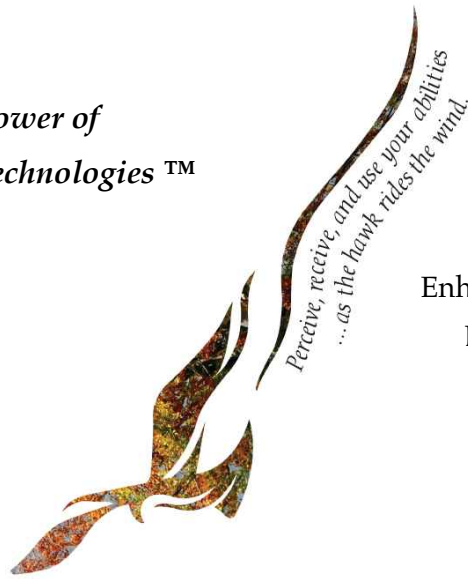


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Edited and published by Joel P. Bowman and  
Debra Basham for SCS Matters, LLC  
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## Welcome...

Here is your *Beyond Mastery Newsletter* for July 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 “Random Words of Kindness,” by Debra; and “Making Peace with Politics,” by Joel.

## *Random Words of Kindness*

In ways that may not always make sense, it is vital we learn to practice random words of kindness, especially when we are speaking about situations that are troublesome in our world, or to us personally. The area that comes to my mind most rapidly is the field of medicine. No one would deny that there are challenges, and it is easy to point fingers at the insurance companies and the drug companies.

This week I was with a client who underwent a total knee replacement. The surgery “went well” from the surgeon’s point of view. It was a bit difficult for the client to share that view immediately as she was struggling with the aftermath of the surgery itself, having difficulty shaking off the anesthesia, and riding the waves of anxiety and brain fog—all brought about by the narcotics. I felt as though I was going through déjà vu, watching myself following my surgery last November.

Thankfully, throughout the intense experience, I was aware dreams were being born within my heart again. I could not help but think of the way acupuncture can be used in place of anesthesia. I was grateful for energy medicine. And I was very aware that while I dreamed of what might be, I was called to view what is with compassion.

In the preface of *Pay Attention for Goodness' Sake*, Sylvia Boorstein confesses that her first meditation retreat took place in a very difficult setting where participants were wedged together in cramped quarters, males and females all sleeping on mattresses on the floor, without even privacy for dressing and undressing. Somehow (she says it was grace) this message on a plaque in the living room brought her back: LIFE IS SO DIFFICULT, HOW CAN WE BE ANYTHING BUT KIND? (p. xv)

When I think of all the individuals working in every aspect of the current “health care” system—including doctors who are taking chances with their licenses by walking with patients who are making choices not considered to be appropriate by the system—it is easy to see random words of kindness are called for. There are also all of those of us (like me) who are not considered part of the system.

All this was on my mind and in my heart when I spent the day at a meditation retreat titled “Awareness is our Refuge.” The retreat was led by Dorothy Ann “Dottie” Coyne, a senior teacher of the Theravadan practice of Vipassana meditation. Fortunately, we were in a lovely space, overlooking a memorial garden of flowering herbs. We had comfortable chairs and a delicious vegetarian lunch. As we sat in silence, walked in silence, ate in silence, and then reflected on the awareness we experienced, compassion was overflowing from my chest.

Later that evening, I heard the message again, through lyrics written by Pete Seeger.

When we look and we can see things are not what they should be  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
When we look and see things that should not be  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through, Hoping we’ll all pull through,  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through  
Me and you.

It’s time to turn things around, trickle up not trickle down  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
It’s time to turn things around, trickle up not trickle down  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through, Hoping we’ll all pull through,  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through  
Me and you.

And when drill, baby, drill turns to spill, baby, spill  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Yes when drill, baby, drill turns to spill, baby, spill  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through, Hoping we’ll all pull through,  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through  
Me and you.

Don’t give up don’t give in, workin’ together we all can win  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Don’t give up don’t give in, workin’ together we all can win  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through, Hoping we’ll all pull through,  
Hopin’ we’ll all pull through  
Me and you.

