this person. I'm probably more hopeful and romantic than ever.

*Eddie: You talk about 'loss layers' in the book. Can you explain that concept?*

SARK: All the losses come in all kinds of layers and you peel one off and think "I'm over that." and it reveals another layer that you hadn't explored. In the instance with my love relationship, it revealed a great loss that I never became a biological mother.

*Eddie: What I like about the book is that it's not just talking about loss in terms of death. We're always in transition.*

SARK: That's one of the reasons I wanted to write the book. Initially, I thought it was going to be writing about grief that results from death and I thought that there was such a much bigger subject here.

*Eddie: And even things that we consider positive change can be scary.*

SARK: Those could be the scariest of all!

*Eddie: What about when all your dreams come true?*

SARK: I've had a lot of my dreams come true and when you make creative dreams real, it's tempting to think that everything will be good. If you get your book published, and it's well received and endorsed and turns into national best sellers and you go around the country and you're treated like a queen and you pick up the phone and everyone wants to talk to you because of the book and it's everything that you've dreamed of...and then guess what? There are all kinds of things; expectations and business and the management of sales. There's a whole panoply of changes and things that became real that are positive. That's why the Zen story is so applicable. "Oh, this is really good news." and the farmer keeps saying, "We'll see." Then wonderful things happen and he says, "We'll see." and then terrible things happen and he says "We'll see." The movie "Social Network" is a great allegory for what we are talking about here. You can have billions of dollars and still be incredibly lonely and sad and this is the part people don't believe. Of course, we need money for our lives and basic survival and growth. Money can be as destructive as it is productive.

*Eddie: In her book, by the same name, Elizabeth Lesser speaks of the Broken Open concept. Did you experience that yourself?*

SARK: In my relationship, we described it as a 'breakthrough' instead of a 'breakup'. I started hating

that because I was so sad. It is better in theory than it is in practice. I love Elizabeth Lesser's book and I recommend it. My book is not about the glass being half full or half empty. It's both. It's not about looking on the bright side. It's looking on both sides. William Stafford has a great quote, and at the end, he says "I have woven a parachute out of everything broken."

*Eddie: What happens when we numb ourselves and avoid feeling our pain?*

SARK: It works in the short term and we know and we have all done it we will continue to do it. We find out over time that it didn't really work the way we thought it did, because there are destructive and cumulative effects. They accrue. We're not often told: "If you don't deal with these feelings, they will keep growing and accumulating until they get your attention and you can't ignore them. A lot of people do it through a health crisis. I did it through a suicide attempt. That captured my attention. It was like "Wow, I'm not going to be here." That was a result of a lot of years of running and numbing and hiding. I'm so happy that it didn't succeed and I had such a good adviser on the suicide prevention line who said to me "Did you really want to die or did you just want the pain to end?" and I said "AHA, I just wanted the pain to end and to sleep and eat." I had weeks of incest flashbacks and I couldn't eat or sleep. At least now if I'm hiding or avoiding, I know that I'm doing it.

*Eddie: Do you have many mirrors in your life who point that out to you?*

SARK: Yes, unfortunately.

*Eddie: Fortunately or unfortunately?*

SARK: Both. I had someone be a mirror today in a tough love way and I didn't like it.

*Eddie: So feelings just are.*

SARK: Someone once said, "Feelings don't have heads." I tell people, we feel how we feel and then we need to let it go. People either don't feel how they feel, or they don't let it go. People are not told how to hold or have multiple feelings. In my family, growing up, you were allowed to have one feeling at a time and then you had to go to your room to have it and then you had to come out feeling better. It could be a common feeling like "I feel sad" but there are many feelings woven in. You might be happy to see your mother at the holidays and sad that she is declining and you might feel angry at

your sister for not doing more and you feel worried about the future of your mother and how your family will be and cope with these changes. When we do our consciousness work, you are able to feel all these things and respond lovingly to your mother, your sister, whoever it is, and create self-care practices at the same time. A lot of people live in stagnant feelings or repetitive negative feelings or inner critic barrages so they don't even know how they feel. That's what I see in my workshops and all around me. It's exciting to see people doing so much transformational process work. I've waited for this period for my whole life.

*To learn more about SARK's juicy life, go to [planetsark.com](http://planetsark.com)*

*Interviewer Edie Weinstein is a Bless Mistress who encourages people to live rich, full, juicy lives. Among other places, she writes her Bliss Blog for Beliefnet [www.blog.beliefnet.com/blissblog](http://www.blog.beliefnet.com/blissblog)*

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## Containing Our Reactors

By Scott Kalechstein Grace

What do you think spreads and kills faster, radioactivity coming from a meltdown at a power plant, or mushroom clouds of fear coming from a mind that has forgotten it's power source?

It could be said that the path of awakening is about learning to contain and cool down our ego reactors with the cooling waters of love, safety, and gratitude. No matter what is going on outside of us, we are always deciding between responding with love or reacting in fear. And whatever we choose, we can always choose differently in the next moment.

On Monday I was sitting in the dentist's chair getting a cavity worked on, the first of three the x-rays had found. In an effort to save money, I hadn't been in for a check-up in over two years, and now I was going to have to pay the price of neglect and cough up some dough. Halfway into the process my dentist looked troubled. She called an associate into the room for a second opinion and the two of them stared into the hole in my tooth. The usual playful banter and levity in the office had suddenly been replaced by a dense cloud of seriousness. They left the room and whispered outside

the door, just beyond the scope of my radar. When they came back, they announced that my tooth needed root canal.

Root canal? NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

My family and I had been going through financial challenges for over two years, and so the first words out of my numb, cotton-laden mouth was "How much is it going to cost?" The price quote made me wish I had had nitrous oxide instead of anesthesia. At over \$2000, this was going to drill quite an unexpected hole in the wallet. My thoughts spiraled into fear as I headed straight to Scare City.

