

Pain

Stanley Peele

Much has been written about how to deal with pain. Some Buddhist writers have suggested that our normal reaction to pain is to internalize it. That is, when we feel pain, we think of it as something which is happening to us alone. "Ow! That hurts! This is bad. This is dreadful. I don't like this. Alas!"

Then, in experiencing this pain as individual and unique to us, we descend into sadness, despair and anger. We allow the pain to overcome us. Our spirit, our energy, decreases.

These writers suggest that if we can think of the pain as universal, something that is experienced by everyone; that we can lift ourselves from despair. The Dalai Lama writes, "Without pain there is no compassion."

Yet this is only a part of the truth. As pain increases, it lowers all our energies. It lowers our spiritual energy. As it increases it overcomes us, until we lack the energy to think of spiritual things. There is only the pain. (Pain comes in many ways: a tragedy, the loss of a dear one, being put in prison, being fired, being sued in court - - on and on.) Pain can be so intense that we can fall into a dark pit; without hope, love, or compassion.

In 1988, when I was taken to the Emergency Room for chest pain, I was in an utterly dejected and miserable condition. I was not mean to people, was cooperative and would answer questions. Yet my energy was so low that the thought that "God loves me" did not even occur to me. I was an illustration of the phrase, "Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter here."

This condition is a part of life. It is real. Therefore, we should not forget this part of life when we philosophize, when we preach, or when we write. We should not pretend that it does not exist, nor should we gloss over it.

Many people forget this. Dr. Wayne Dyer is a fine speaker. Yet he forgets this. He teaches us how to connect with "the source and says, in effect, "I tell you, if you will do this my way, it will ALWAYS work!" Not so. Not so. His way, although inspired, is only one way. It does not work for all people; nor does it work in all situations.

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When we are in that dark pit, God is with us. Although we may not be aware of it, the connection to Him can be even stronger than those times when we are healthy and content. That connection exists on many dimensions. There are many ways of accessing that connection. Here are two:

* 1. The Bottom of the Pit.

When we sink down into this dark pit, we can sink to the very bottom. Then there is nowhere to go but up. Then we can experience a glorious blaze of light that completely extinguishes the pain. We can rise up in spirit and leave our physical bodies. In that moment we no longer feel the pain, for the pain is only in our bodies. Our bodies are not who we are. We are eternal souls.

And in that moment we become fully aware of the presence of God. We feel His touch. He is always with us. Yet, we had to experience great pain in order to open ourselves to him! Hallelujah!

* 2. When We Recover.

Most of us miss this opportunity. We feel relief and joy as our lives return to normal. We want to forget the pain, fear and travail.

Yet if we will relax and look back at the pain fearlessly; and give thanks for the whole experience, a new strength may come to us, a new life. It can be a better, deeper, wiser more compassionate life. How do we find this new life? One way is to say a simple prayer to God, a prayer in six words:

"Thank you God for the pain."

Mean it! Believe it. Make that prayer a part of your life. "Thank you God. Thank you for the pain. Thank you for everything." Let the thought become a constant companion – with every step you take, with every breath.

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