

Believe in Miracles!

Gloria and I have just returned from another miraculous week's retreat in Assisi. I love Assisi so much that I always expect miracles to happen whenever I stay there, and lo and behold, they always do. Is Assisi miraculous, or is it my state of mind when I am in Assisi that is miraculous? I'm not sure. It is probably a mixture of the two. Assisi definitely has very high spiritual energy, and David Nowe, who led our retreat, also has amazing energy. But some people go to Assisi and feel virtually nothing. So I am sure my exceptionally positive expectation of my time there has a lot to do with how wonderful Assisi always is for me.

Reflecting on my miraculous visits to Assisi reminded me of a powerful statement in Byron Katie's *A Mind At Home with Itself*:

There's a law in this world: when you think life is so good that it can't get any better, it has to.

Wow! That is really quite something to contemplate on isn't it? Most of us, most of the time do not think about our lives like this. Even when life is going pretty well for a short while, consciously or subconsciously, we are waiting for something bad to come along and spoil it all. We fall in love for example, and for a while, everything is so blissful. But then we entertain just one doubt in our mind such as, 'Maybe he/she is beginning to go off me?' and the bliss disappears pretty quickly.

Now the key to leading a wonderful life is definitely not trying to suppress all of our fears or doubts. You can try doing this with all your might, and I can more or less guarantee that fearful thoughts will still pop into your mind from time to time - like totally unwelcome guests at your birthday party!

Similarly, the art of positive thinking will only get you so far, because most of us who try our best to think positively about life are just covering over a much deeper, stronger belief system that insists that life is painful, or at the very least disappointing. Which thought is going to win? A superficial attempt to always look on the bright side of life or a much, much more established mind programme that insists that life is painful?

So what to do? Well I do have one or two suggestions for attracting more miracles into our lives. The first is to cultivate sincere gratitude for all that we already have as we go about our daily life. For example, even if we have a headache, we can say a prayer of gratitude for the existence of Paracetamol, or the kindness of a friend making us a soothing cup of tea. When we are having a good day, we can just pause momentarily and say a quiet 'Thank You!' from the depths of our heart. In Assisi for example, I was so thankful for the beauty of the natural world surrounding me as I walked through some quiet woods near the town centre that I actually started to sob with gratitude.

My second suggestion is to begin to notice when a fearful or depressing thought has popped into your mind uninvited and then to tell it kindly to get lost –or at the very least simply refuse to believe it. For example, you are feeling full of the joys of spring one day and then you notice a twinge in your knee and the thought, ‘I am getting arthritis. I am going to become a cripple!’ pops into your mind. Just take a nice slow calming breath and then say to yourself, ‘Nonsense!’ It is simply a passing pain of no lasting consequence.’ Then give your knee a loving, healing hug for good measure.

My third suggestion is that you spend at least a minute or two at the beginning of every day reminding yourself that you can choose to spend the day in love and peace or you can choose to let any little thing disturb your peace of mind. Then decide, ‘Just for today, I am going to choose peace over conflict and chaos.’ Setting your intention firmly like this soon after you wake up will really help you to notice whenever you have given into any temptation to indulge in egoic fear or irritation so that you can get yourself back on track to enjoying a beautiful day.

My final suggestion this month is to be careful not to insist that the world has to be exactly the way your personality-self wants it to be before you will be happy or at peace. For example, this time when I was in Assisi, I really wanted to see the albino donkey that I fell in love with in May. I even bought him an apple as token of my undying love for him. But when we walked up the path where we saw him last May, he wasn’t there!

For a minute or two, I was quite disappointed, but then I told myself, ‘Magic moments in life can never be repeated. Let it go and just wait for a different kind of magic to come to you.’ A day or so later, I was meditating in the woods and felt as though all the beautiful little violet flowers that surrounded me were exchanging pure, love energy with me. Bliss!!! The universe had given me another totally unexpected gift that way exceeded my expectations.

And on that happy note, I would like to wish you many blissful autumnal moments throughout this wonderful month of October.

Peggy Foster
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