

“..BUT THAT’S ANOTHER STORY!”



My Autistic Insight on...
Einstein's Brain,
Giving Good Blog, &
Occasional Distractibility*

Author of Jack's Fantastic World!

LORIN NEIKIRK

(and Compelling Logic, of Course!)

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By Lorin Neikirk

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Cover design by Lorin Neikirk

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 1442130539

EAN-13 9781442130531

For more information about Lorin Neikirk and Aspie Friendly,

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Autism. *Understand it.*

*To the one who knows
all of my stories...*



Ami

(...and loves me anyway.)

INTRODUCTION OR FORWARD

What's the difference between an introduction and a forward?

One might say that an introduction is by someone other than the author, but does it need to be? Similarly, does a forward need to be by the author? It's this kind of shit that drives me crazy. (But that's another story!)

The point is, I want to say a few things before you start reading.

This is a collection of my writing, much of which I understand have been a benefit to other people in one way or another. Some "chapters" are funny (I hear!), some are thought-provoking, and others seem a little... pointless? Here's the thing about that: I rarely do things without a point in mind, regardless of what it seems at first. But when you can read a chapter that you thought was "pointless" and end up with a new perspective? I've accomplished my goal.

I received a great compliment as I was deciding whether or not to pull this book together. A good friend, Jeffery Bottoms, had been trying to convince me that I should, and in doing so, he told

me something that I didn't realize; what I write for fun has impacted others' lives.

Wow.

No, I mean it... Wow! I have published educational books, written articles, and I have done consulting for quite a while now, but I never really stopped to think that something I do for fun could really be a positive thing for others. Helpful, hopefully. Entertaining, maybe. That's good. (Entertaining is good, right?) I like to be helpful and I also like to entertain, so I began to consider that which I never permitted to, uh... permit myself to entertain.

But although I have always secretly wished I could just write about whatever came to mind, it didn't ever seem exactly... practical. That's why I began my blog on Blogger, *A Panoptic Life*.

I am a life-long student of human behavior. Motivations, interpersonal dynamics and relationships fascinate me. But so do other things. I can not promise that this will be a book with a consistent theme; in fact, I will promise you that it will be diverse in its topics! What I can say is that it's genuine, often tongue-in-cheek, and primarily an exploration of life. I didn't say

I was an expert in human behavior, I am a student. That means I am still learning.

And now, a few practical notes about the pages that follow...

First, these chapters are not necessarily in the chronological order in which they were written. This may seem insignificant to you, but I am an Aspie (that means I have Aspergers, which is on the autism spectrum), so being out of order is uncomfortable to me if I don't mention it upfront. (For those of you who are still learning about autism, for instance parents or adults in relationships with an Aspie, maybe this will help to shed some light on why these types of autistic proclivities exist.) Let's say I write, on page 7, that I have written six books, but on page 32, I say that I have just published my first book. As this book is edited, there may be other reasons to put the one chapter in front of the other, but it might mean some "continuity errors" down the road. (Follow me now?) Probably not a big deal to you, the reader, but I needed to mention it in order to feel better. (Phew.)

Another thing is that if you read my blog, you will notice that the chapters in this book vary slightly from what you have already read. Sometimes for clarity and other times simply the exercise of my creative license... Like most (if not all) writers, the more I read what I write, the more I edit it. People are

dynamic beings, and so is a narrative literary piece. If you know a writer, you have seen this in action. So compared to the same posts in blog-form, expect a slight variance from the original verbiage. (Yes, verbiage, not verbage.)

Another difference... (And a little advance warning of sorts.) Chapters cover "grown-up" topics like relationships, without a lot of concern about censoring or filtering. I wouldn't consider this explicit, but there may be a few more four-letter words than in the blog. I guess you might think of it as chatting with your BFF. (Do guys have BFFs? Well, maybe in a literal sense...) Suffice it to say that this is not a children's book, and when adult BFFs chat, sometimes they use four-letter words, so I'm ok with that. (And I'm guess you'll be ok too. If not, well, then... close your eyes when you read it.)

Well, there's nothing quite like rocking the boat... So keep reading, and rock on with your bad self!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a lot of people who made this book possible. (And many of them don't even know it!)

First I'd like to thank my Vickery Street girlfriends in Dallas: Sheridan, Joni, Deborah, Laura, and of course, Steven. When I decided to publish a free newsletter called *A Positive Note*, they actually read it. Not only that, but they liked it, talked about it and spread the word. That turned into my old website aPositiveNote.com, which grew to include a blog on aPanopticLife.blogspot.com. Even though *A Positive Note* is gone, My Vickery Girlfriends were the first to really read that which I wanted to write, "just for fun", and their praise propelled me.

I want to thank my sons Addison and Chili for fostering my writing style. I practically force-read the draft of the first chapter of *Jack's Fantastic World* to them, after which Addison said, "Mom! Keep reading! Is there another chapter?!" He was so excited that we made that a family project. I learned that my narrative style has entertainment value, and it has since become a sort of signature for me. Chili also has a fabulous sense of humor, and he laughs at my jokes, even when I think they are

dumb... That keeps me laughing, too, which is important when struggling through the creative process! My boys are my treasures. They are my ultimate reason to write.

I’d like to thank a couple guys I’ve never met, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, for writing *The Aladdin Factor*. It was page 64 of that book, that told me HOW to go for my dreams. Less than 5 months later, I published seven books, completed the eighth, with more on the way. I also have begun an exciting network for Aspies and others on the Autism Spectrum, called *Aspie Friendly*. Without Mark and Jack’s vision, and *The Aladdin Factor*, I never would have seen what is so clear now: I need to write, not only for fun, but for to help others, and as my way of earning a living, and that is how ALL of my dreams are coming true. I’m already well on my way! So to Mr. Canfield and Mr. Hansen, this grateful fan sends a very big *Thank You!*

I want to thank every person who thought they knew what was best for me, and told me what I should and should not do. As a result, I have stayed true to myself and use my own brain for thinking. I learned that those who don’t have a real and genuine concern for me as a person should not be enabled to determine the course of the life I am living. This happens to include those who discredited me (often in quite uncaring or insulting ways), because they were not capable of

understanding my logic, or problem-solving methods. I never thought I would say this, but *"Thanks a million"*.

More importantly than that, a ginormous **"THANK YOU!"** goes to all of the wonderful, encouraging individuals in my life who believed in me, and said I should go after my dreams. I have fed off of your positive energy, your love and praise, and I want to make you proud. And to that one amazing person in my life who told me I was perfect, and anyone saying otherwise is wrong... I have this special message for you:

On the darkest days when I feel like a nothing, and I feel like hiding from the world in the dark corners within myself, it is you who comes looking for me, finds me, and lifts me up and into the light again. Your support humbles me. Every day.

Lastly, I want to thank my friend Jeffery Bottoms, who encouraged me to pull this together. From the word "Go" he believed that my words were an inspiration to other Aspies. Those words from him were an inspiration to me.

Thank you to each of you. You are truly bad to the bone!

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(That means it's perfectly OK to jump around!)

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*“...Nothing is as perfect as it may seem,
but nothing is as random, either....”*

A TOILET, RE-GIFTING, AND CHAOS THEORY: SPOT'S CLOSE CALL

Well, this has got to be the pickiest fish I've ever known."

