Listen

LONGING, FRACTURE, HEALING, AND MATURITY: THE PATH TO SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP

Our lives are filled with longing. To fill the empty spaces in our hearts and our souls. To live lives of meaning and purpose. Of certainty and beauty. Of love fulfilled, and compassion. And of union with God and the Universe. Aching, reaching towards the heavens, usually falling short; tantalizingly short. Always at the tip of our tongues, just within reach. Requiring one additional, and seemingly impossible, stretch, right beyond the limits of our capabilities.

Such is the thirst for divine union, for mystical immersion that drives most spiritual desire, and evolution.

And missing that mark creates fracture. Fractured relationships, both with God and the Universe, but also with our selves and with others. Loves, both earthly and celestial, seemingly lost. To occasional black holes of sorrow and despair. To mental imbalances.

To divided loyalties and zero sum games. And to that very inability to stretch.

Growth seems to require fracture and suffering as part of its process. We have all experienced sublime moments when we are truly on top of the world, content and happy. And yet, fine as those crowning feelings can be, that’s not when we are stretching ourselves.

Growth seems impossible without longing and fracture, and longing again, like wheels always threatening to run over our hearts.

And yet they inch us towards healing, which is not a trip to some faraway Shangri-La, or a moment of transcendent euphoria. Acceptance is a big part of it, as is some measure of resignation, and the awareness that nothing, and no one,

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lasts. So we begin consenting to “loss” and “de-
feat,” illusory concepts that illustrate how we most
assuredly have little control. Who of us has not lost
a loved one, seemingly forever? Or has been unable
to help those whom we most treasure in spite of our
most frantic and desperate efforts?

Longing, fractures, and healing characterize our
spiritual evolutions. And they resolve into ma-
turity. Imbibing, incorporating, and integrating.
Exercising better judgement. Learning to distin-
guish what is truly important from what is not, and
discerning who we really are in the world;
and far beyond it.

Parents, partners, friends can be wonderful and
transformative aides. But spiritual companions
play a very special role. By holding space, through
deep and transformative listening. Allowing us to
unburden ourselves. Resonating and sharing. And
by reminding us that we are all in this together,
eternally bound. All of us, all in One. God and the
Universe embodied.

Through these companions we rediscover our true
selves. They become mirrors that allow us to find
long forgotten places and insights that have always
resided within, embedded in every fiber of our
being. But that we lost track of somewhere along
the way, for a multitude of reasons: in our efforts
to please others, or to quench our own egos; to
accomplish what we thought was required of us, or
to defy the laws of nature, by trying to make perma-
nent what will always remain impermanent.

May the light that sometimes flickers, but is never
extinguished, bring us love, serenity, joy and fulfil-
ment, especially in the midst of our struggles and
sorrows.

And may it guide us back to the
place where we have always
been:

our true home in the eternal.

-Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares
The following questions are offered for guidance, journaling, or meditation.

1. How would you characterize your sense of “longing”? Could you describe it in words?
2. What parts of your life might you describe as “fragmented”? A relationship? A part of your job? Something you volunteer for? Or perhaps in your own prayer life and spiritual practice...
3. Share this with a trusted spiritual director or companion. If anything arises that you would like to share with the community, please tell us at listen@sdiworld.org.
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LISTEN, LEARN, LOVE
(AND LAUGH, TOO – THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN!)

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I am not a light worker.
I am a dark worker.
I come alive by night.
I dig in the earth.
I wear my miner’s helmet
with a beam from the forehead
so I can see my way to dig.
I am the miner and the canary.
I work in silence.
Dreams are my speech.
The body is my newspaper.
I work in the dark,
unraveling, unfolding,
de-veining, uncurling.
I eat breath and drink tears.
I am not a light worker.
I am a dark worker:
awake
while all the others sleep.

Diane Elliot

Rabbi Diane Elliot is based in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she serves as teacher on embodied Judaism and a spiritual director. She recently published This Is the Day, Ha-Yom Yom, Poems inspired by the practice of counting the Omer (Hadassa Word Press, 2017).
The longing for wisdom is primal and we sense our need for mentors in the Christian life. There is a way to find wisdom and share it.

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May the light that sometimes flickers, but is never extinguished, bring us love, serenity, joy and fulfilment, especially in the midst of our struggles and sorrows.

And may it guide us back to the place where we have always been:

our true home in the eternal.
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What’s incomplete in me seeks refuge
in blackberry bramble and beech trees,
where creatures live without dogma
and water moves in patterns
more ancient than philosophy.
I stand still, child eavesdropping on her
elders.
I don’t speak the language
but my body translates best it can,
wakening skin and gut, summoning
the long kinship we share with everything.

Laura Grace Weldon

Laura Grace Weldon has written poetry with nursing home residents, used poetry to teach conflict resolution,
and painted poems on beehives although her work appears in more customary places such as journals. Connect
with her at lauragraceweldon.com
Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdiworld.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions, and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at www.sdiworld.org.

Wild Dancing
Embraced by Untamed Love
by Janice Edwards, R.S.M.

“This is a rare and original book, full of wisdom about the spiritual life, human suffering, prayer, dark contemplation as well as light, and experiences of union with nature, other persons, and with God.” — Margaret Farley, RSM

“Sr. Janice will captivate you with her refreshingly honest memoir of transformation through suffering into union with Love. It will teach you more about the fine art of spiritual direction. Most of all it will invite you to partner with God in the jubilant Dance of the universe with ever increasing measures of creativity, generosity, surrender and awe.” — Ellie Stratton, Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction

“Writing in a deeply personal and accessible style, Janice Edwards, a very experienced spiritual director, describes her deepest experience with God/Jesus, whom she names ‘Wild Dancing’ or more simply ‘Love.’” — Janet Ruffing, RSM

“As I read Sr. Janice Edwards new book, I began to wonder if Pierre Teilhard de Chardin himself had commissioned her to write it…. Her vision of love is just as cosmic as Teilhard’s, but it is also a love that is clearly stronger than debilitating disease, than rape, than injustice, than the most intense physical suffering, all of which she has known personally.” — Brian Swimme

“This is a book to bring genuine hope into a world overshadowed by despair.” — Margaret Silf

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Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground
and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.
He is with them in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with dust.
Put off thy holy mantle and even like
him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance?
Where is this deliverance to be found?
Our master himself has joyfully taken
upon him the bonds of creation;
he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and
leave aside thy flowers and incense!
What harm is there if thy clothes
become tattered and stained?
Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

-Rabindranath Tagore
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