

I am going to be 70 this year, so my clock is ticking, as it were; I mean there is a finite amount of time left. Yet, at the same time, the work that I see before me, before us, is large, substantial, revolutionary, and profound. For much of my life, I was in search of, as old Archimedes put it, of the lever with which to move the world. Actually, what he said, more or less, was, “give me a lever that is long enough and I will move the world”; which was simply a statement having to do with physics. But down through the ages we have always attached an allegorical spin to his long repeated quote, and I have been looking for many, many years for where and how to stand and what lever to use, with which when I found the right place to stand and the right lever to use, I/we could be of some use to humanity’s collective evolution. And things are changing around us in a way that is beautiful and hopeful. Perhaps I am naïve, but I love our new President, what he is doing and how he is doing it.

I have found my lever and where to stand, and know the contribution that I may be able to make, contribute to, be a part of, get started and go along for a while. Though I see that most of what may grow from it will probably manifest through future generations.

Poverty, prison, crime, and war – what we can do

Someone once said to me, that if all the money in the world was taken away from everyone, and we all had to start all over again, the money would wind up being distributed just about exactly as it is now. I was much younger then, I did not like the person who said this to me, and I especially did not like the cutthroat way in which he did his business. I did not want to agree with him. I said, “What about the people who inherited wealth, and never earned a penny?” He replied, “Especially them, they would get their money back first.” “Why do you say that?” I asked. He said, “Because we get what we expect to get, we get what we believe we are entitled to.”

“We get what we believe we are entitled to.” I have devoted many years of my life, especially the last five, to understanding what I have come to call, “The Wounds of Life”: what they are; how they impact us and shape our lives; how to heal them and change the stories we tell ourselves; and, most recently and most significantly, how to train others to do the same. Now, twenty years after I first heard that quote, I see that it is correct. Each of us, through the circumstances of our birth, the things that have been done to us, the things that have happened to us, the things we have done ourselves, has developed our own respective settings on, what I now call, our personal “abundance meter”. This is where we determine how much of life’s abundance we are able to allow ourselves. I do not mean to say or imply that this is volitional, that we are able to make a conscious choice about the settings of our abundance meter. For the most part, we have very little choice in the matter. “We get what we believe we are entitled to.”

There are of course the socio-economic facts of any person’s existence, place in life. These are true and real. No question. But for any given individual, what it comes down to is that the story about the self that he or she believes is what determines what is and is not possible. If one believes that it is hopeless, then it is hopeless. If one believes that

one is unworthy, damaged goods, no good, etc., it is hard to achieve much in the way of life's abundance. Mostly, when people believe that they do not deserve to do well, they wind up proving it over and over again. And let us be clear, that by "abundance" I am not at all only referring to one's financial prosperity. One can be quite wealthy with respect to finances, and be quite poor in many other ways. Indeed, one can be world famous and loved by many people, and still feel unworthy and unhappy – just look at Hollywood.

The revolutionary thing that I have discovered is that it is possible to change one's story and re-write the script; it is possible to heal people; it is possible for people to change. I have been doing this for more than five years, and I have been training others to do so for the past year. At first, I was concerned that the capacity to do this work was dependent on my idiosyncratic makeup, my 40 years of leading workshops, etc., etc., but, I am so profoundly happy to be able to report that I can teach it to others from many different walks of life, and many different cultural backgrounds. After a while, there will be others who will be leading the training as well. By the way, I am not suggesting that what I do is the only way these kinds of changes can be brought about. I have heard, here and there, of other processes that may be effective, and am aware that hypnotherapy can be quite helpful. I would be quite happy to see many different kinds of effective processes to *heal the wounds of life*.

Why is this important? What am I going on about? What I have found is that virtually all of us have been wounded in one way or another, by the things that have been done to us, the things that have happened to us, the things we have done ourselves to others or ourselves. These wounds move into our subconscious, which, by the way, lives only in the present. It does not know of the past or the future, there is only "now." When we have, for example, absorbed those words (words being one of the ways it happens) that come down from some authority figure: "you're no good," "you'll never be any good," "you're a bad girl/boy," "you're a 'tramp', 'stupid', 'useless', 'dumb'", etc., etc. Inside us, at whatever age this message took root, there is locked into our subconscious, frozen in time, as it were, that being who is those things ('no good", "useless" or whichever), and it is that subconscious self that makes the real decisions in one's life. Which is why, for example, that most abused girls wind up having abusers for husbands, because they believe in their subconscious that they do not deserve any better, that they deserve to be punished for their faults; which, generally, is what they were convinced of when they were children.

These wounds, the ones that penetrate into our subconscious, wind up running our lives. All of our critical life decisions - what kind of work to do; with whom to be friends or to fall in love with; how much of life's abundance can be permitted to oneself – are pretty much made by the wounded being within oneself. Of course, one's socio-economic circumstances form the parameters within which these choices are worked out. However, I have seen over and over again, that any given individual can transcend their birth circumstances. As John Lennon used to say, "its all in the mind."

It does not matter, by the way, what the cultural norms are with respect to, for example, the pedagogical beliefs around physical punishment of children. I have done a number of

workshops in Europe and Asia, in some countries where beating of children in school and at home is the norm, either by hand, or with belts, canes, or sticks. And have, over and over again, found myself working to heal the wounds from these beatings and canings. In many cases I have found people who were absolutely firmly convinced that were beaten because they were bad, that they needed and deserved to be beaten.

I have also found, mostly, amongst women, but men as well, who along with being sexually abused as children, were told by some authority or parental figure, that now they were damaged, that nobody would want them. Of course, most women who have been raped or sexually abused do not require any authority figure to give them the feeling that something within them has been ruined. The victim almost always experiences guilt and shame as a consequence of sexual abuse. There is always the incident in itself and then the guilt and shame around it. The work I do, for the most to part, has to do with healing the shame and guilt. One of my most gratifying moments as a workshop leader, was a time when a woman who had been regularly sexually abused by her father and grandfather, whose mother and grandmother repeatedly told her that she was a slut, ruined, etc, who had been both homeless and a prostitute before I met her, who said, towards the end of a workshop, "I never would have dreamed that it would have been possible to regain my innocence, but I have."

All around the world, there are millions of people in poverty, in jail, in prostitution and destitution, who believe (in their subconscious) that it is their lot in life, and while they may aspire to a more graceful life, they are most often chained to their inner messages that they are "no good", "unworthy," etc. In my work, I have heard over and over again about the family dinner table being a place of hell (I regret to say more often than not); about the "uncle" in all his various forms (uncle, big brother, family friend, father or grandfather, teacher) who abused the little girl or boy, once or many times, while persuading her never to tell anyone; the many, many woman, who did not know how to say "no," once or repeatedly, and who have been ashamed ever since; the children from many different cultures watching every day in fear for their potentially raging alcoholic father to come raging home, beating them and or their mother; the many cultures where child beating is a structural part of the society, and through which I have seen so many who have believed that they were beaten because they deserved to be beaten (because they were – and are – "no good." And those who I meet, are amongst the world's elite: those who have chosen to practice yoga, and who can afford \$300 for a weekend workshop.

I see this huge body of work before us: to change our perception of what we can expect from life, to take this work that is now only available to the privileged (where even in this realm, understanding the possibility of healing, of fully embracing the juice of life, is just in its neonatal stage) and taking it out into the world of hurt that is out there, and changing humanity's collective understanding of what is possible – step by step – training more and more people to be able to lead these healing processes. And, along the way, changing the way in which we raise our children, and provide them with safe and cozy environments, in which they know that they do not have to do anything to earn being loved, that love is given to them unconditionally.