No, really. It is.

I actually said these words aloud as I shamelessly catered to my fish, Spot.

Spot is picky about his fishbowls, apparently.

"The next damned fish is going to be named Edward again. I loved that fish..."

It was only after I had gone through the process of changing Spot's bowl into the smaller bowl (that was never used as a fishbowl, if you want the truth), that I realized that I told my oldest son, Addison, that I think the next fish would be named Ralph. (Or was it Ralf? Hell, I don't remember.)

The point is, as I awoke this morning to my dripping with icky-stuff, coughing up small animals that rhyme with smog, not to mention sniffing and snorting noises that would make even a

teenaged boy cringe, I was sure that it was a dead fish's lifeless death energy which was making me sick. My dead fish's energy. Spot.

Poor thing.

(Cut me some slack, would you? No, I didn't really believe that. When I don't feel good I get flippant and a little cynical. Can we move on now?)

As it happens, Spot wasn't dead. Oh joy.

As long as I've had this particular fish, I've gotten to know a little about him. I've only had this one for a few months, but that is long enough to know that this one is a pain in my ass.

(As far as fish go, at least.)

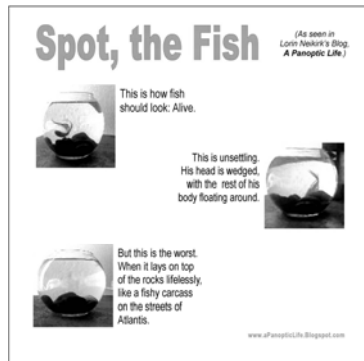
You see, I have a large fish bowl that is in the shape of a fish. I don't normally go for "cute" in my home décor, but this bowl is special.

I was working at a place at Christmastime in 2005 when I got to participate in a secret Santa gift exchange. When I unwrapped a large crystal fish fishbowl, I thought my personal Santa Claus had actually taken the time to figure out what I'd like. Turns out

that it wasn't exactly like that. A couple of comments were made (such as, "wow, THAT looks familiar!!"), leading me to the decision that this had likely been re-gifted to me.

That's ok. A gift is a gift, after all, and I loved it. I like fish. (I also like sushi, but that's another story...)

So this Big Fish fishbowl is what I have used for each of my fish since. Including Spot. That picky thing...



Spot was interested in the bowl when he was first plopped into it. He was cool with it for a while. But I guess old habits die hard, because before long, he wanted to hang out at the far "corner" of the fish fishbowl. (It was near the tail of the bowl, of course. By the fish fishbowl's ass. Makes sense now, doesn't it?)

I haven't mentioned that this fish is lazy, too, have I? Well, in truth all bettas (and I don't know about other fish), sleep a large portion of the day. But this guy? Oh goodness. He must be old or something. Set in his ways. Like most bettas, he wedges his little fishy head in between the stones, and likes it that way.

Sleeps like that. But this one sleeps so much that he seems dead, and way too often for my liking.

Every time I feed him, I shake the bowl just a little, to see if he wiggles with life.

Today I was sure (again) that the fish had passed on. So I braced myself for the flush and made a decision about what to name the next one. Edward.

Now my old fish, Edward, I loved. I named that fish after Edward Lorenz, who was the scientist (meteorologist, actually) who came up with Chaos Theory. You know, non-linear dynamics? (I love this shit...)

Chaos theory states, essentially, that even in "perfection" there are imperfections which create instabilities. Likewise, in what appears to be great regularity, there is also imperfection. Most people have heard of the Butterfly Effect. That is where this comes into play. Basically, a very tiny instability in data can eventually throw something off its course by a wide margin. If I were to sum it up I'd say...

Nothing is as perfect as it may seem, but nothing is as random, either. It's labeling something as "perfect" or "random" which is

the problem, not the inherent attributes of the "thing" in the first place.

Anyway, this is not about non-linear dynamics. It's about fish.

(And if you want the truth, it's not really about fish either.

So, much to my, uh, delight...? (Yes, delight...) Spot came alive on our way to his toilet grave. So we took a detour. To the kitchen. To switch him into a new bowl. This is when I decided that this has got to be the pickiest fish I have ever known.

This fish became so accustomed to his Walmart world, that he was unable to open himself up to the possibility which was before him. He was used to a small cup. But given room to swim, he feels more comfortable in the small corner, in the ass of a crystal fish.

My previous fish grew to appreciate the space. Contrary to what many people think, bettas can, and do like to, swim around. But not Spot.

Well, sometimes. Like now, for instance. I think his gills must be burning, since I'm typing about him...

So, am I doing Spot a favor, by putting him in a small bowl? This plain, round bowl isn't a lot to write home about, after all...

Know what happened when I made the switch? That fish swam around the side of the bowl, and then promptly wedged that little fishy head of his again.

You don't know this, but I have a fish that actually got his head wedged too tightly and could not surface. That led to his demise. So, as instinctual as it might be to do the wedging thingie, I'm a little uncomfortable with it, I must admit. (...But that's another story.)

So putting the damned thing back into the environment that he was more used to (i.e. a smaller bowl) didn't keep him up and running, so to speak.

Although he does seem happier.

You see, if the fish is going to do what he wants, he'll do what he wants, regardless of where you put him. Try to change his environment to get him to do what you want, and he will not change... He will simply adapt to do what he wants within the new environment. Might Spot have changed? Sure. I've seen plenty of fish change. They decided that the fish fishbowl was the place to be! Yes, fish do change.

(And so do people.)

But this fish is the way he is. He likes his bowl, he likes his head wedged between rocks, and he likes to sleep all damned day long. Seems like he's going to do that no matter which bowl he's in. I guess you could say Spot has a healthy share of fishy-self-confidence.

The fish does what he likes, and doesn't pay any mind to being himself, regardless to what happens around him. He is true to who he is. (You know, who he is as a fish.) When you think about it, that's pretty cool.

Maybe I like this fish after all.

*"...the relationship of supply and demand
does not apply to love. Even with the
copious abundance of love, the demand for it
is still higher than anything else..."*

THAT STRANGE LOVE STUFF

Ok. So I have Aspergers. So what.

The funny thing about (now) knowing that this is the reason for the way I think, is coming across what "other people" have to say about it. For instance...

I frequently come across "experts" who say that people with autism (that includes Aspergers, of course) don't have emotions. Or they don't feel them the same way others do. That simply isn't true. Those who have Aspergers do have emotions. Lots of them! In fact, so many that our emotions can be individually defined in ways that others might not think of. What is different is our response to emotions. The emotions, themselves, exist in the way they exist in neuro-typicals (NT). But those of us with Aspergers (AS) think of our emotions differently.

Here's an example...

I was participating in an interview recently about love. The question was posed to me, "Do you ever have feelings of hate for the one you love?" (Paraphrasing.) My response? "No, it's always love. Sometimes I get very mad, but it's because of love, not

hate. If I didn't love him, I'd have feelings of indifference, not anger." That seemed logical to me! The truth is that I am still perplexed as to why my answer seemed to come as any kind of surprise to my benevolent interviewer. Maybe he didn't realize that the person in front of him could differentiate between love, anger and indifference.

