

The Awakening

A time comes in your life when you finally get it—when, in the midst of all your fears and insanity, you stop dead in your tracks and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out “ENOUGH!”

Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on. And, like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears and begin to look at the world through new eyes.

This is your awakening.

You realize it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change or for happiness, safety, and security to come galloping over the next horizon.

You come to terms with the fact that you are neither Prince Charming nor Cinderella. And that, in the real world, there aren't always fairy-tale endings (or beginnings, for that matter). And that any guarantee of “happily ever after” must begin with you—and in the process, a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.

You awaken to the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will always love, appreciate, or approve of who or what you are...and that's OK. They are entitled to their own views and opinions.

And you learn the importance of loving and championing yourself—and in the process, a sense of new-found confidence is born of self-approval. You stop complaining and blaming other people for the things they did to you (or didn't do for you) and you learn that the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected.

You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say, and that not everyone will always be there for you, and that it's not always about you.

So you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself—and in the process, a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers and you begin to accept people as they are and overlook their shortcomings and human frailties—and in the process, a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness.

You realize that much of the way you view yourself and the world around you is as a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche.

And you begin to sift through all the junk you've been fed about how you should behave, how you should look, how much you should weigh, what you should wear, what you should do for a living, how much money you should make, what you should drive, how and where you should live, who you should marry, the importance of having and raising children, and what you owe your parents, family, and friends.

You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. And you begin reassessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for.

You learn the difference between wanting and needing and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with—and in the process, you learn to go with your instincts. You learn that it is truly in giving that we receive. And that there is power and glory in creating and contributing and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a “consumer” looking for your next fix.

You learn that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life.

You learn that you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world and that you can't teach a pig to sing.

You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO.

You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that martyrs get burned at the stake.

The Awakening *continued*

Then you learn about love. How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving and when to walk away.

You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be.

You stop trying to control people, situations, and outcomes.

And you learn that alone does not mean lonely.

You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring your needs.

You learn that feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK, and that it is your right to want things and to ask for the things you want—and that sometimes it is necessary to make demands.

You come to the realization that you deserve to be treated with love, kindness, sensitivity, and respect—and you won't settle for less.

And you learn that your body really is your temple. And you begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin to eat a balanced diet, drink more water, and take more time to exercise.

You learn that being tired fuels doubt, fear, and uncertainty and so you take more time to rest.

And, just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul. So you take more time to laugh and to play.

You learn that, for the most part, you get in life what you believe you deserve—and that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for and that wishing for something to happen is different from working toward making it happen.

More importantly, you learn that in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline, and perseverance.

You also learn that no one can do it all alone—and that it's OK to risk asking for help.

You learn the only thing you must truly fear is the greatest robber baron of all: FEAR itself.

You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know that whatever happens you can handle it and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live life on your own terms. And you learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom.

You learn that life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve, and that bad things sometimes happen to unsuspecting, good people. On these occasions you learn to not personalize things. You learn that God isn't punishing you or failing to answer your prayers. It's just life happening.

And you learn to deal with evil in its most primal state—the ego.

You learn that negative feelings such as anger, envy, and resentment must be understood and redirected or they will suffocate the life out of you and poison the universe that surrounds you.

You learn to admit when you are wrong and to build bridges instead of walls.

You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted, things that millions of people upon the earth can only dream about: a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, a long hot shower.

Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself and you make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never, ever settle for less than your heart's desire.

And you hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind. And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting, and to stay open to every wonderful possibility.

Finally, with courage in your heart and God by your side, you take a stand, you take a deep breath, and you begin to design as best you can the life you want to live.