

## **To Receive is to Give (this heading is not a mistake!)**

This month's message has been inspired by a dear, dear friend who has been emotionally and physically exhausted recently after giving a truck load of loving care to a whole range of friends and relatives. The key problem was that she never stopped to receive any kind of nurturing for herself in order to recharge her batteries. Does that sound familiar to you? It certainly rang a big bell with me.

When I was a child, my mother would always smile kindly on me if I performed some helpful role around the house, but she would also frequently berate me, and even shame me, for being a 'spoilt', 'selfish' little girl. By the way, my mother had suffered from exceptionally harsh parenting during her own childhood and gave me many priceless gifts, so I certainly do not blame her for the way she parented me.

However, partly because of this early programming, I grew up to believe that it was truly virtuous to give selflessly to others, but selfish to ask others to give me what I wanted, or even needed, in terms of emotional or physical support. However, after many years of spiritual training and de-programming, I now see the whole issue of giving and receiving quite differently.

My change of mind started in the midst of a brief 'spiritual emergency' that I experienced nearly 20 years ago. I was behaving so strangely that my cousin rightly took me to A&E in Manchester to try to get me some emergency psychiatric help for what medics term a 'psychotic breakdown'. I had to wait ages before a doctor came to examine me and whilst I was sitting there, I saw a lot of injured patients waiting for urgent attention. But because I was in a very altered state of consciousness, I believed that all these injured individuals were actors who were only pretending to be injured and in pain in order to help the doctors and nurses in A&E to learn how to become really compassionate and effective healers.

Strangely enough, once I came back to a so-called normal state of consciousness, I still held onto that particular 'crazy' insight. So now, sometimes, when I am teaching a Tai Chi class or

running some kind of spiritual workshop, I look around at all of my so-called students and silently remind myself that they are most probably highly evolved souls (much more evolved than me) who have volunteered to play the role of my students this lifetime so that I can learn a load of spiritual lessons and skills. So in this sense, although it might look as though my students are receiving a gift from me, I am the one who is really receiving a priceless gift from them, because without any students, how could I possibly play the role of teacher and learn so much from it?

Although I now understand that in so many ways 'to receive is to give', I am still not that good at asking others for help. If I am in a *lot* of emotional or physical pain I do sometimes ask Gloria if she would mind giving me an energy healing. But after just a few minutes of receiving her incredibly powerful and compassionate healing, I usually start to feel uncomfortable and ask her to stop. However, I do at least recognise on an intellectual level that by receiving healing energy from Gloria I am giving her the gift of enhancing her role as a powerful healer and assisting her to experience the joy of being truly helpful in this troubled world. I just need to let that understanding go deeper so that I can also *feel* the joy of giving to her as I receive from her.

Another facet of 'to receive is to give' is that in our modern world, far too many of us are running around on empty. Mothers, carers, teachers, nurses, doctors, healers, mentors etc. etc. all give out so much and yet hardly ever stop to recharge their batteries, or if they do, they feel guilty about taking even a short restorative break from their caring role. This is madness!

Please believe me when I tell you that you have a deep well full of love and compassion within your own heart. However, unless you pause regularly to fill up that well, it is going to run dry sooner or later. At this point, you will be giving out 'empty compassion' or even 'resentful care'. This type of care is unfortunately worse than useless, because if we care for anyone with resentment in our hearts, the dark energy of that fearful emotion is going to pollute the very person whom we are trying to help! So although we may think that we are being supremely virtuous by continuing to care for others when we are either emotionally or physically drained, we are actually being stupid.

So this month I would really like you to come up with at least three ways that you can take much better care of yourself, particularly if you spend a lot of time caring for others - which I happen to know a lot of you do! Don't just write a list of ways that you can nurture yourself this month. Write the list and then do what it says - no 'maybe when-' and no 'Yes, but'. If, as you take some nurturing time for yourself this month, you notice a nasty voice in your head telling you that you are being selfish, lazy or that you do not deserve a nurturing treat of some kind, tell that voice to take a running jump.

YOU ARE SO WORTH being loved and supported unconditionally by the whole universe. You just do not totally believe this yet and so you suffer in the name of trying to be good. Stop doing this to your beautiful self. God - or Life Itself if you do not like the word God - loves you beyond your wildest dreams and longs for you to realise that you are totally worthy of receiving infinite support and care. Moreover, it is only by opening ourselves up fully to divine love and compassion that we can finally care for others without ever running out of steam.

I am certainly nowhere near there yet, but I have witnessed one or two true saints or bodhisattvas in this world who give themselves to others 100 per cent all of the time, without ever running dry of true compassion. How do they do it? They top themselves up moment to moment with divine love and light. They drink from the well that never runs dry. They constantly connect to Love Itself so that they can extend this out-of-this world compassion out into our loveless planet, without ever getting the slightest bit tired or burnt-out.

I know that most of us still have a lot of evolving to do before we get anywhere near that level of effortless selfless service in our troubled world. But I also know that unless we recognise our own current limitations and take plenty of time out from the world to recharge our own batteries, we will burn out or become resentful of those who need our help. This resentment will then slow down our soul's progress towards full awakening. So please, let's agree to nurture ourselves first and foremost this month so that we will always

have a full tank of love and compassion to extend effortlessly to all our fragile friends and loved ones.

Peggy Foster  
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