(Or perhaps he hadn't really considered the incongruity of his question in the first place, but that's another story...!)

So as a person with AS, I can confidently say that yes, I have emotions. It's the NT response to them which is confusing, really. Consider love. A very interesting concept, that strange love stuff.

Love is the thing in this world with the greatest abundance. It can be found, bought, cultivated, designed, improved upon, grown, changed, and made. And unlike other things, which are prized for their exclusivity, the relationship of supply and demand does not apply to love. Even with the copious abundance of love, the demand for it is still higher than anything else on earth.

Interestingly enough, one would think that having such a treasure is like hitting lotto. But it's not. It's almost not even practical!

It causes sickness, blindness, narrow-sightedness, and temporary insanity, combined with memory loss. Add to that hair loss, heart palps, dizziness, withdrawal symptoms... And in circumstances where the ones who love us don't care for the one we love, it also causes hearing loss. It makes us stay in bed all day, and stay up all night. What a terrible thing, this "love"! But with all this malaise, we can't seem to be able to live without it. And when we have it, we can't get enough of it. Am I the only one who finds this strange?

It turns accountants into poets, turns old women into vixens, men into dogs, children into adults, the weakened into criminals, and parents into teenagers again. The word is a noun and a verb, and describes an element between man and woman, parent and child, strangers, teachers and students, and abstract concepts as a whole.

The concept of love is one which is so loosely defined, and yet we personify it to the point of its manifestation in imbued nature elements. The moon, the stars, the sun and the grass... And it is also the ultimate description of God Himself. God is Love. And yet even wars have been fought in the name of love. (So I hear...)

This is some crazy stuff, this love. Very strange, indeed. And yet, I am one of the many who see it as the Quixotic: Good Life Made Even Better.

Perhaps "love" is not described best by how we feel, what we say and certainly not what we do. It can't be defined by what we think, how it's contained, used, and/or whether or not it is recycled, or thrown carelessly into a heap of trash. Perhaps "love" can be described as Joining Together. It is only when we join two things that love can exist in the first place. "What about 'self love'?" You must consider that even self love is joining together. It is the joining of one's belief and his/her desire to be loved. No, there must be 2 elements, concrete or not, for there to be love.

So I will repeat: Just because one has Aspergers does not mean s/he does not have or feel emotions. It does not even mean that they do not feel their emotions the same way. Perhaps my Aspergers affords me the ability of clarity of thought, the ability to see my world through not rose colored glasses, but instead through Panoptic Spectacles.

(Pun intended.)

*"...an environment where the truth may be
openly expressed. This is where the beauty of
relationships is anchored. This is
the crux of love..."*

TRUTH OF SELF

Truth. It's a fascinating thing, actually...

In the "Aspie Culture" it is keenly understood that NTs (neuro-typicals) say things they don't exactly mean. (And vice-versa.) Now is this being untruthful? Well, it depends on who you ask. If you ask me, I'd say "not exactly..."

I, personally, believe that it's more important to say what you think, while being as tactful as possible. If I don't like my friend's short haircut, I'd say, "Like it? Well, I really liked you with long hair." It's not lying, it's making a positive remark out of a negative situation?

"Do those jeans make you look fat? Actually, I thought the skirt was very flattering."

"Did I like your painting? Well, I can say I've never seen color used that way. And your strokes seem very well-thought out."

"Do I think he's handsome? No one can compare to you in my eyes."

"Do I like your poetry? ...Uh..."

(Well, I don't know how I'd answer that one. Maybe something like, "It's the most interesting poem about carpet lint that I've ever read.")

You get the idea.

Now, these aren't lies. Not even little white lies. They are all 100% completely honest responses. It's a simple matter of directing the information down a different path. It "saves feelings" without dishonesty.

But my blog today is not about dishonesty, lies or deceit. It's not even about "honesty", really. It's about TRUTH. Specifically, Truth of Self.

Truth is something which can not be altered. Regardless of how one presents it, truth is truth. If a friend asks me if I like her buzz cut, the truth is that I do not like it. I preferred to look at her hair when it was longer than 1/8th of an inch. Regardless of how I present the information to her, the truth is that I do not like her hair. A typical example of what could be honesty vs. a "little white lie". (Sort of typical, anyway.)

Truth is that which exists, without regard to subjectivity. Truth is unequivocal and simple. Honesty is the expression of that which is true. Hence, my comment about the skirt being very

flattering is an honest response. Why is this confusing? It doesn't need to be, but it is for some reason.

Let's extrapolate the ideas of honesty, dishonesty and truth. And we can't talk about the three without tossing in trust, of course. But quite possibly not in the way that one might imagine...

If truth is what exists, regardless of its reference, and honesty is the expression of that which is true, then naturally dishonesty is the expression of that which contradicts the truth. Notice that I did not say "that which is untrue". I'm going to intentionally digress here for just a minute. There's something I want to say about that:

We have all heard, for example, the (not very colloquial) colloquialism: Innocent until proven guilty. Most of us seem to believe that the reason for this is "fairness", but that's not accurate. True, that it is "fair", but it is only fair because it is not possible to provide evidence of a negative. You can not prove that a person is "un-innocent". When a person is on trial, it is their innocence that is in question. If someone is proven "guilty", it has been demonstrated that it has been proven that innocence is not possible. (If, for instance, it would not be possible for a person to be innocent if they were seen killing someone.) Let's take this a step further:

If one is expressing a truth, it is the truth which is demonstrated. Not the lack of truth. Another example is as follows: How does one prove a lack of pay? By providing check stubs? I have seen this in governmental agencies. (God, please help them...!) The issue was that the lack of income needed to be "proven". How can one "prove" that they have no pay by showing check stubs? That is contradictory of the truth. If there were stubs, there would be pay, now wouldn't there?

When I was recently diagnosed, the initial phone-intake person told me that they could not diagnose adult Aspergers if the person had not been in special education in their childhood. A diagnosis is the first formal admittance of a [disability, disorder, whatever]. How can one have previously had a diagnosis (putting them in special education) when the first diagnosis has not yet occurred? A similar theme is when I heard that they needed to prove that I "have always had Aspergers". (That's like asking a person from China if they have always been Chinese!) If you have it now, you had it then. You either have it or you don't. Period.

So we've established that untruths do not really exist. Deceit, yes. But nothing can be "untrue". Something can be false. False is not the same as untrue. This goes back to my original point.

Truth exists, no matter how we try to cover, sugar-coat, conceal or mutilate it. The expression of that which contradicts the truth (“No, I LOVE your new almost-bald haircut!”) is a lie, or a false statement.

But didn’t I say something about trust? Ah yes...!

Trust is not only about whether or not you believe a person is being truthful or not. Like faith, trust has to be given willingly and without doubt, even in the appearance of that which contradicts one’s belief. If that came out confusing, try this on: Trust is about choosing your belief, despite your perception.

