

Introduction

The diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis was bestowed upon me at the first of the year. I was told by well-meaning friends that it was not such a terrible pronouncement. Everyone knew someone or knew of someone who was performing brilliantly with an MS label. However, having that stamp applied to me was horrifying. It took me three months to accept the news.

The medical personnel I encountered along the way were more than competent, highly efficient, and caring. They had seen MS patients deteriorate and knew what to expect. They told me to remove my throw rugs, to use a cane, and to rest. No one said, "And this will happen to you, also," but the expectation was clear. I felt defeated.

At the urging of two close friends I started journal writing. I have journaled extensively over my professional career as a psychologist and an author. All of my books originated with a journal entry. I've worked through feelings, cleared my thoughts, and anchored myself with journal writing. It has given me a way to cope with uncomfortable life events. This diagnosis presented the most intimidating challenge I've faced.

Journal writing invites the unconscious to come forth. I create a space by sitting at my computer, focusing my attention, and opening to receive words or images or feelings. I have learned to respect the wisdom of my inner world. I received my doctorate in 1976 and have practiced individual psychotherapy since then. I watch as healing emerges from the confusion or anger or pain that clients bring. Certainly, I have witnessed this inner world healing process in myself, also. When I wait for my inner world to lead me, I observe my thoughts and my feelings and record what I notice in my journal. I don't introduce an intellectual component; I just pay attention. And then I write what I observe. Always I am surprised by the unfolding. And delighted. Our inner worlds hold such depth and intricacy and mystery. They lead us to a healing our minds can't predict.

So, over this background of trust for my inner world direction, I introduce the diagnosis of MS with my reactions of frustration, sadness, fear, confusion, surprise, and, eventually, determination. Finally, I welcomed this diagnosis as an opportunity.

I wrote often, I meditated, and I used my background as a psychologist to structure my observations. I don't encourage dwelling in the past, but as the inner world heals it resolves old wounds and mistaken beliefs. I noticed that, allowed it, and watched it pass. My appreciation for my psychodynamics made sense of my experience.

I, also, used my knowledge of the Enneagram, a tool for psychological and spiritual healing and transformation. This test points out specifically and clearly the blocks, challenges, dynamics, and strengths for each of us. This is done in the context of "types." We each fall into one of nine types with its own motivations and insights and blind spots. When we learn our type, we recognize the distortions in our thinking and perceptions and maintain a more objective stance in regards to our inner world. Each type experiences healing and transformation by meditating.

Meditation invites a powerful healing intervention from an unknown Source. When we meditate we allow the unconscious to guide us in a slightly altered state. In journal writing the conscious mind cooperates with the inner world by recording the words, images, feelings, and thoughts. When we meditate we ask the conscious mind to wait outside the door and we create a space for the inner world process to move. We observe, we allow, and, always, we stay present. Daily meditation brings healing shifts into our lives all through the week, not only while we sit. We invite the Universe to partner with us and the Universe always says Yes.

Working with the inner world on both a personal and a transpersonal level has led to an evolution of my thinking about spirituality. Reality is greater than we can understand. We participate in the whole from our individual perspective. The Abraham/Hicks material has lent an immensely helpful structure to my understanding. Thoughts create reality. This is good news since we can change our thoughts at will. But it is not always simple or easy. Old shadowy psychodynamics intervene. Our commitment to meditation empowers our self-awareness by showing us those psychodynamics. We don't have to

understand what happens in meditation; the Universe does its work without our input. We just need to get in the chair and meditate.

In Part One, I share my journal writing for seven months. I invite you to walk with me as I experience and learn. In Part Two I offer you support in your healing journey. The first section focuses on good mental health practices from a psychological viewpoint. The second section offers guidance about committing to your meditation practice. The third section presents some thoughts about self-affirming spiritual practices. I offer you these thoughts to apply to your own experience.

These pages recount the most powerful days of my life. I wish you power and wisdom and clarity in your journey.

Part One

Journal Writing

April 30

This week I start a new drug. The fact that it is new, just an addition to an ever-lengthening list of drugs, surprises me just a little. I have believed that with good judgment, adequate exercise, healthy eating habits, and decent sleep (when I can find it), I could maintain a good quality of health. I not only wanted to do it all myself, I thought I must. I didn't expect help.

When I was 20, 18 months into a miserable marriage and just completing college in Chicago, I was brought down by a virus I contracted in a Lake Michigan winter wind. I had lived two years in South Bend, Ind., for my initial college experience. The first Oct. I was there in 1967, I was entranced by the snowfall. In Oklahoma we didn't see much snow and never saw it for very long. Here the flakes bombarded the campus, the cars, the people and accumulated on the ground, the trees, and the buildings. For weeks and months. In May it was still snowing but I was no longer delighted.

After two years in South Bend I transferred to the Univ. of Ill. in Chicago. The snow was still plentiful but added to it were the gusts off the lake. I was colder than I had ever been and for longer. In December, 1970, when I finished the required coursework to earn a BS, I had another cold. When the cold had resolved in Jan. I noticed some weakness in my right leg which grew worse. I was at home in Tulsa, visiting my parents for Christmas but when it came time to return to Chicago, I, instead, entered the hospital. Where I remained for 44 days.

I slept 22 hours a day without meds. I had no pain but also very little feeling and less control of any muscles. My vision doubled at a short distance, I couldn't hold a spoon, and standing was out of the question.

When I left the hospital I had received the diagnosis of transverse myelitis. According to the doctors, a virus from the cold had entered my spinal fluid and damaged nerves. My right leg and left arm were most affected. The doctors said to swim and to expect that I would age faster than usual. They didn't limit my expectations for my healing but also didn't offer any long term therapies.