There’s big problems to be solved, let’s get everyone involved  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you  
There’s big problems to be solved, let’s get everyone involved  
God’s counting on me, God’s counting on you

Hopin' we'll all pull through, Hoping we'll all pull through,  
Hopin' we'll all pull through  
Me and you.

When we sing with younger folks, we can never give up hope  
God's counting on me, God's counting on you  
When we sing with younger folks, we can never give up hope  
God's counting on me, God's counting on you  
Hopin' we'll all pull through, Hoping we'll all pull through,  
Hopin' we'll all pull through  
Me and you.

Somehow, following the Gulf Coast oil spill, even when things looked so down, Seeger knew it was important to sing words that help folks to look up. I have listened several times while writing this article, and I think you may appreciate hearing him performing live ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvnsB\\_kVNYI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvnsB_kVNYI)) at a fundraiser at The City Winery in New York City on July 23, 2010.

I wish I could write music, or play the banjo, or sing. For me, I will have to be content to notice the way I can say it the way I want to see it. I can bring compassion to my lips when I tell the stories. I can look at the evidence things are getting better. In the late 1990s, when I became somewhat of a public spokesperson for holistic health and what is now called integrative medicine, most often I was trying to help folks embrace the benefits of therapeutic massage, recognizing it is not a front for prostitution. I would carry *acupuncture* needles with me so those attending lectures and workshops would not think dozens of *hypodermic* needles would be stuck in them and left for about an hour.

Today, massage therapy is practiced in salons, spas, hospitals, health & fitness centers, airports, and even city parks. Acupuncture is being integrated into traditional medical settings by family physicians, nurses, psychologists, oncologists, chiropractors, as well as continuing to be offered as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

I remember well hearing Dean Ornish, M.D., speak way back in 2008. His 35 years of research has scientifically proven that the integrative lifestyle changes he recommends can improve chronic conditions. Someone in the audience asked him if he was discouraged or encouraged about where we are [were] with integration. His response was to say that he is thrilled at how far we had come and amazed at how long it had taken. That may remind you of Pete Seeger's singing those random words of kindness, doesn't it: *Don't give up don't give in, workin' together we all can win.*

### *Making Peace with Politics*

I first became aware of politics when Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson were the presidential candidates. The year was 1952. I was 9 years old and in the third grade. One of our homework assignments was to read about the candidates and decide for whom we would vote if given the chance. My parents were for Eisenhower, so I was, too. I suspect that most of my classmates used a similar strategy for deciding.

While I don't remember much about that election, I can remember that the candidates treated each other with respect. When I review the record now, I see that the major conflict was within the Republican Party, with moderate Republicans being for Eisenhower, while the conservative branch of the party was for Robert Taft from Ohio.

Many of the conflicts we are seeing in today's politics resemble that internecine conflict.

For whatever reason, I was one of those who "liked Ike," and I have considered myself an "Eisenhower Republican" ever since. These days that makes me a Democrat. My fundamental beliefs about the role of politics have not changed. To be sure, I know a lot more about political philosophy now. I have read a lot about it from Plato, to Machiavelli, to Thomas Hobbes, and to numerous more recent authors.

Eisenhower was a conservative who still believed that government had a role to play in public life. He was the principal architect of the Interstate Highway System. Tax rates under Ike were much higher than they are now, and the economy still blossomed. More years than not, Ike balanced the budget in spite of our need to pay off the Korean War debt. Although we still had a number of national problems (Civil Rights, Labor Unions, the Joseph McCarthy hearings), most people had reason for optimism. The country seemed headed in the right direction. You may remember the TV series, "Happy Days."

Things have changed. I don't know about you, but I have found the politics of the last several years challenging. I know people who have essentially dropped out: they no longer attempt to discern which of the available candidates are worth voting for or which policies might result in a greater sense of well-being for more people. I admit that adopting that view might save a lot of wear and tear on one's psyche, but ignoring the underlying condition may contribute to core social problems getting worse, much as ignoring the oil warning light in an automobile can result in a major problem.