In this example, one might say they “trust” that their child is not sneaking out, but if there is any doubt that they are, the person has not shifted their belief. Trust is not in place. Trust, real trust, would be if you find the windows unlocked and dead grass on the carpet in a trail from the window to your kid’s bed, and you try to figure out what the heck else could have happened, because you “believe” that s/he did not sneak out. Now, if the kid did, then the parent may not trust the child. (Either again, or anymore. Whichever would apply.) But the decision (whether conscious or unconscious) to trust is in the hands of the parent. A child can not take away trust. S/he can only do something which causes the parent to experience a lack of trust.

But this is not what I'm talking about. The trust that I like best is different. The trust I'm talking about is that between two people which creates an environment where the truth may be openly expressed. This is where the beauty of relationships is anchored. This is the crux of love. Love is intimacy, in its purest form. (No, we're not talking about sex, although sexual trust is important, too.) There can be intimacy without love, but without intimacy, love is "inhibited." (At best.)

Intimacy starts with trust. Then intimacy cultivates love. (And the lack of it erodes it.) The core of love is trust, the intimate kind of trust.

On a simple level, we might talk about some "truths" truth of conversation. Here is an example:

A man and woman are in a relationship. This relationship is healthy... There is trust. (Intimate trust.) In order for one to share intimacies, to talk about one's beliefs, thoughts, feelings, dreams, desires, concerns and all the rest, the person doing the talking must trust the other. Intimate trust, that the other will still accept them after the "sharing".

Consider: If a man wants, very badly, to quit his day job to become a famous pop star, it takes a serious amount of trust

(and courage) to share something so, well, intimate. “What if she laughs? What if she thinks I don’t have enough talent? What if I frighten her, thinking that we are about to be broke?” Before words ever make it into sentences, the speaker is judging the response.

If there is intimate trust, he is likely to share with her. If there isn’t, he won’t. Or, if he does, he will likely feel comfortably (or uncomfortably) guarded. It is this phenomenon which I think is the second to the saddest in relationships. And unfortunately, most of us fall “victim” to it at one point or another.

Consider both sides: How sad is it that one must hide his or her innermost feelings, because that person feels like their partner will not be accepting. But there is another side of that coin...

If I am in a relationship, and my partner is “afraid” to share thoughts and feelings, it doesn’t give me the opportunity to demonstrate that I am accepting of those expressions. It’s the old “afraid to be vulnerable” cliché. But it is real. Vulnerability is the exposure of parts easily hurt. The person, let’s say the male counterpart, may have many reasons to be afraid. This could have happened in his past. Possibly he has been conditioned since childhood by his parents, ridiculed on almost every occasion that he shared his dreams.

Or, maybe his parents were supportive, and one day he walked into his high school composition class, and when he reads aloud his essay on his ultimate dream of being a costume designer for a ballet, the head cheerleader sneered. Because he happened to have a huge crush on her, he is traumatized.

Say he made it through adolescence ok, and married his first wife, the woman of his dreams. If she was less than tactful when he shared with her, his confidence would subsequently be eroded over time. Or maybe one big fight ruined things in an instant. Or maybe, if my partner is afraid to share, maybe it's because of what I said or did. Let's say this was the case. (Hypothetically, of course...)

So in this situation, I realize the error of my ways, and vow to be supportive whenever possible, because I love my partner. By that time he has already been withholding things that he thinks could trigger a reaction. How does one convince another that they can be trusted with the truth, if the opportunity to demonstrate the trust isn't forthcoming? A dilemma, to be certain.

There is another kind of truth in relationships. It's the "truth of self". This is the biggest truth, the greatest contributor to intimacy with regard to "honesty". Truth of self is when a person

can be genuine and not fear the consequences. Not a completely novel concept, of course. But...

When one person does not need to think about how they are acting, that whatever they say or do, whether it is received well or not, will not alter their loved one's (or ones') acceptance. I think it is this truth of self which contributes to, and rebuilds, truth of conversation. This is sometimes called "unconditional love". But definitions of that phrase tossed about don't adequately describe the truth of self, in my opinion.

"Love" is vague. As I've said in another one of my posts, love is defined so many ways that it's almost useless as a noun. (Or verb, for that matter.) It's not clear. Add to that, that "unconditional love" is a phrase so over utilized that it has lost it's meaning in its lack of sanctity. "Truth of self" is what we want to foster.

"Truth of self" is when a person can fart and not worry that they will be shooed out of the room. It is when you have your loved one over even though the house is a disaster, and you don't feel the need to make apologies. It's walking around completely naked, without a second thought. (Regardless of body shape and/or size.) It's knowing that all your ideas are great ones (honestly) in his or her eyes. It's knowing that no one else compares to you. "Honesty of self" is that which emanates at

night, when you reach over to your partner and cuddle, even though you are half asleep, and they respond, unconsciously. The truth exists even when we are sleeping. It's not being afraid of our performance in bed, it's not wondering if we kiss well, it's not being afraid to be unattractive.

Now, keep in mind, that truth is truth. Honesty of self is an internal thing. When it can be shared, it doesn't alter truth. Remember, truth can not be altered...

If I weigh 374 lbs and I walk around the house naked, my partner might not think about how skinny I am. But that I can do that and not be afraid of the consequences... That is what matters. I am not the most beautiful person in the world. I am not the smartest and I am not always the sweetest. But I am myself, regardless of what I might try to change myself into. (That is not to say that one can't change as a person... Another topic for another day!)

The truth is not as important as I feel about my personal truth. My Truth of Self. And it is when that truth can be shared between two, that there is true intimacy.

Someone said something to me yesterday. It came out in a way that perked up my ears. I wasn't sure of how to take it. Then I realized he was being honest. Not mean, cruel or even unkind.

Honest. What he said was irrelevant, and if I mentioned it, it may not seem to make sense, but it was important to me. He risked my response by being honest. And I had the responsibility of being sensitive, if not verbal, in my response. What I was responsible for was accepting his words as the truth, as well as his Truth of Self.

Einstein says (essentially) that the measure of something is directly based on your vantage point, your perspective as you gaze upon it. Then again, measurement is not the truth either. It is always faulty, as nothing can be measured precisely. But as long as we feel ok with what we are measuring in the first place... That is when Truth of Self becomes Life.

"...what we think influences how we feel.

So much so, that it can alter our

life's situations ..."

THE RISK OF TRANSPARENCY

I read somewhere that if we are to truly love, we have to risk transparency.

Ok, can I admit that this scares the shit out of me?

(Oops... I think I owe my kiddos a buck for that one. Wait, it's in print... So does it count?)

So, fine. Be transparent. Risk it. Well, I'll tell you one thing, I'm good and transparent under the cover of anonymity! Although I guess sometimes wearing my heart on my sleeve doesn't go over so well with those who happen upon it.

Just yesterday I tossed a proverbial message in a bottle out into the gulf. After about an hour it whipped back my way and bonked me in the head. The note was in the same bottle but on different paper. It was a response from another person! Someone read my heartfelt words and decided to respond! Anonymously! Yea!! So I read it and it said...

Oh, you don't want the details. (Trust me. If I restate what was said to me, there will be so many profanities I will probably owe my kids a good seven or eight bucks if I reprint it.) But let's just say I made an impression. But you know, the transparency of

my message in a bottle did rub that person the wrong way. (For certain.)

