

# Self-Empowerment

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The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## Being Tethered

There is something about the movie *The Wizard of Oz* that has so seeped into my heart and mind, that I very often find myself using some aspect of it to explain a concept. Today I would like to take you along a sort of a *yellow brick road* – a pilgrimage. There we shall encounter the Bumpy Landing, Being Set on a Path, Meetings Along the Way, Arriving at a Destination, Getting an Assignment, and Learning There's No Place Like Home.

### The Bumpy Landing

Most of us have experienced at least one Bumpy Landing. Some of us have lived through many bumpy landings. They may show up as loss, illness, trauma, or any number of disappointments and frustrations. Just as Dorothy Gale was swept up in a storm, landing with a crash in unknown territory, I, too, have suddenly found myself in emotionally uncharted places.

I have found myself dazed, confused, angry, and afraid after the storms of betrayal, divorce, illness, and other unexpected life situations. Changes happen, whether we are prepared for them or not. I certainly didn't always meet my bumpy landings gracefully. We do the best we can with what we know at the time, usually employing our habitual coping mechanisms.

Each of us has different coping strategies. I generally have tended to repress what I thought of as negative emotions, often charging ahead at full steam, not knowing what consequences I might be inviting by my unconscious actions. Others might have demonstrated their rage against their unhappy circumstances, possibly wishing for some sort of revenge. Still others might have openly expressed their feelings and needs, seeking help in various ways.

Are you aware of how you react to such bumpy landings? Are you aware of choices?

### Being Set on a Path

Upon landing, there may or may not be an obvious direction that we need to move toward. Does it seem like there is only one way to go? Someone may point out possible direction(s); or maybe there is a road that beckons us to follow. Of course we can try to stay still,

collapse, not move at all. But eventually, there needs to be some action, one way or another. Follow the yellow brick road – from abandonment to connection, from illness to health, from brokenness to wholeness.

We may wonder if there is a Wizard (therapist, physician, soulmate) who can help us fulfill our need. Are there any alternatives to the quick fix that may sparkle at the end of the chosen path? Might we be centered and grounded enough to do some research? Is there an advocate or friend who could assist and support my journey, helping me to find my way?

### Meetings Along the Way

Along the path there are people, places, and things that grab my attention. Are they helpers, hindrances, or distractions? How do I know? What does my intuition say? I can't receive any trustworthy inner guidance if I am mired in fear. Somehow I need to slow down, take a conscious breath, get quiet, and mentally allow receptivity to emerge to the best of my ability. I need to build trust in myself to pay attention to whatever signals I might receive along the way. Maybe a friend is helpful to a point, but is another helper more resourced for the current situation? Is there a book or a website that can assist me further? Do I need a team of helpers and new resources to help me handle various parts of this journey?

### Arriving at a Destination

I may have "arrived" at a goal, the end of the road I chose to follow. Maybe a probable solution has been found, the illness has been treated, or a new relationship has been established. Is that the end of the story? Is there a "happy ever after" to rely on? Nope! But wait, there's more.... Life goes on.

### Getting an Assignment

You know, each arrival at a destination begins a whole new journey. Gulp! There's more to life than any one goal can fulfill. The illness has been treated, but now I've got to learn what I need to do to maintain habits that support health and well-being. The old significant relationship is long gone; now it's time to build trust and intimacy with myself as well as others. No matter what circumstance set us on the journey from the crash site of the bumpy landing, there is some more

work to be done, and it's not just getting a witch's broom. There is some kind of growth and learning that will emerge from the next chapters of life.

### **There's No Place Like Home**

I recently finished reading *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself* by Michael A. Singer. That book describes a path to freedom from suffering, which is a feeling of being HOME in your own life, no matter what life brings your way. He shares a way of consciously allowing the energy of *all* feelings, both positive and negative, to pass through you without resistance or clinging. It's simple, but not easy. It is a spiritual practice, practice, practice.

I was caught by the word *Untethered* in the title. What does that mean? Can my soul be tethered or Untethered?

I looked up the word "tether" which is described as both a verb and a noun. Tether can be either the act of keeping things tied together, or the actual tie itself. Think of the childhood game tether-ball. The ball is tethered (tied) to a pole by a tether (rope or chain). However, a tether can also refer to an invisible bond or link. While an astronaut can float in space while tethered to the space station by wires and a hook, a mother and child may be tethered to each other by a bond of love.

The first image of being tethered that came to mind was the hot air balloon in the Wizard of Oz (of course).



When the tether is accidentally released at the same time that Dorothy tries to retrieve Toto, it seems impossible to get her desired ride home. That image can symbolize our fear of "letting go of control." We want those anchoring lines to be strongly secured so we don't miss what seems like our only chance, our only way home.

