

Face to Face by Lisa Browning

On Friday, March 26, I had the pleasure of picking up the newly-printed order of *Sharing: our stories, our selves, our success* ... the seventh “regular” volume of these anthologies of empowerment stories, which I have been publishing since 2013. In those seven volumes, and the one “Special Edition” anthology, entitled *Care for the Caregiver*, over 140 people were courageous enough to be vulnerable, to share their personal stories (and some more than once!), and I have been blessed to meet almost every one of them face to face.

Even this year ... despite the restrictions in place as a result of Covid, I arranged for my writers to come by my house to pick up their books. Social distancing was still in place, but it was SO lovely to be able to talk face to face, rather than on a computer screen or phone, or by text.

Through those face to face conversations, they brought me up to date on their lives, and I did the same. We learned about each other’s challenges and triumphs, over the course of a very difficult year. There’s something about standing face to face. There is nowhere to hide. The body language, and the eye contact, brings another dimension to each interaction.

Not only have I come face to face with so many of my authors I have also come face to face with myself. I realized, over the past year but especially over the last few weeks, that I have been far more comfortable mentoring others. Helping others to find their own truth and their own inner strength and power. I strongly believe that vulnerability is strength, and that we must face our own darkness before we can ever hope to see our own light. But it’s far easier to help others do that than to actually do it myself!

One gift of Covid, for me, was the opportunity to look deep within myself ... to see myself, face to face. I faced my fears, my pain, and my shame, and I came to see myself as I truly am. In an energy healing session yesterday, I was advised to stand fully in my feelings without apology or embarrassment, and to embrace my humanness.

We are all perfectly imperfect. And it is when we open up to each other and to ourselves, soul to soul and face to face, that we learn just how precious that is.

A Voice of Reason

by Kayleigh Radatus

This last year really did a number on a lot of us, particularly from a mental health perspective. I know for myself, I was completely unprepared for how trauma response triggering a global pandemic would be, and I spent most of 2020 desperately managing anxiety, stress, and depression. Anxiety attacks were common – walking through the grocery store alone, trying to make sure I didn't forget anything, suddenly the tears would come and I'd find myself hyperventilating and unable to stop crying.

About seven months in, I realized something had to change, or I was going to totally collapse under the weight of everything I was feeling. That's when I remembered the early days of my trauma healing journey, and the tools I discovered that helped me begin, ever so tentatively, to transform my life. Those tools were the ones I needed to get through this pandemic.

One of the biggest elements people dealing with trauma struggle with is the voice in their head. Every negative message they've ever heard, every negative response they've created themselves, reverberates over and over in their brain. Its astonishing really, what a great resonance chamber the brain is. It works very much like the open body of an acoustic guitar, the sounds from outside go in, and are reproduced loudly and repetitively. When those negative messages start reverberating, we are no longer actively in control, yet we need to introduce a new sound – one that resonates in a positive way. We need to interrupt the pattern of those negative messages – change the sound vibration we are hearing.

Words matter. So very much. This is why I created A Voice of Reason. *A Voice of Reason in your pocket, always. Here to remind you of what is real and what is true, when your mind runs away with you.*

With A Voice of Reason in your pocket or bag, you're never alone with those negative messages. You've got 54 new messages of love, encouragement, and support right there with you, to help you change those negative messages that might be stuck on repeat in your brain. A Voice of Reason to change the vibration reverberating and resonating in your brain.

All you have to do, is take out the A Voice of Reason tin, and either randomly or actively choose a card to be your focus for the day. Every time one of those negative messages pops up, focus your attention on the message on the card instead. Repeat it out loud, or in your head, whichever you feel most comfortable doing. Do this consistently, and soon you'll find the messages from A Voice of Reason occur more often than the negative ones you used to be struggling with.

Join me online Tuesday, April 6th at 8:00pm on In The Spotlight with Catherine Graham of Journey Healers to see more of the cards and learn about the powerful healing tool A Voice of Reason can be. Watch <https://www.facebook.com/journeyhealers7> or <https://www.facebook.com/lovethisgroovylyfe> for the link to be published!