So does that mean that being transparent not a good idea after all? Hold on a sec...! I don't even know that person that tossed the bottle back at me. I don't even know the GENDER, so how could they possibly know (let alone understand) me or what I was trying to say? Should I really be upset that my attempt at being transparent flopped like a deflated soccer ball in the heat of summer? Anyone would tend to say things anonymously, which they wouldn't dare to say face to face. After all, the anonymity potential of a "message in a bottle" prompted not only the other person's colorfully rude comment, but my nakedly honest original message in the first place.

But what about transparency with someone I actually care about? How would that work out?

Differently, I hope.

Well, I had the opportunity to test that this week. This week, for a number of reasons, has been a whirlwind of emotion. Practical reasons aside, I have been dealing with a personal relationship issue that has been confusing to me.

(To say the least.)

I had the opportunity to be transparent early in the week, with great results. So great, in fact, that I tried it again on Thursday, when it seemed like things were losing steam. What happened then were, um, complications? And to clear, the "complications" which resulted could very well be interpreted as absolutely nothing at all. The fact is, I was afraid to risk being transparent in the first place. I was afraid of how the information would be received. I thought it was fine, and then I was transparent again, with basically the same information, and the same person, and got a seemingly different response. What prompted the second round of honest dissertation to begin with? Um, fear. How did I decide how I thought the second response was intended? I went off of my fear(s). I was afraid that what seemed like "nothing" was really "something" without any explanation.

(Boy, I sure can get mixed up in the complexities of life!)

But if I am to back off and look "less closely" at who said what to whom, (or didn't say or do) and what happened when and where the... uh.. Well, all of that, I would see that nothing has really changed.

Nothing has really changed.

Yep. The same shit going on from Tuesday through Thursday has not vanished since Thursday. Nothing has changed! But see, that is what fear does to us. It screws with our heads.

No, really.

Funny thing, those movies... Ever watch a movie where there is a close up of the actor on the ledge of a building stories high, and you just know they are only probably six inches off the ground? Without thinking about that, your mind tricks you into thinking they are up high. But the reverse is true, too...

I was recently up on a ladder, and pretty darned high. I don't especially like heights, particularly when they are high enough to end my existence. But I imagine ladder climbing is not too dangerous when done properly.

"Six inches off the ground... Six inches off the ground... I'm only six inches off the ground..."

And before I knew it, I was on the ground itself.

The point here is that what we think influences how we feel. So much so, that it can alter our life's situations and important decisions.

I have a girlfriend who is in an unhappy marriage. She considered transparency, considered the risk. If she is transparent, she risks her husband exploding, accusing, blaming her for the problems in the marriage. She was afraid he would tell their son that she broke up the family, and God forbid, what if the husband began some self-defeating behaviors? Transparent for this girl means saying "you know, this isn't working for me because you don't seem happy with me. I need to go and have a different life." And to her, what she thought could happen if she said that, wasn't worth the risk. She talked to unsupportive family members about it, and decided not to risk transparency. As for me, I feel like the risk is not to consider what you lose, but what you gain. After all, what could she gain? At the very least, freedom. (If nothing else.) At the most? A happy life with someone to love her the way she needs.

Hey, I think I'm hitting on something here.

I mentioned earlier that I am afraid to be transparent. Scared shitless, to be honest! After all, I am risking that person not responding the way I want. For instance, if I were worried about saying "I love you" to anyone, the greatest risk is that they will not say it back. But is that a life-altering thing? If I say "I love you" it's to express it, not to fish for information... If I don't get an "I love you back", that is OK with me.

I think that when we consider what we are afraid of, especially when it comes to being transparent in relationships, we need to consider not what we risk to lose, but instead what we risk not gaining.

(There is a difference, you know.)

I was just in Dallas, where I visited another friend named Roni. Roni is very much in love, although not technically dating, a man she had as a boyfriend 20 years ago in high school. Today, she says he surely loves, but doesn't seem to be "in love" with her, although he is often "around", helping her here and there around the house. I, personally, think he loves her, because he does so much for her. On the other hand, he doesn't spend a lot of time with her because he has a crazy work schedule, a lot of family, and kids on alternating weekends. But when she needs him, he is there. He's just in and out as quickly as he can be. It's like a relationship without the relationship.

According to Roni, she loves this man, always has, and wants nothing more than to be in a real relationship with him. She doesn't have to wonder about how he feels, or if he wants to be with her, romantically or not. (Not to mention, she's a little curious about whether or not he is, or wants to, date around!)

They seem to have a caring “relationship” of sorts, but what kind of relationship is it? Does he love her or not?

"You don't understand," she told me a couple of weeks ago, "he really does a lot for me, a LOT, but the times when when he is over helping me out, he doesn't take that minute to, you know... Look into my eyes, or kiss me really warmly. He comes over, says 'hey, I know you need oil in your car...' he takes care of it, gives me a quick kiss and a big hug, and he's out the door! If he loves me, why wouldn't he be able to spend two hours watching a movie, instead of two hours trimming the hedges?"

(Yeah, I can see her point... I've been there.)

But I know something she doesn't, and that's because I've read *The Five Love Languages!*

Maybe he is loving her his way. His primary love language might very well be “Acts of Service”. If so, then he IS loving her. But if her love language is quality time, as it seems to be, then he is loving her in a way that doesn't make her feel loved. Time is something he doesn't have much of, so he spends it loving her the way he thinks she would feel loved.

As an outsider, I can see that he is doing everything he can to be loving with the time he has. He's cramming lots of love into

every moment he is with her. But she doesn't feel it that way. She sees it as a bunch of busy work and "what about the good stuff??"

I guess it's a little like making someone feel special on their birthday with a cake, and you like chocolate. So you make a chocolate cake, expecting that they will feel special. Unfortunately, they hate chocolate cake. My guess is that chocolate cake isn't what the birthday person had in mind when they were thinking about a birthday treat. He likes chocolate cake, so that's what he makes. She doesn't like chocolate cake, so she doesn't eat it and is left feeling a little hungry...

She wants to be transparent, but is afraid. She needs that relaxed time with him, needs to know if he loves her the way she loves him, but is it all too much to ask? If she asks, is she being insensitive to HIS needs?

Should she risk transparency? Let's look at this new concept of risk that I hit on a minute ago, shall we?

There are two kinds of risk when we consider transparency.

Risk a)... of what we fear, and

Risk b)... of what we lose by not being transparent.

It's the difference between gambling and not investing, when you look at it that way...

So what would happen if she says, "As busy as you are, could we spend some 'quality time' together instead of 'work time'? I sure would love that...!"?

A) She is risking that he'll give a reaction she doesn't want. Since she is very much in love with this man, the WORST reaction would be something like, "Uh, well, I don't feel that way about you, so no. I don't want to spend 'quality time' with you." (I guess the one thing worse than that would be to add "...and I don't think I should keep helping you either." Ouch!)

B) If she DOESN'T risk transparency, she risks losing out on something she could gain. But what is that, exactly? We did "worst case" in A, so "best case"...? He says "I thought you'd never ask! Sure!" He comes over, things go, uh... they go well, he stays until the wee hours of the morning and he decides he can't live without her either. They decide to get together, eventually marry and have a long life together, living every moment blissfully happy until they both are 102.

