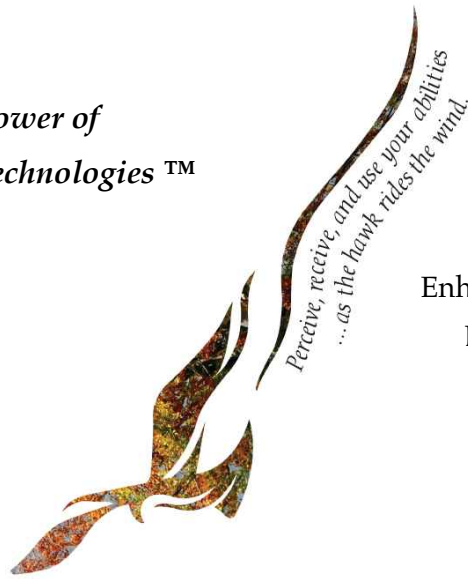


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Edited and published by Joel P. Bowman and
Debra Basham for SCS Matters, LLC
August 2013

Welcome...

Here is your *Beyond Mastery Newsletter* for August 2013. This newsletter may be duplicated and distributed to those who share an interest in Energy Medicine, neurolinguistics—especially Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)—and spirituality.

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This month the featured articles are “Sacred Acts of Kindness,” by Debra; and “Doing Unto Others,” by Joel.

Sacred Acts of Kindness

Coretta Scott King said that “the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members, a heart of grace, and a soul generated by love.” The longer I live, the more obvious truth to that statement.

Lately, though, I not only see the truth, I also have a greater sense of the ramifications of the actions of the members of any community. We know that germs are contagious, and that mirror neurons cause emotions to affect one another as well. We have all had the experience of having a mood either flattened or lifted by an interaction with another. What if we can affect those way beyond our family or our immediate circle, and way beyond just our community? Could it be true that our actions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors actually create in the *whole*?

Last year, following surgery to remove the tumor on my left ovary, I ended up in cardiac care due to some postsurgical complications. The surgeon, with whom I had felt a great deal of rapport, was out of town, so I was seen by a colleague. On the first meeting, I found him to be very intense as he listened to my answers about what led up to my hospital stay. The following day, he came to my room to handle my discharge. He was every bit as intense, and I told him I found him very intense.

His response was more than a bit frank, and leaned way in the direction of condescending: “When a patient tells me she went to her massage therapist about a mass in her abdomen, I am paying close attention.” He went on to say I had a serious heart situation, but could live a long life if I got proper medical attention and took the

medications that were needed. As if that were not strong enough, he added, "If you want to be foolish, and throw your life away, I cannot do anything about that."

At that point, I was remembering advice from a good friend, "Don't make waves. Do what you need to do to get out of here, then you can make the choices that are right for you."

My response to the doctor was to assure him I was not going to be foolish with my life. I also told him we were not ignorant about a-Fib (atrial fibrillation), that our son-in-law had been being treated for it. I said Doug had gone through cardio-version (more than once), and had also had cardiac ablation. I told him I fully understood about the medications, diet, and lifestyle. He gave me the advice to get into a cardiologist, and signed my papers so I could go home.

Two days later, I found out that doctor had been undergoing treatment for cancer. In fact, the weekend was his first "call" after having returned to work. At once, I was deeply aware of the truth that he was (as we all do) responding to me through his own experience.

What a tender opportunity to remember that sacred acts of kindness are done to the self, not just to the other. If I had allowed myself to get bent out of shape, (I have enough history with this way of being in the world to qualify as a world-class contortionist) I might have even created enough hostility that he could have reported my behavior as noncompliance and refused to sign my discharge orders. At the very least, my body would have been in stress.

This is an excerpt from *Love is Letting Go of Fear*, by Gerald Jampolsky: "To Give is to Receive" is the law of Love. Under this law, when we give our Love away to others we gain, and what we give we simultaneously receive. The Law of Love is based on abundance; we are completely filled with Love all the time, and our supply is always full and running over. When we give our Love unconditionally to others with no expectations of return, the Love within us extends, expands, and joins. So by giving our Love away we increase the Love within us and everyone gains."

Don't just take my word for it. Just do an internet search on "kindness research" and you will see articles with titles like these: *Research shows kindness leads to happiness; Kindness is contagious, new study finds; Acts of kindness can make you happier; and Kindness breeds more kindness.* There is a biological reality about sacred acts of kindness.

We have to learn to respond with unkind actions. Thankfully we are born with a leaning toward kindness. In Buddhism it is called "basic goodness" and in Christianity we are said to have been created in the *image of God*. In the musical *South Pacific*, Rodgers and Hammerstein address this in the song: "You've Got to be Carefully Taught." Here are the lyrics:

*You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate.*

This year I am attending a series of four workshops on how you can achieve higher levels of consciousness (greater awareness of our interconnectedness with the sacredness of all of life). I have just returned from the first weekend. Many of the exercises designed for our learning are quite simple with very profound implications. For example, we each took a small quantity of water into our mouth and just held it there, becoming aware of (and resisting) the urge to swallow. We were to just be aware of the desire to swallow, waiting to do so until after the urge had passed. Then we could swallow without the need to do so, but by making a conscious choice. A similar practice is common to meditation practice in general, the simple choice to resist the urge to scratch in response to what is called the *meditator's itch*.

Imagine this practice of overcoming an impulse to swallow a liquid or scratch an itch expanding to overcoming the impulse to respond to someone's saying something unkind by saying something unkind. We can learn not to give in to the impulse to strike another. Imagine an even wider expanding to humans being able to resist the temptation to declare war or to do bodily harm to another.