I'll be showcasing the new support package I've created to accompany the cards, and announcing a special offer during the program!





Life is Like a Maze

by Bill Brubacher

The poet Martha Smock once wrote :

***“Could we but see the pattern of our days
We should discern how devious were the ways
By which we came to this, the present time...”***

Our life often doesn’t make sense, does it? Especially when we feel we have so little control of it, or have somehow lost control of it...

And even if we had control, how can we be sure what is best... and what we want is really going to be best for us – or for those we care about?

Can any of us truly claim full responsibility for controlling our lives? After all, no one really knows what this morning, afternoon, or evening will bring. We live in a world of chance and all we can do is try to make the best of what comes to us.

Our lives can change in an instant, with the unexpected news in a telephone call, a drive to the store, the purchase of a lottery ticket, the stranger we accidentally meet on the street...

When we are young, change doesn’t seem to matter as much because we don’t usually have our eye on the ‘long game.’ We experience both good and bad circumstances as they arise and we don’t generally like to think expansively about it because it makes us feel too vulnerable to the fear of the unknown.

It’s only later in life, after we’ve lived long enough to realize how wonderfully or frustratingly unpredictable life is, that we begin to get curious and wonder why things worked out the way they did.

So I was thinking, life is indeed a great mystery, like walking through a maze.

We first enter the maze, wide-eyed and innocent, with fearless awe, yearning to explore and experience all its enigmatic passageways.

As we venture deeper, down corridor after corridor, short and long, which we can't see above or beyond, we begin to realize we have little to no control as to when we arrive at sudden endings and new beginnings, or unexpected twists and turns – and returns, in our life.

So, you see, if life is like a maze, the first thing we have to accept is the reality that we really don't know what lies ahead. And it's pretty easy to feel helpless and disappointed at times when life brings us to a dead end and we have to back-track, feeling angry and lost. Life is full of surprises because we can't see around corners.

All of us live with these 'maze'-life deflections and many of us don't know what to do with them when they occur, other than to react.

It's not easy to simply give up our sense of control and surrender to forces beyond our control, especially when the circumstances are life-changing.

But there is more we can do if we want to make a difference....

The first step in understanding our life/maze is to accept our relative powerlessness, which can be very humbling and even painful.

Next, we have to accept the fact that disappointment and pain are a reality of life, and no one is protected from experiencing them.

SO, it's perfectly natural to feel pain and frustration whenever they arise. However, might I respectfully suggest a way to handle setbacks? It's best to share it first with your closest friend or a loved one. It's terribly important not to suppress it or to express it unconditionally, because our feelings, both good and bad, are very precious because they connect us to our truest and most honest, deepest selves.

So, feel the feelings then let them go – and keep letting them go, as often as you need to, to get rid of that negative and destructive pent-up energy. It's holding on to it that makes it poisonous and doubly dangerous.

Now you are ready for the next step.

It's important to remember we can't control what we have no power over, but that doesn't make us weak or powerless. We can either surrender to powerlessness and defeat, or look for a new kind of power and strength that can lift us out of our pain and above our disappointment.

As Wayne Dyer once said, "If you change the way you look at things – the things you look at change!" Therein lies the greater power and miraculous potential of change. And how does that happen?

Here there are two things you need to know: one, to trust that everything, no matter how bad at the time, will turn out to be all right in the end. Surprisingly, positive outcomes have happened consistently, so many times in my life, when I've opened my heart and mind to that 'mystery.' And mostly the outcome has always made me better and better off – often in ways, I never expected. And it can happen to you, too.

Secondly, it always helps me to remember that nothing is as it appears. And in particular, nothing is all good or all bad – or lasts forever. There is always some good hidden in the bad, and some bad, hidden in the good, *in all things*. I promise.

Take the time and make the effort to search for it, and it will repay you many times over in saved energy and serious regret.