(Ok, give me a break. I did day *best case!*)

So maybe that's stretching it out a little past what we could reasonably predict, but you know... If we are going to be afraid of "the worst" isn't it reasonable that we anticipate "the best"? (It's logical to me, anyway!)

Ok, so let's dial it down on the reality scale. Revisions...

A) He says something she doesn't want. (Reality check! He DOES care for her!! Why would he do all that shit otherwise? Come ON now!) So maybe this... "Oh gosh! I wish I could, but I can't. At least not this week. I have to do [x,y,z] and I am probably going to be busy this weekend too..."

Hey, that wasn't too bad. He cares for her, maybe he can do it another time. Maybe he won't, but that he told her he WANTS to come, but can't, at least tells her something: it tells her how he feels.

It's not just about getting shit done. There are feelings there. *He cares.*

Ok... B) What does she reasonably risk if she doesn't try? Well, maybe he would go over and they would have a nice time watching a movie and eating friend chicken. Maybe they would kiss and when he leaves two hours later, (Reality check! He's

busy!!) she'd feel this really great sense of joy, and maybe he'd feel pretty good, too.

Hey, looks like the good possibility is pretty darned good, and the bad possibility ain't that friggin' bad. Seems like there is no reason to not risk it.

The people are the same, the situation is the same, everything is the same. Now, things DO change, but things which change can also change back. Things which are not changeable won't change in the first place. What does this mean? It's simple...

It means that if I (you, we...) are afraid that things are one way one moment, and another way the next, we need to do a reality check. Anything which is a constant, and causes the good thing, won't change into something different. If my dog loves me, but one day she is ignoring me, the dog didn't change. The circumstances changed. The second part to this is that circumstances, which could influence a constant, is temporary and can (and will) also change back. If my dog is ignoring me, maybe she has an upset tummy. That will go away and she will no longer ignore me. It's how we respond to the constants and the situations which influence our life. This is the crux of why good things come into our lives, by the way. When we see the good things for what they are, and don't worry about the changeable aspects which temporarily influence the current

state of the positives, while dismissing the bad things, the bad things fall away and the good things remain. (More about that another day...!)

So I think I've just proven something to myself. (And maybe to you.) The risk of transparency is much greater than you think. The great risk is not is losing so very much if you are transparent and you "fail"... (by not getting your desired response.) The GREAT RISK in not risking transparency is what you can not gain if you do not take the step to be transparent. Karen may decide to risk transparency. (Especially after reading this!) And she has a better than 50/50 chance of things going her way. She can't go backwards, only forward. My other, unnamed friend didn't want to risk it, and lost much more by NOT risking it than she would lose if things did not go as she'd wish. At the least she'd have her freedom, if nothing else.

So when I was transparent, I took a risk. My efforts turned out one way one time, and another way the second. But what I have learned is that nothing really changed. Risking transparency means opening the door for opportunity, and if I choose to let my fears influence how I think and feel about what results, that is my problem, and not an accurate reflection of what is going on. I risked transparency. Risk. Hey! I risked transparency! I risked it and I came through ok, and not only that, I have a lot to look forward to. Opportunity is just around the corner, my crystal-

clear self was only days ago. The risk is over, I've done my part.
And all constants remain, so I am in good shape.

I'm in great shape! I did what I was afraid of, and I came out
just great!

(And I didn't even have to say, "Six inches off the ground...!")

*“...I wasn't just listing wants anymore.
I had begun to make decisions...”*

TUMBLERS SHIFTING, TO UNLOCK LIFE'S SAFE

About... Well, let's see. Oh I know! It was in the spring of 2004 I started a book called Wildflower, and I made a book jacket for the book I had not yet written.

I had done this before, actually. And I always got a kick out of it when my sons would show my "book" to their friends. I would always come in and interject, "It's not a real book yet! This is a motivational tool...! See, open it up and you'll see it's about something else."

The boy would open the book and see that it was an out of date dictionary or something like that. I had simply printed out what would be a cool book jacket and glued it to the paperback. Like I said, it was a motivational tool. I would set it in front of my computer as I wrote.

The idea to "make" my book (with a new cover) was not my idea. I read somewhere that the visual of seeing your name in print is very powerful.

If you can see it, it will happen.

Today, I looked at the clock at 4:48 am, a whole 12 minutes before my favorite radio show clicks on my alarm. I was already

pouring my coffee by the time I heard their chipper morning voices at 5:am. Since then I have been working on the cover for my book, a kids' book called *Jack's Fantastic World: (...And the Time He Decided to Paint His Brother's House!)* which is soon to be available for sale in print, online.

It has an ISBN and an EAN-13 and everything... Want to know them?

ISBN: 1440459576

EAN-13: 9781440459573

Yeah, probably not much you are going to be able to do with that information. I'm just bragging. Cut me some slack! ;)

See, an ISBN is an industry standard book number that can be referenced anywhere. The EAN-13 is another industry standard number which is tied to the barcode on the back of the books you buy. The EAN references information necessary when the book is purchased at a bookstore. (Like current price, for instance.)

What does this mean? It means I'm officially a "real" writer.

Oh, sure, I always have been a writer... It's pretty much the only thing I have ever "always" done, and more than anything else, it's what I make money doing now. But isn't it interesting how

we assign meaning to things, based on our belief system? I have always been a writer, but now my book will be available, in print, to buy (ahem... are you listening?!) on *[insert a very popular online bookseller here]*. Cue the oohs and aahs, because now I feel like a "real" writer. Like I've arrived.

Or, more specifically, I am arriving.

I am thinking book signings, book donations to schools, and then there is my ultimate "dream"... Reading to kids. That is what I have always wanted to do. Get paid for reading (ideally my own books!) to kids.

I just love that.

It's not like I haven't sold books before. I've sold a bunch, actually. But now there is a real potential of being able to walk into a store and see my book on the shelf? That's a whole new experience. And hey... I'm ready for that!

Here's the really wild thing. (Are you ready?)

If you had asked me a week ago where my life was headed, I would not have known what to say. I can tell you what I would have thought, though...

Well, let's see... I need a steady income, and quick. As much as I love to write, it's not getting all the bills paid. Oh my gosh, this house... What a mess! What am I going to do with it?? And I am so stressed out. I just can't think about what I need to get done. Wait... Is tomorrow really Halloween? Oh shit.

That (and then some) is **exactly** what I was thinking a week ago.

Today I am waiting to hear back on a paycheck job that pays great, doing something I would love that is super easy for me and I am perfectly qualified for, and I'm the #1 candidate; I have a sparkling new ISBN and EAN for a book I wrote over a year ago; I'm designing my own book cover for my first "real" published book (and I'm designing to cover myself because I want to and I can, not because I have no choice); and I know that my house is going to get fixed, my kids are feeling strong and happy, my love live is on the road to recovery, and I have a perfectly bright future ahead of me.

So, what has changed since last week? Not much.

No, I'm not being sarcastic! I'm serious. Not much has changed. (And yet, everything is different.)

The thing that changed is my intent. I took a look at my wants and desires.