The result was that I believed my healing was up to me. I was 21 and still fairly steeped in denial so I really didn't see much of a problem. I didn't walk for four months but gradually my strength returned. I didn't doubt that I would recover so I was completely optimistic.

I entered graduate school that fall at the University of Oklahoma in Norman and enjoyed a fairly normal graduate experience--long hours in the library, weekend drinking, limited sleep, and lots of walking. My body grew stronger and I assumed a normal existence.

The next years took me to southern Ohio for my first job in a psychiatric hospital and then to southern California for a doctorate. Starting in Ohio and continuing in California, I swam as the doctors had recommended. I had been as athletic as any girl in a girls' school in Oklahoma was--not very. Summers in Oklahoma kept everyone inside from 9-6. Evenings were lovely, catching fireflies and stringing dandelions. But outside activity was limited.

In California, however, I was amazed and delighted by the gentle days and nights. In the winters it rained. I thought I was in paradise. San Diego in the 1970s was an overgrown town with friendly folks and multifarious opportunities to explore interests of every ilk. I jogged, painted watercolors, attended artist's receptions, wrote and attended author's receptions, drank wine on the beach, made a skydiving

jump, climbed the vertical trail by Torrey Pines golf course to the beach. Additionally, I maintained a private practice doing psychotherapy, kept my own books under the tutelage from my CPA father, and bought a condominium. Life was great.

I pursued my interest in meditation. The last quarter in graduate school I learned to meditate, perhaps the most helpful course I took. But life was busy in my 20s with activities and in my 30s with work. By 40 and thereafter, unpaid inner world bills had come due. It was time to delve deeply into my shadowy undercurrents.

The psychological framework provided by my studies and my work helped me appreciate the order and the beauty and the precision of my own psychodynamics. Meditation gave me a construct for holding the craziness and pain and overwhelm. I had developed a strong Controller, the part of me who insisted that I function rationally in the world. But my feeling side had been neglected. Now it demanded attention and in meditation found it.

My 40s proved to be less about work and more about integrating my unconscious dynamics. Meanwhile, I swam four days a week and went to the gym to lift weights and used the cardio machines three days. Physically, I didn't grow stronger as I had been doing until 40, but I maintained my physical competence.

My meditations deepened my self-awareness, as though an inner teacher showed me flip cards and said, "Look at this and this and this." Details from every age appeared, I looked at them, experienced my feelings, and watched them pass. I respected the wisdom in my meditations which clearly wasn't related to my intellect. I lived more spontaneously.

Menopause at 55 issued in startling and devastating physical changes. I had visited China, contracted a cold, taken Cipro and returned to the US. No big concern. I didn't have another period and 'felt' a pool dry up inside me. Each day I walked with more difficulty. The nerve damage symptoms from 1971 returned incrementally. I was left in pain, without much muscle control, and unable to think clearly. After consulting three doctors, I established a hormone replacement regimen which helped immensely but not completely. I still couldn't walk evenly.

It has been nine years since then and I've found a wonderful doctor who measured and replaced amino acids. I swim a mile daily and I feel great. But walking is still a challenge. A physical therapist has given me some pertinent exercises which I practice religiously. But I've also noticed that my healing is more than just physical. A spiritual component has developed from my many hours meditating which guides me. I've learned to expect support from non-physical reality and to look for it. And it always comes. Now I value my partnership with non-physical reality and rely on it. I've learned that blending the physical and non-physical parts of me defines true healing.

May 4

I had anticipated the new medication because I was told it would yield immediate benefits to my walking with no side effects. Quite the opposite was true. Within two hours of taking the first pill dizziness prevented me from standing. Now almost 24 hours later I still don't feel myself. I'm glad I tried it since I want to explore every option the doctors provide. They seem to resist death but be OK with medication destroying my quality of life. What's the sense in that?

Now I am more sure that my healing is up to me. This morning I am speaking at Unity while the minister is out of town. My topic is vibrating at the frequency of the Universe. We are all physical and non-physical beings and we always, always emanate a vibration. What are we emanating?

If we know as Source knows, we create a reality vibrationally aligned with Source. If we doubt or think or believe, we separate ourselves from Source. True healing is practicing that aligned vibration all the time. I don't think the doctors practice that alignment. They offer a cure (or partial cure) from their intellects. They trust their minds more than their Source energy centers. They believe, they don't trust their experience. Bless them. They do the best they can but they can't offer me what I need to heal. I am, this morning, more than I have ever been, sure that my healing is up to my vibrational practice.

At church this morning I will lead the congregation in imagining their perfect healing, in whatever terms that takes. And I will practice this, also. For ten minutes a day I will know myself healing. I will visualize myself healed, aligned with Source. No thinking, no belief, no action. Simply knowing and allowing.

Allowing the Universe to work in my life is trusting Source completely, jumping off the edge, acknowledging that I haven't a parachute, and watching to see what happens. Besides having no alternative at this point, I want to live this way. I want to embrace passion and trust and total surrender. I want to say, "Your will be done." I'm clear that I can do no more under my own steam. All the pushing and exercising and discipline hasn't carried me the last miles of my healing. I am glad I practice good habits but I need more. And Source is my only hope at this point.

And not such a puny hope, either. The power that creates worlds is available to me and to each of us. All we need say is, "I'm available." And then practice vibrational alignment with the Universe.

I can do that. I want to do that. I choose to be a vibrational match to my own healing. I choose to focus on the solution, not on the problem. I choose to align with the Universe, not with my intellect or my hard work or with the doctors' acceptance of limitation. I have hope and knowing and trust.