We are not learning to allow another to be cruel to us. It is not a sacred act of kindness to allow another to be unkind. We are learning to respond out of genuine awareness rather than to react to an impulse to respond. As we see fully that our own sacred acts of kindness are great gifts given to ourselves, with a bit of space, you avoid knee-jerk reactions which add injury to insult.

It is not necessary for every person in the world to learn to respond with sacred acts of kindness for our world to be kinder. As Aaron, one of the teachers of the workshop series, has been quoted as having said,

If half of the negative people in your world today are met with so much kindness that it allows them to see and express their own goodness, it's going to enormously transform your world. We don't need 100% of those negative people to be transformed instantly. What if you are kind and loving to one negative person today and help them to see their own potential for goodness? And what if they tomorrow are kind to one negative person? And on it goes?

Doing Unto Others

Most of us in Western cultures learned "The Golden Rule" from the New Testament, which quotes Jesus as having said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (John 6:31 and Matthew 7:12). The idea of reciprocity is much older, and is found in the Old Testament as well, expressed in both the positive form ("Love your neighbor as yourself," Leviticus 19:18) and the negative ("eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" Exodus 21:24). Even in the negative form, however, the idea of reciprocity was considered a kindness. The natural inclination of our ancestors was to punish excessively, so "an eye for an eye" was a lot kinder than what might have been expected.

The basic concept is old enough and sufficiently wide spread (Hammurabi's Code,

Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Wicca, and writings from Ancient Egypt, Greece, and India) that the idea seems in ways inherently human. The concept has also been observed in the behavior of other primates and other mammals. Dolphins, for example, have been observed rescuing struggling swimmers.

In most ways, all of nature *seems* to support cooperation more than conflict. Even in cases where we observe what looks like conflict (lions eat lambs a lot more often than they lie down with them), an expanded perspective shows that, left to its own devices, Nature brings all into balance. Prey animals (sheep, deer, rabbits, etc.) reproduce more quickly and in larger numbers than predators (lions, tigers, wolves, etc.). In general, living things work in cooperation to maintain balance and the health of the ecosystem.

Humans seem to be the exception, which may be the reason so many of our philosophers and religious leaders felt the need to encourage us to treat each other with compassion. As a species, humans seem to have a more difficult time living with each other than other species do. We create religions and then become most annoyed that others of our kind have different ideas about what it means to be religious and/or spiritual.

In *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Jonathan Swift describes a war between the Lilliputians and the Blefuscons, who went to war over the proper way to open and eat soft-boiled eggs. The Lilliputians thought that the right way was to open the eggs at the little end, while the Blefuscons thought the big end was the right way. The war was a metaphor for the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Swift, and others of his time, would have been well aware of the history of wars fought for the sake of religion.

For a summary of the wars between Protestants and Catholics, see <http://bit.ly/3H33RQ>. For a more comprehensive survey of religions wars in general, see <http://bit.ly/BHGun> and <http://bit.ly/BHGun>. The irony is that the religions were all teaching the basic concept of doing unto others as you want others to do to you.

Religion is, of course, more a way of "selling" a war to the public than it is the reason for the war itself. People are more willing to support a war to support Christianity against the Godless Communists than they are to support a war to acquire access to natural resources, including the land itself, oil, and minerals. What gets lost in that picture is the recognition that wars have no winners. In a war, everyone loses, and the side that loses the least is declared the "winner."

This concept applies to symbolic "wars" as well as to "bullets and bombs" wars. Did "we" win the War on Poverty? Have we won the War on Cancer? Are we winning the War on Drugs? In *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie said, "The only argument you can win is the one you don't have." The same is true of wars.

This does not mean that, if threatened, you simply roll over and play dead. While that philosophy suggests that one (a person or a country) should not be the first to cast stones, it also implies that one should begin with an effort to understand the perspective of the "other." In general, others want to be listened to and have some sense that they are being understood. In *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey said, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

This doesn't always work. Chief Red Cloud of the Oglala Sioux is quoted as having said of the Whites, "They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it." If one side is determined to have an argument or a war, that may make a peaceful resolution of differences impossible.

Ultimately, the only behavior we can control is our own. Just because we believe and live by the philosophy of doing unto others as we would have others do to us doesn't mean that others will follow suit. Fortunately, behavior is usually reciprocal. This may have to do with what are called *mirror neurons* (see <http://bit.ly/THWSq1>). If we radiate peace and acceptance, those around us are likely to mirror those feelings. If we radiate fear and hostility, those around us are likely to share those feelings.

The really interesting thing about fear is that the fear is transmitted, but the object is not. If I'm afraid of spiders and you're afraid of snakes, and I become fearful because I've seen a spider, you will pick up on my fear and think that there must be a snake close by. That's the point at which it's worth asking, "Did you see a snake?" I would tell you, "No. It's a spider...." That would give you the opportunity to say, "Oh, *just* a spider. Let me take it outside...." When that was done, we could both relax.

The idea of doing unto others includes Covey's idea of seeking first to understand. Arguments and wars tend to start in situations where there's little or no understanding that others have rights and legitimate desires. You, may know the song, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me" (Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, <http://bit.ly/dbg4jl>), which captures the essence of doing unto others as we would have them do to us.

The one with greater awareness is the one who needs to go first. The interesting thing is that as you practice "going first," your awareness and sense of peace automatically increase as well.

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