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JOEL BRASS AND ASSOCIATES LTD.

The Growing Edge



LONELINESS: OUR GREATEST FEAR AND A PORTAL TO PEACE

"When we are alone and quiet we are afraid that something will be whispered in our ear, and we so hate the silence and drug ourselves with social life."
Friederich Nietzsche

"Risking loneliness to achieve the sense of oneness with oneself we call solitude is essential if one is to survive the Middle Passage."
James Hollis

James Hollis

As a psychotherapist for the past quarter of a century, I am included on a daily basis in peoples' greatest fears. Which ones do you think are the most common? Which send shivers down our spines? If you think the answer is the fear of dying and death, I actually rarely hear that one. The fear of rejection? Now you're getting warmer. The secret, private fear of feeling unworthy, inadequate or not good enough? This is one of the most common for sure.

I have learned that to discover what most frightens another I must listen for what is hidden between the lines of what they are saying. I must listen for what they are not saying. Like the references to Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter book series, I try to discern that which is so anxiety-provoking that it cannot and shall not be named. In doing so I have concluded that it is the fear of ultimate loneliness that is our most fundamental terror.

Even admitting that we are lonely is a difficult or even embarrassing act for a lot of people. The trepidation around experiencing it is so powerful and all pervasive in our society that many, for the life of us, can never spend a single moment being still or silent. We cover up our fear of stillness by making certain that we are incessantly busy and leading our life at a breakneck speed. We've become the Mad Hatter from Alice In Wonderland whose approach to life is summed up by his personal mantra: "I'm late. I'm late for a very important date. I have no time to sit and wait. I'm late!"

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We cover up our fear of silence by talking just for the sake of it, by keeping the interpersonal space between ourselves and others cluttered and overflowing with words, no matter how superficial or devoid they may be of real connection or self-disclosure. We cover up the fear of stillness and silence by immersing ourselves in the most popular addictions of our culture - materialism, hedonism and ego worship. We cover up by clinging to terrible relationships and constricting professions rather than risk the consequences of hearing and following our soul's pleas.

Who lies underneath this massive attempt to avoid? As one of my clients put it: "Just plain little ol' me." And what's underneath our unwillingness to spend time with "just plain little ol' me"? The unspeakable fear of being lonely. Of being helplessly alone. And, paradoxically, at the very same time, of making a real connection with our selves.

SOLITUDE : THE CURE FOR LONELINESS

Marianne Moore, an American poet, has written very wise words on what constitutes the most powerful and effective way out of the fear of loneliness by stating: "The best cure for loneliness is solitude".

Solitude is the willingness to risk going into the seeming vacuum or abyss that we unconsciously believe lies beneath the insane merry-go-round of our ways of living. It is the gentle, deliberate seeking or renewal of a relationship with one's natural self. It is the willingness to create space and time for the discovery or renewal of a relationship with a Transcendent Force or Presence in our world. You might say that we must have the courage to risk immersing ourselves in stillness and silence in order to overcome our fear of loneliness. Without this courage, we will perpetually live in the disorienting and vacuous condition of self-alienation and disconnection, in my opinion the most prevalent disease of our modern world.

By courageously walking through the portal of loneliness, we can come to a place where we do not feel alone if when we are by ourselves. Rather we can come close, very close to who we really are. This is a place where we can know personally and indisputably, in a way that seeking it in the affairs of the world can never show us, that we are whole, perfect and loveable creations, at one with everything and everyone. We can know in the only way to ultimately know anything, in our actual experience, "... what our ancestors knew, that the darkness is luminous, that the silence speaks."

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Choices, Growth and Inner Freedom in the Second Half Of Life

A One Year Program

“We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life’s morning – for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in morning was true will at evening have become a lie.” - -C.G. Jung, Collected Works

It is both my personal and professional experience that most people in our society are extremely ill-equipped to deal with the psychological issues, challenges and potential inherent in the second half of life. The so-called mid-life crisis is both inevitable and necessary. This is so because what is required in the second half of life to experience deep personal meaning, happiness and fulfillment is nearly the mirror opposite of that which is asked of its first half.

The way we form ourselves in life’s morning and afternoon is a response, (often an adaptive and ill-serving one) to what our parents, schools, religion, culture and the demands of making it the world have asked of us. It is predominantly a *social* script. It must answer questions like: “How can I separate from my parents? Enter the world and turn myself into a social identity? Develop a strong and capable ego and create healthy relationships (often a contradiction in terms)? Fashion and advance in a career? But in order to experience deep and abiding personal happiness and inner peace in life’s later afternoon and evening, the worm turns. The questions that must be successfully answered are all *spiritual* at their core: “Who am I? Who am I behind the roles I have lived and the expectations I have met? What does my soul or authentic self ask me to be in this life? What is the nature of life and death? Do I have a personal relationship with a Transcendent Force or Spirituality and how can I surrender more and more of myself to its guidance and care?”

Whereas the first half of life is all about (the illusion of) defining personal safety and security by *acquiring* things – education, material possessions, property, status, reputation and power, in order to experience any real measure of inner safety and security in the second half of life the exact opposite is called for – the gracious, trusting *relinquishment* of much, and eventually all, of what we have acquired for subjectively-based and inwardly-felt realities and values.

This One Year Program will support you in examining and releasing the blockages to your own personal, authentic spirituality and authority. In regard to spirituality, we will look at and begin to release your aggressive/defensive ego consciousness’s (the part of you that is survival-oriented and fear-based) real beliefs, judgments and accumulated grievances with God as you know of God to be. In the matter of becoming your own personal authority, we will explore how the adaptive and reactive strategies from your childhood and early life still prevent you today from making your own choices on how to be. Healing this will enable you to experience much more inner freedom and release you to live your own life, and no one else’s.

Format: 6 experiential weekend workshops spaced approx. 2 months apart beginning late February, 2011; buddy system; weekly support group meetings (highly recommended)

Requirement: You will be asked to partake in a spiritual practice of your choice – yoga, meditation, tai-chi, walks in nature, readings, attendance at a formal religious service etc. throughout the year and Joel will be bringing in the teachings of *A Course In Miracles*.

Cost: \$1650 + H.S.T. + the purchase of two books – Joel’s *Healing Your Relationship With Yourself : End Inner Conflict by Developing A Harmonious Inner Family* and James Hollis’ *What Matters Most: Living A Considered Life*

To register: Contact Reena Taank, seminar coordinator, at 604-689-4532 or reena@telus.net
or
Joel at 604-732-9091

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate contest of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we ever do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love."

Reinhold Niebuhr
The Children of Light



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