There is another very different image that I have in mind that relates to my concept of tethering. It is from a book that I read many years ago called "Journey of Awakening" by Ram Dass. I do not have the exact likeness of the image here, but I found one that

approximates it well enough to describe the idea to you. In the book there is a drawing that illustrates a small prison-like cell from which we come and go, because it is *unlocked*. It illustrates how our beliefs and habits are like a prison from which we *could* leave if we choose to, yet the comfort of the old ways can be a strong force pulling us back into the little prison cell over and over again, as if we are tethered to it, until we are willing to choose differently. In that way I am invisibly tethered to my cherished ideas, values, beliefs, and habits. The length of that tether depends on how open I am to other ideas, values, and beliefs. Will I defend my cherished beliefs against all threats, or shall I consider alternative points of view? Allowing for other possibilities gives me a greater freedom to roam the areas outside of my little unlocked cell. Maybe the amount of time that I spend curled up in my cell will continue to be less frequent and of a shorter duration. That tether may stretch further out.



Or maybe someday I could be untethered? Who knows – change (and transcendence) happens!

### **In this issue**

Scott Kalechstein Grace, a Spiritual Dr. Seuss, has graced us with a whimsical lesson on the way "Guilt" is like an Inner Grinch, tethering us to something like a joyless ball-and-chain-of-life.

See how Mohammed Ali was one man's hero by the way that he listened, and then gave a gift of wisdom.

One of my most treasured books of inspiration is a re-interpretation of the Psalms, *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness* by Nan C. Merrill. My trust in Spirit grows, supported by such beautiful expressions of Biblical wisdom. It inspires me to stretch a little bit farther out of the unlocked cell of limitations, fear, old programming, and stinkin' thinkin'.

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May we each find our way out of any suffering, into a graceful and grateful way of living. May each and every one of us find our joy, peace, and love.

Blessings to you!

Your fellow traveler,

*Rev. Jill*



## How The Guilt Stole Christmas

By Scott Kalechstein Grace, the Spiritual Dr. Seuss

There's a teacher inside you who teaches you lessons. His favorite word 'should' is a sign of his presence.

He shoulds on you till you're so deep in depression.  
You do things that make your priest gasp at confession!  
The teacher is guilt and he's doing his best,  
to whip you in shape so you'll be a success.  
When he thinks you screwed up he will whip your  
behind, the way jockeys whip horses to quicken their  
time.

He's the guilt that stole Christmas, your personal  
grinch, and he'll take a whole mile if you give him an  
inch.

He lives in your basement, that's where he  
resides. Alone in the darkness he schemes and he  
hides.

So let's grab a light and head down to the cellar, to  
expose and illumine this cagey cave dweller.

'Cause most of us do not become motivated,  
when guilt's on our case we just want it sedated.  
So we smoke or we drink to drown out the noise,  
or become busy worker bees, good girls and boys.  
Straight A's nothing less in our quest for perfection,  
in the hopes our achievements can win God's  
affections.

But God always gives you a standing ovation,  
adoring you with the most pure adoration.  
It's guilt that imagines that God could be pissed,  
which makes you walk on eggshells, afraid of his fist.  
Which possibly drives you to be atheist,  
or at least be a type A perfectionist!

Remember in school when you got your first B?  
And you felt like you failed somewhat miserably?  
It's guilt that thinks misery leads to prevention,  
and for your own good sends you straight to detention.  
And in that detention he hopes you will suffer,  
enough that you'll be that much wiser and tougher.  
It thinks it is serving some valuable service,  
by rushing to judgment and making you nervous.  
But guilt's not like conscience, regret or  
remorse. Those teachers teach gently, while guilt uses  
force.

"What's wrong with you madam", and, of course,  
"Shame on you, sir!"

Guilt thinks he's your teacher, but he's just your  
abuser!

Now guilt can arise from so many sources. Let's name  
just a few as a matter of courses.

There's guilt from your organized childhood religion,  
that delivered its gifts like a well aiming pigeon.

There's sexual guilt when you've just done the naughty,  
or sometimes there's guilt when you've just had the  
thoughty!

There's guilt when you did something bad and got  
caughty, or when you did not do something you oughty.

There's parental guilt that's installed by your folks, who  
hoped to protect you and teach you the ropes.

There's guilt when you've gained weight and gotten too  
curvy. There's no end to the reasons you could feel  
unworthy!

Now if you are Catholic guilt can be addressed,  
in a booth once a week, hail a cab and confess.

And if you're not Catholic you still can unload,  
so you pay a good shrink so your head won't explode.

Cause when you keep guilt in a dark secret place,  
your head swells until it blows up in your face!