This simple belief is my faith and strength in difficult and uncertain times, which keeps my life in balance; so knowing that universal truth means I don't have to live in fear when things suddenly take an unexpected turn in the 'maze' of my life.

I can always trust in the good, always being there, even if I can't see it, like the sun constantly and reassuringly shining brightly in the sky, above the most tempestuous storms or darkest day.

The best thing to do when adversity strikes next, is to first stop and think before reacting, and move on with trust, not fear or anger. Look for the good and know that nothing lasts forever.

And remember, everybody lives in their own maze, not much different than yours.

The mystery of life can be a journey of discovery or a journey of despair...whether you believe life is good or bad, you're right.

*Wishing you a blessed month of Easter -
where good will always rise above bad
and can happen in your life, too,
if you want it.*



Happy Easter!
Bill Brubacher

Mental Health Heroes

by Christine Nightingale

Heroine #1: Margaret Trudeau is well known as the wife of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the mother of Canada's current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. But equally important, she is known as a trailblazing mental health advocate, reminding us that mental illness can impact anyone.

Her story of living with bipolar disorder helped normalize mental illness among Canadians. In deciding to speak openly about her experience years ago, she became a trailblazer in helping break down the stigma which keeps many from seeking help.

Heroine#2: Beginning when Bell Let's Talk launched in September 2010, Clara Hughes figured prominently in the eyes of Canadians as the founding spokesperson for the campaign. In 2014, undertaking "Clara's Big Ride," she completed a 110-day national bicycle tour through every province and territory in Canada.

Hero #3: George Cope of Canada Bell also did his part in starting a mental health initiative. As president and chief executive Officer of Bell Canada, he has modelled how corporations can take a leading role in addressing mental health issues.

Staying silent about mental health issues leads to delays in getting care. The Bell Let's Talk initiative is getting Canadians to talk about mental health, while funding mental health work at Canadian hospitals and research institutions. On Bell Let's Talk day each January, Bell Canada donates a nickel to mental health initiatives for every text, long distance call or wireless text on its network. The Bell let's Talk hashtag is the most used Twitter hash tag in Canada, with 729 million uses.

Bell Let's Talk has generated \$86.5 million for mental health programs in Canada. George Cope was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2014.

Heroine #4: Princess Diana, the 'people's princess,' was a beautiful, glamorous woman. But underneath that image she struggled with bulimia, self-injury and lingering feelings of worthlessness. In a 1995 interview with the BBC, she described bulimia as a "symptom of what was going on in my marriage." Her honesty helped chip away at the stigma surrounding mental health and encouraged others to seek help. Thousands of people changed their lives because Diana talked about hers.

Today nearly 1 in 6 adults in the UK and 1 in 5 in the USA live with a mental illness, for example an eating disorder, depression or an anxiety disorder. Very few seek treatment due to fear, shame and embarrassment.

During her 1995 BBC interview Diana was a trailblazer in speaking frankly about her “secret disease”...self-esteem at a low ebb...you don’t think you’re worthy or valuable.”

Diana explained that bingeing functioned as a release valve from pressures and problems that seemed insurmountable. In the years during which Diana spoke publicly about her bulimia, rates of women seeking treatment for bulimia more than doubled. The press dubbed this “the Diana effect.” Mental health practitioners credited this shift to greater public awareness and dialogue about bulimia.

If a princess could have bulimia, so could they. If she could overcome her eating disorder, they could too. Self-disclosure of people in positions of power or visibility can change how other people approach their own psychological health.

Heroes #5 and 6: Diana’s sons have taken up the task. Prince Harry spoke frankly about seeking counselling to deal with the grief over his mother’s death. Prince William appeared in a documentary about anorexia. “We need to normalize the conversation about mental health” he stated.

Margaret and Diana told their truth, and their narratives resonated. Society would benefit from more truth-tellers like them.

Things Are Getting Better and Better ...

by Colleen Heighington

As I am writing this, my uncle has had his Covid 19 vaccine shot, my sister has had her first dose of it, and a very good friend of mine is getting his very soon. HIP HIP HURRAH!!!!