I read that it doesn't matter that you don't know how to get what you want. It doesn't matter why you *might be afraid to get what you want*. Wait... Afraid? Does that sound like a crazy suggestion? Afraid to get what you want?? No, it's not crazy! Yes, afraid! Look at it this way:

...If I get a job, how will I be around to get my house fixed?

...If I publish a book, what if it doesn't sell?

...If I fix my relationship, will I lose my freedom and independence?

...If I become wealthy, how will I know people like me for me?

...If I tell him I love him, what if I scare him off?

...If I can take care of my own life, does that mean there's no reason to help me, when I know that is how some show love?

(Being afraid to get what you want doesn't sound so crazy now, does it?)

I read that the only thing that really matters initially, is for us to want, in the first place. I laughed when I heard Dr. Wayne Dyer say that when people tell him that they haven’t quit smoking, but they are thinking about it, his response is, “Good! Keep thinking about it!” He says that there won’t be any change if they stop thinking about it, so regardless of whether or not they are quitting now, it’s better to think about it rather than not to! I thought that was a pretty wise way to look at that...

For so long, many (maybe even most) of us have been disappointed with life. Let down. When we were kids we asked for things, but our parents told us we were anywhere from selfish to want something, to just unrealistic. We grew up and wanted to do something interesting with our lives, and we heard "Oh, you are such a dreamer! Do something practical with your life or you will starve." Asking is hard... When we got a job, we asked for a raise. We have a friend that we asked to be a wing-(wo)man. We get a spouse then we ask for more sex. (Or different sex!) Some spouses ask for no sex at all... When we are parents we ask for peace and quiet. Is it any wonder that most of us have stopped asking for what we want?

In most cases, we go from not asking, to not wanting, so we won't feel bad when we don't get what we ask for. We feel like we can't ask, because we think we won't receive it anyway. But

asking for something and not getting it in that specific situation is not the same as asking yourself what you want for your life.

We don't know what to want. We are out of practice with how to want. We don't know what we want anymore.

I can hear some of you thinking. *I'm not an idiot, Lorin! Of course I know what I want! But why have I had such a hard time going for it?* Well, lots of reasons. Fear, mainly.

Then there are others of you who are thinking: *You are right. My hopes and dreams are wrapped up in my children and their wants or ...in my job or ...in survival! I don't even know what I want anymore, Lorin! What do I want out of life?! I don't even know!*

(See? I was right, wasn't I?)

Before you can get what you really want, first you need to know what you want. Once you know what you want, you can see your life that way. Think of it as fantasy, if you want. Once you see and feel that fantasy, the "how" finds a way.

Now I have seen it. I have seen what I want, I have seen what my life can be, and I have seen the first step to get there. And I have to say I am excited.

(By the way, the whole path isn't important! Just the first step. Makes it easier, doesn't it?)

Here's what happened. I read that the first thing is to write down a list of 101 things I want. To some, that sounds easy, to some that sounds challenging. I can tell you that I did it fairly quickly. It took me a few hours. (Fortunately I was stuck somewhere, so I had some spare time.)

I found that in my case, there were three phases to my list.

First came the typical things I usually think about, when I think about "what I want". To have a job I love making a great living. For my home to be fixed. For my kids to feel comfortable with the changes they are going through. To have a loving, romantic relationship. Shit like that.

The second phase was when the list began to change into a list of dream stuff. Things that just came to mind if I could have whatever, in any and every way. This part was actually easy, because it was mostly trivial shit. I didn't feel restrictions on my wants anymore, so I just put the things that I want. To have a ranch with horses. To have a housekeeper. To have a PT Cruiser. To take a vacation twice a year. You know, fantasy stuff in a cool life.

It was the third phase that was really exciting, not to mention unexpected.

Looking back, it seems like the third phase was when I had begun to make decisions. The whole list was of things I wanted, but this last phase was of things that really *really* would make my life complete. I later realized that of the whole list, it was the stuff in here that were the things I really want in my life the most. I didn't even notice that I began side-stepping the handwriting shortcuts, but starting every sentence with "I want...".

The first phase went a little like, I want... ...to be able to get all my bills paid. ...to get this ticket dismissed. ... to remember to send out those resumes tomorrow. By the third phase it was I want to make a lifelong impact of parents and kids." "I want to see smiling faces when I read my books to kids." "I want my kids to feel safe and secure." "I want to provide a financial future for (some loved ones)." "I want a loved one to have a job that pays well and also helps me." "I want to provide once-in-a-lifetime experiences for my kids and spouse." "I want to travel frequently with the one I love." I wasn't just listing wants anymore. I had begun to make decisions.

My perspective shifted from listing the things I want, to listing that I want the things. (If that makes sense.) It was a powerful experience...

In the book that I read, which said to do this, it said to make the last want, Number 101, the biggie. Make it one with no limitations whatsoever. No limits of time, space, gravity, money, or any other limits you could imagine. This is a special want. (I'll tell you why it's special another time, but I will tell you that in my case, my Number 101 summed up my entire list. I don't know what your Number 101 will be, or if it will sum up your list, but it is more special that then rest on your list, and I will tell you why a little later.)

After I completed my list, I reviewed my list of wants, and I was pleased.

Incidentally... Making a list of things you want is not selfish. Chances are things you want aren't only for you. Not many of us only want things that are good for only us. Another beauty of this list is that we can list so MANY things that there are more than enough wants to satisfy you and your loved ones. I have things on my list like building a strong investment portfolio for my kids, as well as some other people who are important to me. (People who probably wouldn't expect it.) Other things on my list are for certain family members to become more healthy.

Other wants are for loved ones to get better jobs. One want is for a troubled friend, wanting her to find love. Another is wanting a different troubled friend to live life more carefully.

So now I ask... Is making a list of wants selfish? What if I told you that if you make a list of 101 very specific wants that you have, wants for yourself and others, many or most of your wants can come true?

If you want your child to find a spouse that loves him for who he is, one who take good care of him as his wife, and you know that you could have that by simply making a list of 101 wants, then why not? Taking one day, and spending each spare moment, and maybe your lunch break, writing your list of 101 wants, could very well change your life.

It certainly won't make it worse.

When I was done reviewing my list, I noticed something else. What would have otherwise seemed like wants that were scattered, were actually very focused. The things that will bring more joy into my life could be supported by securing other wants, too. So I can see here that the key is not to just think about the things that make you happy (although that is a great thing to do), but the key is to go after what you want.

Here's what I mean about that...

I've had some great "payroll" jobs, but ultimately, I have been saying I really just wish someone would come to me and say "I want to pay you to do what you are good at, and love to do. Just keep doing what you love, and we'll pay you what it's worth, and it happens to be a lot."

I mentioned I am up for a great "payroll" job, and my hope is that they will see that I'm as qualified for it as I already know I am. (Although I might not mention how easy it is for me, or they might consider lowering the pay scale!) But remember how I started this blog?

My book.

Something on my list is that I want to build a couple of investment portfolios for some loved ones.

I also want certain other loved ones to have jobs they love, and get paid well.

I want to have a lot of family around me at the holidays.

I want to help a lot of people, to make an impact which would affect them positively throughout their lifespan.

I want certain family members to realize their impact on others.

I want a certain type of car (no, it's not a luxury car!), horses, and frequent travel.