And that's why we nickname our therapists,  
*shrink*. They help us deflate all the hot air we think.

And if you can't pay for a counselor to hear you,  
you ask a good friend just to listen and cheer you.

Then they take a turn and sing like a canary.

And you welcome their truth like you are their Truth  
Fairy.

And then guilt takes a hike without a single Hail Mary!

Now when you've got guilt you are on your own case,  
and your head's like a courtroom, a humorless place.

The district attorney presents your trespasses,  
as if he was wearing a pair of dark glasses.

Glasses that block out your goodness and light.

He's your prosecution and he might win the fight.

"Not so fast!" says your diligent defense attorney,  
as he outlines the good things you've done on your  
journey.

Objection! Objection! The D.A. protests,  
and presents more proof that in truth you're a mess!

And on and on these attorneys they fight. All night and  
all day, all day and all night. Both trying their best to be  
heard and be right.

And when they cross examine, battle and spar,  
they both have no clue of the true you you are.

Cause the you down in Trueville is never on  
trial. Underneath your adult there's an innocent child.

Whose report card in truth has no guilt to report.

Your case has been settled and laughed out of court.

There's no judge or jury, and it's starting to dawn,  
being stuck in your head is not where you belong.

So you start tuning out all the static and noise, and start tuning into what brings you more joy. You take off your tight stuffy courtroom attire, and slip into whatever your heart might desire. Your heart, not your head, is now leading the way. Which leads you back to church from your childhood days.

The priest in the booth says, "My child, where've you been? It's been years and I'm ready to hear some new sins!"

But nothing prepares him for what he hears next. It's more blasphemous than the scandalous sex. "Father, forgive me, for I've been pretending, that something was wrong with me that needed mending.

I thought there were hoops that I must jump through first, before being happy and knowing my worth. And now I am finding my treasures on earth, are here in my body, my temple, my church.

Oh, the moments I missed and the joys I denied me, to atone for some guilt that I thought had to guide me. But I'm off the cross now and finally can say:

***I confess I am innocent; goodbye and good day!"***

And the priest he's astounded, he's shocked and tongue tied, as you exit that booth before he can reply. There's a bounce in your step as you let out a "Whee"! Cause the space in your head is at last lawyer-free. You know you're still human and will make mistakes. But oh, what a joy to be off your own case. And simply because you are taking up space, you know that you're worthy of love and of grace. Simply because I am taking up space, I know I am worthy of love and of grace.

*Scott Grace is a traveling troubadour, speaker, and an intuitive life coach who serves worldwide and does sessions via phone or Skype. Read more about his coaching practice on the Intuitive Life Coaching page of [www.scottsongs.com](http://www.scottsongs.com) or schedule a free intro session through email at [info@scottsongs.com](mailto:info@scottsongs.com). Also visit [www.youtube.com/user/skalechstein](http://www.youtube.com/user/skalechstein) for his delightful videos, performing this and other wonderful pieces.*

## Wisdom in Seventeen Words

by William Lifsey, North Carolina

In the mid-1980's I was Captain of a B-747 flying from Newark, New Jersey to Los Angeles. One flight, as usual, I went downstairs to greet and thank the First Class passengers and there, in the very front row, was

Mohammed Ali, ex heavy weight boxing champion of the world. He had been to a Parkinson's clinic and was returning home.

I had boxed in college and in the Navy and was a tremendous fan of his. The first time I saw him on TV he fought Floyd Patterson. Patterson kept his hands next to his cheeks, an excellent defensive position to protect his face and prevent being knocked out, but a rather weak offensive position. Ali fought with his hands at his waist while he literally danced in and out and around his opponent. It wasn't a traditional boxing stance.

I told him I knew he was an extraordinary fighter when he was able to throw a punch from his waist and hit Patterson in the face before Patterson could close his hands to protect himself.

After I spoke, there was an awkward pause. I wasn't sure if Ali had heard me, and I was debating whether to move on or repeat myself — then his face lit up with a smile. Apparently the Parkinson's had caused a short circuit. The Champ was standing up in front of his seat when I spoke. He put his hands up in a mock boxing stance, started to shuffle his feet back and forth and proclaimed, "I was smoking, I was smoking."

Hours later I went down to First Class again, and the aide traveling with Ali told me the Champ wanted to speak with me. He asked about my boxing history and our conversation soon turned to our families. We both loved our children and our families greatly. He asked what the worst part of my job was.

I told him the job itself was perfect for me because I literally loved to fly, but I didn't enjoy being away from home during holidays, missing birthdays and special events. In fact, on that trip I was missing a Cub Scout camping trip with our son. He inquired more about the camping trip and our son's name.