I am reminded of the story about a contemplative monk who moved to a remote cave where he could meditate in peace and harmony. He did that for a number of years, and then a visitor arrived—an annoying visitor, who asked a lot of questions and fiddled with the monk's "stuff." It didn't take too long before the monk was throwing a screaming fit. The visitor paused and then said, "It's easy to maintain equanimity when you don't have to deal with other people."

One way or another, we have to learn to maintain a peaceful center even when dealing with other people, even those who enter our metaphorical caves and mess with our stuff. There is some truth to the saying, "Everything is politics." If we are going to live with other humans—and, truth be told, with other living things—we need to negotiate a wide variety of agreements with others. Those negotiations are "politics."

In "days of old," the king or queen always got his or her way. Louis XIV (1638 – 1715) is reported to have said, "L'état, c'est moi" (I am the state) to signify that for the French subject to his reign, it was "his way or the highway." By the time his grandson ruled the roost, the French were tired of that philosophy of rule and introduced him to a guillotine. This, too, was "politics."

Most of the history of political machinations is neither pretty nor happy. Nevertheless, as Steven Pinker (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven\\_Pinker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven_Pinker)) has amply demonstrated in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (see <http://bit.ly/SHiLC3> and <http://bit.ly/19cUmk6>), violence—including the violence associated with politics—has been declining over time. Democrats and Republicans, Progressives and Tea Partiers, are treating each other a lot better than the French factions treated each other during the French Revolution (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution)).

Focusing on the present moment has advantages. A number of people consider it the core of spirituality. It is easy to understand why: the present moment is the only moment over which you have control. You know what it is like to talk to someone who seems to be paying attention to anything and everything other than your conversation.

In tennis and golf you must focus on the *current* shot.

When we think about our political lives, however, if we focus exclusively on the present, the day-to-day squabbles are “front and center.” The media, and especially TV, exacerbate our tendency to “awfulize,” to focus on the awful. Their job is to create a captive audience, and they often do that by amplifying the fear factor. People who are afraid will stay tuned to see whether their fears will be realized or diminished by the next political actions.

In some cases, the long view is more positive and helpful than focusing on the present. In that sense, Life is more like pool or chess than it is like tennis or golf. In pool, you do need to make the current shot, of course, but you need to make it in a way that sets up your next shot. The same is true in chess. In chess, the winner is typically the player who can plan the best strategy for a sequence of moves and correctly anticipate probably countermoves.

Whatever your political inclinations, you do well to remember the proverb, “This, too, shall pass” (for a history of the proverb, see <http://bit.ly/b1ZS>). The world’s cultures, including both the United States and the various foreign cultures with whom we are currently in conflict, are slowly but surely moving in the direction of greater democracy, equality, and freedom for all people. While that does not mean we won’t have ups and downs along the way, it provides reason for optimism.

If you know the music of Stevie Wonder, you undoubtedly remember his haunting “Heaven Is 10 Zillion Light Years Away”:

They say that heaven is 10 zillion light years away  
And just the pure at heart will walk her righteous streets someday  
They say that heaven is 10 zillion light years away  
But if there is a God, we need Him now  
“Where is your God”  
That’s what my friends ask me  
And I say it’s taken Him so long  
‘Cause we’ve got so far to come...

Tell me people  
Why can't they say that hate is 10 zillion light years away  
Why can't the light of good shine God's love in every soul  
Why must my color black make me a lesser man  
I thought this world was made for every man  
He loves us all, that's what my God tells me  
And I say it's taken Him so long  
‘Cause we've got so far to come...

But in my heart I can feel it, yeah,  
Feel His spirit wow oh woo...  
Feel it, yeah, feel His spirit...

To rightly view the rancor and squalor of today’s politics, we need to remember how far we have come. Regardless of how you define God or, more generally, “the Good,” as Pete Seeger says, “God’s countin’ on me and you.”

## *Language Tips and More*

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