It's finally happening ... things are getting better and better as we try to get back to a little normal again. It now has been well over a year so it is about time things started to change around for us. Over the course of time, I've been asking people if they would be getting their Covid 19 vaccine once it became available to them and most of them said they couldn't wait to get it while others have indicated that they would not be for reasons of their own. To be truthful, I fall a little into this category and hopefully as time goes by, I will see it differently and change my mind to receiving the vaccine. Time will tell!!!

My family and friends have been most fortunate to have not known anyone who has had Covid 19, and I pray that it will continue to go this way. Covid 19 is out there but according to the news, the numbers are going down, and that is so good to hear. I know that there are variants out there as well, but life goes on and we must continue to do our best to prevent ourselves and others from getting it.

As I am finishing this off ... Yes!! things are getting better and better... my very good friend has had his first vaccine shot and my husband is getting his very shortly while my son and I are on the waiting list. It seems that we are starting to see the silver lining to Covid 19 and that our prayers are being answered. Keep on praying and ... In God's Way and God's Time ... ALL WILL BE WELL and we can start living again!!!



Thoughts Over Coffee

by Andrea Lines-Botell

It occurred to me, over my predawn coffee, how many moments in life are not truly experienced, due to fear or the desire to stay within the box of norms. We have adeptly put that box in place because of the need for a sense of control.

In early childhood, we approach life in splendour and wonder. Experiences bring new explosions on the senses, creating a ripple. This expands, from the moment we touch, feel, see or smell something to the responses others have around us while we are engaging through the moment.

A simple new pleasure can become a spectacle of others commenting and drawing attention to areas we may not have noticed. Some of these responses may be of disapproval, and in those moments the spectacular wonder can turn into shame or guilt. Moments of self-discovery can be turned into what pleases someone else rather than what they are for us. We can lose ourselves in those responses, and process a new belief system.

The first moment of touching mud or tasting ice cream or seeing a butterfly can be swarmed with thousands of pieces of additional information other than our own.

How much of what we experience at this moment is truly based on our own opinion or being?

This is almost impossible to quantify, as from the very moment we are born our life becomes connected to and influenced by those around us. Each building block of information laid by what we interpret from others.

Even our rebelling over what we are not is based on our past, and can be a dramatic swing of resistance based on unhealed wounds.

In its simplest form, take the child who is staring in wonder at a spider, watching in delight as it spins its web. The parent is terrified of spiders' shrieks, so the child then turns that wonder into fear. This learnt response can remain for an entire lifetime.

We are such complex beings, facing new potential dilemmas daily, from a point of reference of what social media dictates. We are consistently fed what is perceived as acceptable or desirable, and this makes it even more difficult to find who we truly are.

One of the areas that saddens me is the vast amount of information that is judgment-based. There is an incredible amount of help, but also potential harm, that is delivered through social platforms. One particular platform I noticed has many amazing people with varying abilities sharing their lives. Volumes of people send comments from a place of deep angered judgment, while others send their comments from a place of extreme joy and support.

It has been since the beginning of time that humans have felt they have the right to judge others. It is now at the surface and more visible than ever due to access to social media; it rules our modern societies.

I would love to be able to pull back the lever on social media and hit the pause button. Allow for us all to take a moment and rediscover the simpler things in life. To celebrate each other for differences, and help to lift each other. I know that may sound cliché, but none of us gets out of here without wounds and scars; we all know that. We should try to stop adding to them or, at the very least, we should try to minimize them.

I have had many conversations recently on how you never know what a first or last experience will be. I for one want to be present enough to fully experience each moment, so if it is the first or the last it will be something tangible and expansive. Even the simplest of moments can provide a gift.

Allowing fear can serve a purpose when it comes to assessing physical danger, but when it comes to experiences of life it can hinder us beyond what we could have imagined. One of my lovely aunts consistently reminded me that there were no right or wrong decisions in life, simply different outcomes; all have growth and all have new experiences.