Since I did not perceive I had a say in the matter, I told them to get on with it. The invasive procedure, actually getting a root canal, was nowhere near as painful as my resistance to what the universe had just served up on my plate. The warfare going on in my head seemed quite louder than the dentist's noisy drill, as I repeated endless mental variations on the themes of "NO!" and "We're Doomed!"

This day was not going my way, but, much worse than that, I was letting my fears go nuclear.

I believe that fear is simply a lack of trust, and that is starts with a habitual unchecked conversation in my head that in any moment I could interrupt and end with a sanity intervention. And that's what I decided to do. Right there in the chair I traded in my grievances for gratitude, starting by silently saying thank you to the doctors who were using their skills to save my tooth. Then I gave thanks for this precious opportunity before me to release myself more thoroughly from fear. My gratitude soon spread to include all the blessings in my life, my health, relationships, and inner peace. Finally, giving thanks for the miraculous gift of life itself, I found myself reclaiming my power and becoming lighthearted and peaceful again. I spent the rest of the day being playful and joking with others about my adventures with root canal. My partner told me how uplifted she felt by how I was not letting this turn of events turn down my spirit. If anything, I was elated. My spirits were high because I had remembered that Spirit is who I am, Spirit is the only reality, and everything else in this world is the temporary passing parade of illusion, with no power but the power I give it.

For years I had been a conditional giver of thanks. I gave thanks when things went my way, and withheld my gratitude when life served up challenges, disappointments, or other assorted learning opportunities. But for

those of us wanting to use this lifetime for growth, the situations that stimulate our fears offer our greatest blessing. Healing cannot be found when fear is held at bay in the harbor of our comfort zones. It is precisely the experiences that our egos shout "no" at that can be the very catalysts for awakening, the fierce grace that motivate us to let go of fear and more deeply embrace a peace that is not of this world.

I used to play a game as a child called "Hot Potato". Now I am playing it again, this time without the carbs. I am learning to drop my scary hot potato thoughts more and more quickly, sometimes instantly. If someone actually threw you a painfully hot potato, your instinct would be to drop it at once. If it is our grievances and gripes and freak-out thoughts that cause us mental and emotional pain, why not drop them quickly like a hot potato? The other choice is to nurse them, get agreement about them from others, and huff and puff in radioactive clouds of righteousness, panic, and drama.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!

A nuclear free world begins in our heads and spreads to our hearts. When we are planted in our power, no earthly power plant can hurt us. And love is the only power that cannot be contained. Let's spread it together.

*Scott Kalechstein Grace is the author of Teach Me How To Love. He is also a counselor and coach, a modern day troubadour and inspirational speaker. He lives with his partner and daughter in Marin, California and loves presenting at conferences, giving talks, concerts and workshops. In his phone counseling practice, he is a relationship specialist, helping both individuals and couples enjoy more conscious relationships. You can visit [www.scottsongs.com](http://www.scottsongs.com) to read more about his work, to hear his talks or to sample songs from his nine CD's. Send him an email to receive writings like this one on a semi-occasional basis.*

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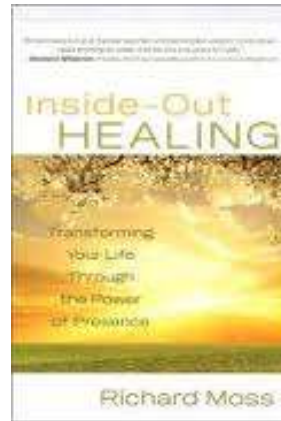
Dear Friends,  
Thank You for a successful Spring Fundraiser.  
Your generous response to our annual  
Spring Fundraiser is much appreciated!



I appreciate you!  
Reverend Jill

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## Inside-Out Healing by Richard Moss



Today, I think of myself as a teacher of the soul who has a background in medicine but knows that consciousness – or more precisely, the state of awareness when you are in the Now – is the greatest of all human powers. I know that when you really understand how you lose your connection to presence and can return yourself to

the Now, you will be able to be restored to well-being as predictably as a good education can teach you to master mathematics, chemistry, or physics. I know that you can more reliably bring yourself to inner peace with the work you will learn in this book than you can through taking a pill, although I'm not adverse to scientific medical achievement and the use of medications – not at all. I just know that the power of your awareness is greater still.

The retreats I lead have been and continue to be a kind of laboratory for discovering the best tools and practices for enabling people to become fully present, deeply alive, and capable of rich intimacy and love. I haven't taught this path because I had mastered it and knew it was good for others. I taught it as much for myself as for my students or clients. I needed to learn as I went along, taking one step at a time. Like any scientist, I am still learning and always will be.

What I am learning isn't about acquiring more information or having more experiences; it's about discovering the life and world that opens to you moment by moment when you are truly in the here-and-now. It's about going deeper into yourself – deeper into your body, your feelings, your suffering, your joy, and your behavior. It's about becoming more intimate with yourself, with life, and with others, moment by moment. It's about helping others live this path.

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Excerpt from the Introduction to *Inside-Out Healing: Transforming Your Life Through the Power of Presence* by Richard Moss, Hay House, © 2011

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## Daily Word

*The spirit of God moves through all people  
to manifest peace on earth.*

The media often report unrest and distress throughout the world. I can choose to believe there is no resolution to the world's problems, or I can choose to know the truth that God – at the heart of each person – is a power for peace. As I know this for myself, I also know it for all people throughout the world.

I envision the peace of God reaching into the world's farthest corners, showing the way to peace and acceptance. The power of God is greater than any human weakness, pride or prejudice. I have faith that every heart is open to receiving God's love and every mind is open to God's wisdom and understanding.

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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)

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1100 Friendship Street  
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Love & Blessings

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