

# Self-Empowerment

Winter 2016/2017

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 24, Number 2

A publication of  Agape Interfaith Ministries

## My Brain is Full, but my Spirit is Unlimited

Dear Self-Empowerment Buddies,

I recently had a very challenging week. I will attempt to explain the state of mind I was in that led me to express it as feeling like my *brain is full*, while still being aware of my unlimited spirit.

First, I must confess – I am no saint! I did not slide through the challenges peacefully and patiently. And yet, I had the presence of mind to know that my state of overload was a temporary condition that would pass, and that I would indeed (eventually) return to equilibrium and sanity.

The first layer of the *overload* was my enthusiastic registration for too many adult education classes in my new community. There are so many wonderful choices each semester that I've often had up to four different classes each week! In addition, Rick and I have joined a Country Western dance club, so we have been learning pattern dances (8 so far), and practicing those dances several times each week. I joined two other clubs: Scrabble playing once a week, and a political group that meets once a month (with some volunteer opportunities during the election season). Add to that our daily exercise routine (at 7am), weekly church services and their occasional activities, a few medical appointments, and a dash of socializing – a very full schedule for just the first layer!

The next layer of calendar-stuffing involved having a local handyman help us tackle a few alterations to our new home, scheduling salesmen to come give us estimates on new windows, and having a new radio/backup-camera installed in my 2011 Subaru. Can you feel the volcanic build-up here? How many balls, rings, and plates can I juggle at the same time while planning and writing my next issue of the Self-Empowerment newsletter? Ha!

There was not enough spaciousness in my day to allow me to (gently?) deal with the change that the new high-tech radio introduced into my already-busy life.

Putting the car in reverse and seeing the dashboard screen image of the area behind my car was easy and wonderful. However, I experienced issues and emotional reactions to figuring out the many new controls. I felt panicked, confused, frustrated, angry, scared, regretful, and stressed out! I had just spent over \$700 for the new system, and I immediately wanted to undo it and get my old radio back, to return to the known, so I could feel safe and secure. No matter what radio station I tried, the sound kept stopping & returning. I tried playing a cd, and the sound still kept cutting out. I was on the verge of returning to the installer to insist he fix the problem, when I allowed the tiniest glimmer of willingness to seep into my awareness. I opened my mind and thought, "It's probably installed correctly, so maybe there is something I can notice and learn here."

*With persistence and faith, I meet change with an open mind, willing to learn something new.*

I kept poking icons and symbols until I found the clue. This radio has a navigation system that is very different from my previous one. Somehow it was trying to navigate to a destination I had not programmed into it, and an inaudible low-volume voice was interrupting the radio and cd music, hence my mysterious experience of the music cutting out.

I did not need to return to the installer, after all – I needed to find the online manual that would help me learn how to work the darned thing. I needed to submit to a learning curve that is temporarily uncomfortable, especially with the busy schedule that I had created for myself.

*With persistence and faith, I return to sanity.*

The phrase "my brain is full" came to my mind in trying to decide how to describe what it felt like, trying to learn more information than I felt ready and willing to take in. It felt like an impossibility to learn even one more thing.

There is a very human part of me that "wants it all" right here and right now. That part demands to know everything immediately, without any discomfort, work,

*"I opened my mind and thought, ... maybe there is something I can notice and learn here."*

effort, or process. Learning more and more complicated dance steps, making changes to our house, learning how to use a new car stereo/navigation system and squeezing in some spontaneity while establishing a whole new lifestyle in a new geographic location at the age of 62 feels like I'm asking too much of my human capacity. On the other hand, I have been on a spiritual journey for the past 47 years that reminds me over and over again that Spirit is an unlimited source of inspiration, guidance, healing, support, and comfort. When I take that breath and open my mind and heart to whatever my inner wisdom can share with me in the moment, the possibilities are tremendous!

I am using the new car radio functions at a beginner's level. Greater mastery will have to wait until I am ready to study more of the instructional manual.

*With persistence and faith, I follow my dreams.*

I recently found myself remembering the time when I was a college student, over 40 years ago, wondering what I should do with my life. I didn't know what decisions to make concerning life choices for committed relationships, higher education, or career. I sought out resources to help me make those difficult decisions. An interest inventory test indicated a leaning toward being a teacher, counselor, minister, or administrator.

In retrospect I understand that part of me "knew" what I was called to do, but I did not trust that I was capable of fulfilling what my heart and soul knew. While I appeared to be a rather self-confident person, there were important areas of my life that seemed "less than" in my judgment. I had an easy time learning what I was interested in, but it was an uphill battle for me to handle any classwork that did not turn me on. I was considered a smart person with great potential, but I did not have what it took to push myself through a clear set of actions to achieve the career goals that seemed obvious. I took a circuitous route of many years, many life adventures.