Shortly after we arrived at the gate in LA, there was a knock on the cockpit door. It was Ali's aide with a gift for our son, a signed 8.5 by 11 inch photo of Ali. The Champ had written a message to our son on the photo:



*"The time your father spends away from home, is the price he pays for service to others".*

During 30 years with the airlines I had many pleasant experiences and many lessons about the generosity and kindness of people from around the world. But 10 years into retirement, what I remember most are Mohammed Ali's stories about his love for his family, and his kindness toward our son.

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## Psalm 34

I will bless the Beloved at all times;  
a song of praise will I sing.  
My soul speaks to the Beloved continually;  
let all who suffer hear and be glad.  
O, open your hearts, friends,  
that your pain and loneliness  
be turned to Love;  
And then, we shall rejoice in the Beloved  
together!

When I searched for Love, the Beloved  
answered within my heart,  
and all my fears flew away.  
Look to the Beloved, and your  
emptiness will be filled,  
your face will radiate Love.  
For when you weep, the Beloved hears  
and comes to companion you;  
your burdens are eased by Love.

The Beloved sends angels when you  
call upon these messengers  
for guidance and light,  
for their gracious inspiration,  
One with Love, you are never alone!

Happy are all who dwell in the  
Beloved's heart!  
Abandon yourself into Love's hands,  
O you holy ones,

For those who give themselves to  
the Beloved,  
lack no good thing.  
Everyone separated from Love is empty  
and hungry within;  
But those who open their hearts to  
the Beloved,  
are filled to overflowing!

O come and see, come and hear,  
how we honor the Beloved.  
Many there are who desire Life,  
who yearn for fulfillment,  
who covet the wisdom of Truth.  
Keep your heart open and free,  
take time to dwell in the Silence,

Become a peaceful presence in the world.  
For the Beloved sees the deeds  
of our hearts, and  
hears our innermost thoughts.  
The face of the Beloved turns from  
the evil ways of men and women;  
For Love is kind and merciful and  
remembers not our sins.

Rather, the Beloved is patient,  
ever-waiting for us to cry out  
for forgiveness.  
to embrace Love's way.  
How often the Beloved weeps with  
compassion  
over those who are crushed in spirit.

Though we are beset with many fears  
that cause illness and troubles,  
The Beloved is ever ready  
to comfort us in our sorrows,  
to strengthen us on our soul's  
journey to wholeness.  
The Beloved renews the life of all  
who surrender to Love.

*Psalm translation taken from Psalms for Praying:  
An Invitation to Wholeness, by Nan C. Merrill  
© 2007 Continuum Publishers, New York*



## Daily Word

*I am completely and divinely loved.*

At times I have longed for a hug or some other physical representation of God's love. This longing seems to come from deep within my heart. Today I know to turn within to feel divine love. Instead of relying on others, I rely on God.

I feel inner peace every time I pray. I go to my inner sanctuary and find comfort in times of worry or stress. I turn to that place now. I relax and breathe deeply. In this moment, I experience my oneness with God. I inhale, breathing in the cleansing, freeing breath of Spirit. I am renewed. I am calm. I am at peace.

I emerge from prayer with a profound sense of being loved. I am never alone. Nothing can disturb my peace of mind because I am one with God.

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Dear Beloved Readers,

This is the first issue of the Self-Empowerment newsletter to be distributed electronically *only*, after 22 years of printing and mailing over 300 copies four times a year. Although I would periodically have a friend give me help preparing the hardcopies for mailing, it was mainly just me printing, collating, folding, taping, labeling, stamping, and mailing each issue. Most years I printed them myself on my HP LaserJet 1300 printer, but the past few years I happily paid Staples or Office Max to do that part for me. Whew! So it is with great joy that I now release the tasks involved in mailing hardcopies.

There are more invaluable members of this team effort for which I am eternally grateful. Mike Tunney has been my editor from the very beginning. His dependable and helpful review, critique, and overall proofreading and editing of my writing keeps you from reading my first-draft-stream-of-consciousness article to which you would say, "Huh?"

Thanks and praise also goes to those other writers and poets who generously allow me to include their writings here, offering more depth and inspiration for us all.

And surely I thank all of *you* who have continued to support this publication over the years by reading it, sending valuable feedback, and even sending donations to help with the costs of mailing it over the past two decades.

It has been and continues to be a great joy to me to write this newsletter, sharing the journey of an ever-evolving self-empowered life. I love sharing this with you. I have been happily tethered to this mission and activity of sharing inspiration through this newsletter, and I shall continue to do so for as long as that tether holds.

I hope you continue to enjoy this publication in this pdf format. This publication is a labor of love and each issue will come with a free e-hug! Feel free to send me your feedback and e-hugs via email to [Jilleroni@juno.com](mailto: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.**