

June 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

*“When someone we love dies traumatically, we feel frighteningly uprooted, markedly insecure, and our ability to trust in the world feels gravely threatened – and indeed it is gravely threatened.”* (Joanne Cacciatore, PhD, *Bearing the Unbearable*)

I must confess that I am finding it difficult to reflect and to write as my brain is so distracted by all that is happening in our world and nation, - all this on top of the Corona virus and our ongoing struggle with grief... it can feel overwhelming and overbearing at times. However, times like these, I believe, call out for reflection and connection. Quite often when I read the news it feels as if the world is unraveling before our very eyes. I imagine that this feeling has been prevalent many times in human history, but it feels very real right now and it is extremely disconcerting, to say the least. It's difficult to vocalize the sick feeling that permeated my whole body as I watched the horrific video of the killing of George Floyd, and I cannot begin to imagine how it feels to our Black brothers and sisters. I am in no way justifying or legitimizing the violent reaction in riots, looting and destruction, however, what I do understand from a grief perspective, is that in grief there can be a lot of anger and that anger can often turn to rage. In her book, *Bearing the Unbearable*, Joanne Cacciatore, PhD says, “Fear, even terror, might play an important role as it relates to the way we approach- or avoid- our own grief.”

In my own personal reflection for the past year or more I have been pondering the struggle between negative and positive energy that seems to be taking place on both an individual and global scale. I am noticing in friends and family, on social media, and in other areas how quickly and easily we can slip into a negative mindset, when everything and everyone just sucks. In this black hole of negativity, as I call it, there is nothing but darkness. When everything and everyone sucks, when we don't give a crap about ourselves or anything else anymore, when we feel rage and disdain for other human beings or groups of human beings, when we give into the lower energies of hatred, judgement, intolerance, and repulsion, then, I believe, we are in danger. I do not believe we were created or that we exist to dwell in this negative vortex. It is not what we are intended to evolve into. In fact, it can serve to dismantle all that we have achieved in positive ways through the millennia.

I share this today in an attempt to help us all, including myself, to be a bit more aware of this negative vortex, as I have deemed it, that seems to be enshrouding the entire planet at this particular time in history. As they say, 'misery loves company;' whether it be one of the news circuits, a social media platform, a neighbor, a family member or a complete stranger, we can be quickly pulled into this vortex, releasing the pent up anger we may be feeling because of our own losses and our own pain. Soon we may be dwelling in this place of darkness, negativity and judgement, a place of cruelty and outrage but not a place of healing and contentment. Often targets have an uncanny way of presenting themselves for our inner rage, - targets such as people we don't necessarily like or agree with, a driver who cuts us off, a robocall, or anything else that draws the attention of our unavoidable anger. We who are grieving need to be extra-sensitive to and aware of this, I believe, as we are most vulnerable to our emotions. Anger is certainly a part of grief, even though not everyone gets angry, it's almost always there, buried somewhere in our consciousness waiting to be released. We have every right to be angry, after all, our world has been ripped apart, nothing is the same anymore, someone we love dearly is no longer here. This anger is legitimate and even necessary, and it most certainly needs to be released. How we release it plays an especially important role in our recovery and healing.

Part of our self-care, I hope and pray, is that when we find ourselves feeling particularly negative and dark, or enraged in some way, that we can invite our brains out of this darkness and into the light. Some mornings I wake up feeling angry and I don't know why. I now make it a practice to go to one of my windows and look into the light of day and try to find something for which to be thankful. It helps that I have actively decided that I do not want to abide there; I want to have peace and contentment, I want to feel better not worse, and so I have set my intention to heal. Almost always, this simple exercise pulls me out of the vortex into a place of contentment and solace. Those are the things we all need right now, - not rage and hatred, but serenity and comfort. Let's all set our intention to dwell in the light, because that is, I believe, where all those we have loved and lost abide. That is where I want to be, and I hope you do as well.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.*

Take good care of yourselves, Kevin