Despite taking the long way, I believe I experienced the development of character, strength, and power that were necessary for my calling.

Looking back, I see a gap between two parts of my mind. One part is the small self which is limited by perceptions, judgments, personality, personal history, as well as physical, psychological, and emotional issues. The other part was, is, and always will be connected to the highest truth I can access – known as the Soul, Higher Self, or Spirit.

There was a dissonance between what I dreamed of being (a teacher-counselor-minister) and what I thought I was capable of being.

It has been suggested that I could have taken a much shorter and more efficient route, if only a parent or a teacher had understood and supported me in realizing my highest potential.

Once again I am reminded of the scene in "The Wizard of Oz" where Dorothy is told that she would not have believed the simple truth – of the scope of her inner power – at the earlier stage of her journey. Likewise, forty years ago I was not yet ready to fulfill my goals or dreams until I went through experiences that explore deeper levels of myself and others.

Maybe you (or a loved one) has experienced regret or grief for an unrealized dream or goal. Maybe there were circumstances that derailed the fulfillment. As in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," there were important choices to be made that kept the main character's dream of travel beyond reach. The happy ending showed how so much joy and fulfillment was his by following what he felt needed to be done, responding to a depth of character that transcended his original plans of travel.

Short of seeing what life would be like if we had taken a different path, there are ways of reframing our life story by figuring out what was valuable about the way it did unfold. We are never a "failure" when we find something worthwhile that has come out of a situation.

*With persistence and faith, I listen for inner wisdom.*

It seems to me that there is a balance between following whatever you think your dream is, and staying in touch with an inner wisdom that guides each decision along the way. There may be a longer-than-expected route to fulfilling your dream. Or maybe the original steps toward that dream might lead you somewhere else you are meant to be. While there may never be a definitive answer, there are certainly clues as to the rightness of where you are, or where you are going.

I believe there is a spiritual power or psychological capacity within each individual for that inner wisdom to be accessed. In the face of challenges we can become willing to activate the spiritual power within to re-establish peace, wisdom, and balance.

Taking a breath and becoming willing to allow persistence and faith to lead us through the difficult challenges of life can be a super-power available to all of us.

### **In this issue**

On page 5 is a chart called "100-Day Gong" that was given to us by our community's Tai Chi teacher. He explained that it often takes the disciplined practice of something for 90 days before it becomes a regular habit. So the chart has 99 incomplete smiley faces for the

purpose of adding a smile on each face upon the successful execution of your new desired practice. It could be a Tai Chi practice, or it could be prayer, meditation, a kindness for someone, the repetition of affirmations, a new skill, dancing, a work of creativity, or whatever you would like to see more of in your life. Consider using it to put a smile on *your* face each day. Now *there's* a habit worth nurturing – the habit of a daily grateful happy smile!

“With persistence and faith, I follow my dreams” is the affirmation statement in the Daily Word (reprinted on page 6). I felt so moved by that statement that I found myself repeating the first half with many different endings as a practice. I decided to craft a new statement each day for 100 days that begins “With persistence and faith, I . . .”

To kickstart the practice, below are my first week’s affirmations, followed by a short descriptive reflection.

The photo on page 6 is the sign in front of the recreation building where I have been exercising at 7am weekdays for the past three months, and where I dance with my hubby to Country Western songs, something I never *dreamed* of doing. . . .

I wish you the persistence and faith to be the best YOU that you can be! Blessings Always!

Your fellow traveler, *Rev. Jill*



### **The first week of my 100-Day Gong, affirming the application of persistence and faith in my life.**

1

*With persistence and faith, I access a source of strength greater than my own.*

I love to deepen my connection with that bigger *something* that has been called by many names. I usually think of it as Divinity, Spirit, or God/Goddess/All-That-Is.

2

*With persistence and faith, I nurture my curiosity.*

There is so much to learn, so much to know, so much to be aware of. It is both interesting and humbling to meet others who have different pieces of knowledge that are new to me. Curiosity motivates me to re-open my mind.

3

*With persistence and faith, I offer my gift of service to others.*

I have met wonderful people in my new community. One woman who recently moved here has

a huge task of sorting through many moving boxes of stuff to decide what to keep, what to release, and where to put it all. It is a blessing to offer her some assistance and support in this effort.

4

*With persistence and faith, I find greater ease and balance.*

Remembering to return awareness to my own feelings and needs, I give myself the gift of fun and relaxation to refresh myself. My energy can serve myself and others best when I maintain a reasonable balance.

5

*With persistence and faith, I age gracefully.*

I do not know what my full capacity is or what it will be as I continue to eat healthy foods and exercise regularly. I take good care of my body. I am supported by medical professionals who offer holistic care in conjunction with whatever standard medical care I am willing to receive.

