

The Art of Suffering: Flowing with your pain may take you further than you ever dreamed

by Robin Leslie

Much has been said about the power of being in the present moment as well as the ability to manifest life's desires. But what if what you want is not what's happening? What if the present moment sucks?

I've recently watched a close friend struggle with losing her career and physical mobility after a recommended, botched leg surgery seven months ago. Holly is a yoga teacher and the anger and injustice about this circumstance has been intense. Yet recently she's become engaged to marry an awesome man, is selling her home, and is moving to a new place in life with relative ease and grace. She's stopped fighting the present circumstances and surrendered.

We all have the big falls and are taught to not surrender by staying tough, fighting through the pain, keeping a stiff upper lip and taking it like a man. This resistance locks up energy and creates blocks in the body that need to be released if you are to come back to a supple graceful body with energy freely flowing through it. Energy blocks create illness and disease.

Powerful lessons come in times of suffering. We are told, "Fight the cancer and don't give up or give in." As if giving up and giving in were the enemy of true health and happiness, instead of the path to our true being. What would happen if we gave up and gave in before we got sick? Would we then live in a constant state of peacefulness that only people who have surrendered know?

I saw a remarkable turnaround in Holly when she stopped trying to fight her way back to health and surrendered instead. She stopped asking, "Why did this happen to me? Who is to blame? Asking instead, "What thoughts are helpful? How can I live with more ease and grace? Can I appreciate any-

thing about my circumstance? Appreciation is one small step out of darkness; taken one at a time they lead you back to the light.

When Holly began doing this, her burden of suffering eased and she began reclaiming her humanity and beautiful lighthearted sense of humor. Some might say it's the drugs, but I saw her go through many kinds of extremely powerful narcotic drugs and none of them have had the positive far-reaching effects that this change in mindfulness has. So drugs maybe, but I'm betting on the attitude, it's more powerful than we think.

We aren't taught to grieve our losses; we force back tears and try not to cry. As an energy healer I see it all the time: blocks created by resistance to suffering. The flow of tears is the lubricant of life, and suffering is the current that takes us to the higher, more enlightened places, if we would let it.

During my divorce six years ago, my son cried every night. A counselor suggested I let him cry. So I let him cry to the bottom of his tears. Today my son is one of the most loving, gracious, 16-year-old men that I know. His heart is open and caring, yet it is strong. Grieving didn't make him a "wuss." He experienced a valuable lesson in moving energy out of the body when life's circumstances come to call. He is pliable like the trees that bend in the wind, surviving to live another day. Today he's living pretty well; whole, happy, free, and with compassion he might not otherwise have had.



Robin Leslie says that allowing suffering into your life, rather than resisting it through the use of drugs, alcohol, sex, TV, video games or any other distraction, will take you deeper into the light of your being because it takes you deeply into the heart. You feel like it's breaking, and it is! But that's exactly the movement that's needed.

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that's exactly the movement that's needed. Learn to co-operate with it and decades — even lifetimes — of encrusted unnecessary protection fall away. It is the grand movement of the soul.

The spiritual teacher Gangagi once said, "True forgiveness and love arise naturally, effortlessly, from the silence of a heart broken all the way open." Let it break rather than close in response to pain and suffering, and it will take you towards a greater and more expanded view of life and of God.

In my counseling practice I teach people to suffer consciously, to surrender to the big waves of life as they come crashing down on their heads. Allowing the flow to have them rather than fighting or resisting the undertow of tears takes them to higher ground. If you resist you may get injured or stop the progress towards the thing you want most: a supple, open, flowing presence of Spirit.

People often remark how calm and happy I am in my everyday life, but that only came after years of learning to surrender and allowing the circumstances of life to open me up like a can of worms and release any parasites that had been eating at my soul. It wasn't me; it was just the worms.

I teach Holly's yoga class now while she is recovering. We practice the art of stretching beyond where we think we can go by allowing the breath to take us further when we've reached the edge of our stretch. When the heart contracts and wants to shut down in response to pain and suffering, breath. Allow it to stretch you a little further. It opens you to understanding life and new ways of being you may never have thought possible.

Let life have its way with you. It's a grand lover, a lover's dance really, but one of the least well-known. It is your perfect partner. Let the pain and suffering of life break you all the way open and then see where life takes you. Bet it's to your bliss.

In 2003 Robin Leslie awakened out of intense suffering into bliss. She now teaches, writes, and does intuitive counseling and energy clearing. Learn more about her work at robinleslie.com.

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