



MEANINGFUL LIVING
PSYCHOLOGY, LIFE COACHING & TRAINING

Meaningful Living Newsletter

Issue 22, September 2016

What a month! by Karina Stell

What a month it has been and a challenge to live the values I speak of so often in the room with individuals, couples and families.

It's not easy to live our values. It's perfectly sensible, emotionally melodic even, to imagine a person being faithful to their values and making the connection with the world they feel is authentic for them.

I've done this work for some time. I've been challenged as to my values almost throughout. It's what I believe in, what I believe is the ONLY way to carve a life but I'm waving my hand in the air right now, saying 'not waving', but rather 'drowning'.

I have been, as most of you already know, in remission from Hodgkin's Lymphoma for two years. You who have been clients of mine throughout saw dramatic physical changes as I underwent 8 months of fortnightly chemo that felt at times as if it would kill me. I returned to work after 8 months a bloated, bald, stunned human being who had to pick up the pieces of what felt like the aftermath of a train wreck and find my values to continue.

It was hard and I believe some transitional treatment is required for 'survivors' to

help them with this movement from this strange chemical isolation back into the world they knew. I repeat, it was hard and my heart often pulls toward anyone I know who has travelled a similar road that I did! There is no doubt, these experiences are permanently life changing experiences that leave one feeling the same as everyone else and yet different, having seen a world that defies explanation if it has not been experienced.

I've no doubt that many jolts to the psyche which others have experienced, and feel just as I have explained, are experienced every day and my article is in no way to elevate my experience beyond theirs. It is just what happened to me and what forms the underpinning on my article this month on values.

I was scanned and found to have some nodes light up this month. There went the floor again! There went my anxiety, grabbing me around the throat so as I couldn't breathe for what felt like many hours. Not this again. Please God, not this again.

I had to share this news with my children and see the fear once again come across their faces. I had to reiterate the promises we made the first time, that we were just going to feel out loud and not try to be

martyrs. An old world revisited and so hard to sit in.

Three days now after a biopsy which will either seal my path down the same frightening road or release me to have my life back, I sit in extreme discomfort emotionally. Just waiting, not knowing, and now the node has been removed, someone in a lab somewhere actually knowing about my life before I do. So very vulnerable.

Now to my values. Who do I want to be as a mother, a therapist, a human being living what I believe in? My values are I want to be real, I want to tell it how it feels and not try to make it a melodrama nor a nothing. Just to be in the reality of what this feels like in the hope that someone else who has been here can get me and I can get them. I want to keep seeing my clients as this is one of the huge fears I have that I will lose. My life as a therapist means a great deal to me. My clients matter to me and I love my work. I've worked so hard to come to where I am and the thought of losing it again scares me. I'm studying to try and work toward a Masters, I will have to withdraw or continue, determined just from the few words uttered by my doctor in a day.

Valued living is the only place I can rely on

in this dizzy, scary time. Who am I? How do I want to be authentic? How do I want to act in my hardest time, when it actually matters the most?

That is why I share these thoughts with you so vulnerably in this newsletter, because this is the realness of any one person's life from one minute to another. There is not much we can control but how

we meet what comes to us. In this I find some balm in the uncontrollable. These are hard days for me and in an effort to live the realness I espouse as useful, I just wanted to share.

I have to close with a quote that scares me as well as comforts me in times like these, but is apposite in discussions regarding values.

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

— Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Last month's puzzle solution:

Happiness, connection, gratitude, patience, feelings, whine, laughter, anxiety, acceptance, just notice, thought, tranquility, breathe, pain, discomfort, panic

'Say hello to the thought and notice what you are feeling'

Good Luck!

1. Guess the Phrase

YƆƆIƆ RIDE	SS II DD EE	LAP COMPUTER
BAR BAR	DDDD days DDDD nights	hands hands hands hands DECK

Change Rough to Poach in 4 moves!

rough
poach

Maybe I am a lousy therapist! by Michael Cohn

Last month I wrote about ununderstanding clients, allowing the interaction between them and me to just flow, hopefully with me sitting in a place of great curiosity, just taking in whatever it is that I might take in.

Mindfulness is crucial in the therapeutic process because all sorts of feelings, ideas, understandings and cognitions often come rushing in, all clamouring for attention, and all the while, a pesky ego might be in the wings, waiting to pounce.

It is only mindfulness which has the capacity to allow a gentle awareness to catalyse into a moment of just noticing, which may then allow the therapist to just do absolutely nothing but hold the space, curiously.

Where am I going with all of this?

I have no idea!

There is just the germ of something – perhaps I can just sit and be, and see what emerges.

Hhhhhmmmm.

I notice myself resisting this ‘empty’ space, wanting to fill it with words and ideas, to write something ‘worthwhile ...

It’s quite difficult to just be with the ‘stuckness’.

Wow!

I write so earnestly about developing equanimity around stuckness, but my own stuckness agitates me nonetheless!

Is that what happens with clients too?

Do I jabber in order to fill the space?

I’m reminded of an exquisite passage in Journey of the Heart, by John Welwood and he was talking about mirroring, that phenomenon which often occurs in a close encounter between 2 people.

“Mirroring happens not only between intimate partners but in any relationship where two people are working closely. For example, in my early days as a psychotherapist, when clients resisted change, I would try out different strategies to overcome their resistance - which invariably led nowhere.”

So here he talks about a situation where his reality was that a client resisted change, and he would try out different strategies to get through to them so that their resistance might be overcome.

But, he continues: “When I instead used clients’ resistance as a mirror, I saw that I was resisting their resistance!”

Welwood goes on: “This led to a curious but extremely helpful discovery. Often the most useful thing to do in such situations was to work on my own resistance and give clients more space to go through whatever they needed to. Then they had less need to resist me or the work!”

How amazing? Just a small shift which can lead to such fruitful outcomes.

Now this is always a fascinating place to be, because it allows for a complete reframing of the encounter. In fact, much of what we experience in life, including our responses to these experiences, may be life’s mirror, waiting to teach us something.

Can I learn more from this? Can I learn from the

words I have just written? (Doesn't make sense does it? If I have written the words, what more can I learn – I am the author of the words!! I know!)

Can I sit in my *stuckness* as I try to write and just see what words begin to flow? Can I sit in my *stuckness* as a client struggles with something?

Can I not rush in to try to 'help'? Can I sit with my self-critical thoughts as they insist that if I cannot answer a client intelligently or come up with something 'clever', I am a failure? Can I gently welcome my self-critical thoughts that insist that everything I am writing is nonsense?

For those of you who don't follow us on Facebook – just some treasures from this month:



Basically how I'm handling life

"Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."

— David Augsburger.



Emerging out of our pain to make a life is one of the amazing things we humans can do... ❤️🙏