6

*With persistence and faith, I set appropriate boundaries.*

Learning how to say no has been a great help in maintaining balance and returning to a state of equanimity. Sometimes I change my mind and re-negotiate agreements. Sometimes I change the direction I was going in. Life is full of twists, turns, and opportunities that call for appropriate boundaries.

7

*With persistence and faith, I question my assumptions.*

The very things I feel most sure about may be mistaken. It is important that I nurture curiosity in my life and question as many of my assumptions as possible. With an open mind and an open heart I learn and grow, enjoying a rich and fulfilling life.

Question your thoughts.  
Question your stories.  
Question your assumptions.  
Question your opinions.  
Question your conclusions.  
Question them all into utter  
emptiness, stillness and joy.  
The keys to freedom are in  
your hands.  
Use them.

Adyashanti

QuoteAddicts



***With persistence and faith, you might follow your dreams by setting New Year's Resolutions that support your dreams.***

Wikipedia, the Free [online] Encyclopedia describes popular goals and success rates for New Year's Resolutions:

**Popular goals include resolutions to:**

Improve physical well-being: eat healthy food, lose weight, exercise more, eat better, drink less alcohol, quit smoking, stop biting nails, get rid of old bad habits

Improve mental well-being: think positive, laugh more often, enjoy life

Improve finances: get out of debt, save money, make small investments

Improve career: perform better at current job, get a better job, establish own business

Improve education: improve grades, get a better education, learn something new (such as a foreign language or music), study often, read more books, improve talents

Improve self: become more organized, reduce stress, be less grumpy, manage time, be more independent, perhaps watch less television, play fewer sitting-down video games

Take a trip

Volunteer to help others, practice life skills, use civic virtue, give to charity, volunteer to work part-time in a charity organization

Get along better with people, improve social skills, enhance social intelligence

Make new friends

Spend quality time with family members

Settle down, get engaged/get married, have kids

Pray more, be closer to God, be more spiritual

Be more involved in sports or different activities

Spend less time on social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)

**Success rates:**

The most common reason for participants failing their New Years' Resolutions was setting themselves unrealistic goals (35%), while 33% didn't keep track of their progress and a further 23% forgot about it. About one in 10 respondents claimed they made too many resolutions.

A 2007 study by Richard Wiseman from the University of Bristol involving 3,000 people showed that 88% of those who set New Year resolutions fail, despite the fact that 52% of the study's participants were confident of success at the beginning. Men achieved their goal 22% more often when they engaged in goal setting, (a system where small measurable goals are being set; such as, a pound a week, instead of saying "lose weight"), while women succeeded 10% more when they made their goals public and got support from their friends.

---

*So what do you want to see more of in the coming month, year, or decade? What steps are you willing to take that will support the success of that goal?*

*You are never too old to reinvent yourself!*

































































































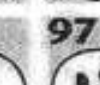





*Take the first step toward your dream. Make 2017 a great New Year!*

---

A Gong in Chinese Taoist tradition is a set amount of days one devotes to a particular task. It is a promise to one's self to stay focused and on path towards a designated goal. The reason for a 100 day gong is that it takes at least 90 days for a new habit/behavior to burn itself into our nervous system. The purpose of this chart is to assist you in your focus on what you want to work on in the next 100 days. Set your intention. Follow through in your practice each day. Draw a smile for each day you complete your practice. (Photocopy for additional practices you may choose to nurture.)

## 100-Day Gong

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
									
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
									
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
									
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
									
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
									
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
									
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
									
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
									
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
									
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
									

## Daily Word

*With persistence and faith, I follow my dreams.*

Prolific dreamers, inventors, and innovators have given the world the most fascinating and useful insights and inventions. Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Steve Jobs, and more have had visions and dreams about the universe and about ways to enhance our lives.

I, too, have dreams. I have visions and goals that are important to me. I may have put them aside due to obligations or time constraints, but they are still with me.

I focus on my goals now. I revisit those dreams that inspire me and encourage me to stretch myself in new ways. I feel a new stirring within my soul to begin the steps to fulfill those dreams now.

*Reprinted with permission of Unity®, publisher of Daily Word®, Unity Village, MO 64065. One year print subscription \$15.95. 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  
Web: [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org)

Subscriptions are available without charge.

To be added to the Self-Empowerment email list: Email your name and request to be added to the quarterly email distribution list to [Jilleroni@Juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@Juno.com).

Back issues of Self-Empowerment can be found on the website: [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org)

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 © 2016, Agape Interfaith Ministries.



Sign in front of our Recreation Center / Fitness Gym - Oct 2016

**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.**