There are a lot of other things, too (there were 101, remember?) but something I saw was that when I get what I ultimately want, the other things which would bring me joy are natural by-products. (And when you review your list, it all comes into focus!)

Let's say that my book is published, and let's imagine that it sells well. Extrapolate that out, and let's say I write a few more which also sell well.

Now take a look at the list above. Now the stuff ties together, doesn't it?

And now you can see what I see...

I see myself reading my books to kids who don't know who the heck I am, but love my story. I see the looks on their faces, their reactions, and I feel the feeling I have, knowing that their giggles are because of something I wrote. When they say "Wait! Go back!" it's because they want another look at the drawing

that I did. And at the end of the story, they have learned something that will help them, their parents have a new way to handle a problem that was confusing before, and the kids can't wait to read the book (or have it read to them) once more. And this is what I get paid to do.

And that, my friend, is my reward for getting what I want.

(Well, maybe there are a few other rewards as well.)

Here's more beauty in all of this. When I get what I want, I can give to those I love.

I give my sons a ranch and horses to ride. I give someone I love a job as my manager. I give my father a daughter he is proud enough to call his daughter. I give my mother a reason to make a positive impact in her life. I give my ex-husband the comfort of knowing that I am ok. I give my sons the comfort of a mom who makes a great living, and still able to pick them up from school. I give a financial foundation to some loved ones who might not have another option. And that's only the beginning.

What do you want? Do you have bills to pay? Do you have dreams that you pretend don't exist? Do you want to learn a new language, do you want a different home, do you want a new vacation spot? Do you want to volunteer more? Donate more? Do

you have family struggling? Do you have kids who hate to see you trudge through your day and life? Who can you give to if you get what you want? Have you really thought about it?

Make your list. You don't have to share it with anyone... (I know I was guarded as I made mine!) It's important that you not change your answers for fear that someone may see it and either not like it or ridicule you. Put it in a password protected word document if you are embarrassed at the idea of others knowing your deepest wants. The best and most accurate way to make this list is to not put a lot of thought into each of your responses. If something like "I want to make \$500,000 next year" comes to mind, don't stop yourself, thinking That's unrealistic! Why did I think that? I'll just put \$100,000. That's a lot more reasonable! Go ahead and write down what comes to mind.

The list is for 101 things you want. Not 100 and not 102 things. One hundred and one.

When you write, be conscious of what you are saying. "I would like a new job" doesn't cut the mustard. You either want it or you don't. You aren't making a commitment, you aren't quitting your job by making the statement, and you won't get fired for saying it and wanting a new job doesn't make you a bad person. "I want a new job."

Same goes for "I wish I had..." and "I hope to..." and anything else besides "I want". To shorten the writing, you can start "...to have..." or "...for my kids..." or whatever. But if the sentence can't start with "I want" then reword it.

Another note: Be specific! If you say "I want to get a call to talk about money" you might get a phonecall to talk about someone wanting money from you! Specifically, you want someone to call you to talk about giving you some money. (Now, the question is, when do you want them to call?!) If you say you want to be surrounded by people on your birthday, you might want to say you want to be surrounded by friends on your birthday! If you get picked up for Jaywalking, and spend your birthday in a county cell, you are still surrounded by people, right?

All I know is that there are so many things that I have wanted in my life, but I was afraid to let myself want them.

I was afraid that if I wanted something big, I would pin myself down, into being forced to figure out how to get it, when I already knew that I had no clue of how to get it in the first place. If I knew, I would have it already! I was afraid to want something because people told me that certain things were not likely to happen. I didn't go to college for a degree in art because my father told me I would starve. So I went for something "practical", was bored, and didn't graduate. I was afraid to want

because I have already had a blessed life. Who am I to want more? So many people have so little... But not wanting doesn't help me to help others get more, or help them help themselves, does it? I was afraid

And the first thing I had to overcome was to realize that it is possible to want. The second thing to overcome was my anxiousness about wanting things for my life, including not knowing how to get what I want. What good is wanting something if you don't know how to get it, right? Wrong.

The conundrum is that the path doesn't appear until you can allow yourself to truly want. Don't even think about the how until you get past the barrier of being OK with wanting what you want. Once you can say, to yourself, I WANT THIS. PERIOD. Then the way will come. It's when an idea suddenly comes to you, or you meet someone who "happens" to have a contact that would be perfect for you, or you stumble across a book in a bookstore that you didn't know existed, but has the info you knew you needed. One you say, "Ok, I want this. I don't know how I'll do it, but I want it. Period.", this is when (and why) things "fall into place". This is when things seem to magically work themselves out. You decide you want a different job. Period. And somehow you meet someone socially who says, "Boy, if you weren't already working, I would hire you!"

The way surfaces once you give yourself permission to simply want something. It's not the commitment to "go for it", not even the decision to have it... Quite simply to decide that yes, you want that. Once the want is there, the rest will appear. Like magic. (Quite literally, believe it or not.)

I have seen my future. I won't share it here, because it's not important to me that I do that. But I can tell you this: I have seen with full clarity the direction of my life.

- It starts with the list: 101 things that start out "I want...".
- Next, review the list. See the common themes and threads. See where if you get X on your list, then Y and Z will naturally occur.
- Last, look at Number 101 on the list. Then close your eyes and imagine your day in great detail. What your new life looks like. Feels like. Smells and sounds like. This is what your life will be like.

The "how" will appear, in the way of feelings, thoughts, ideas, excitement, and new things in your life.

When I see my path, I can almost see the tumblers falling into place, a mechanism like life which is complex and locked tight

like a safe... But when you have the combination in your hand, the tumblers know where to fall. And when the combination is complete, the safe, and your life, has been unlocked.

Now, make that list.

"...Einstein's intellect gave him credibility. But it's because he viewed everything from a different vantage point that's made Al what he is today. (Other than dead, of course.)"

...I will bet you a Starbucks Latte that Einstein knew, before the whole $E=mc^2$ business, that he thought just a little differently than the rest of the cats in his dorm..."

OPERATION K-MART AND THE THEORY OF IDEOLOGICAL RELATIVITY

So, I have this friend, and he said something funny to me.

Essentially, he was telling me a story whereby his opinion or idea was blown off, and he said it was like Operation K-Mart. I got it right away. He was discounted. Dismissed. *Dissed*.

(And, probably, a little bit pissed.)

I had to admit, I can relate more than a little bit. I told him that I have my own catch-phrase, too...

"No one ever listens to me..."

That saying of mine is usually under my breath, or said with feigned exasperation... It's really less of a complaint or an accusation, and actually just a remark. An inside joke with myself, and the acknowledgement that try as I might, what I say doesn't always make it to the intended. Like my buddy, I am simply saying, *Once again, I've been discounted*.

I was in sixth grade when I announced (quite proudly, I might add) that I had a job doing cash flow forecasting for my dad's

banking buddies, using a Microsoft, pre-Excel "spreadsheet" called Visacalc, a DOS program on our cool Apple 2 Plus.

(Yeah, DOS and Apple together. That was not a typo, for you young'ins. This was way before the Microsoft/Apple split, and the resulting Mac. Don't mess with me. I'm old.)

So after my proud announcement at school, the response was something like...

"You don't have a JOB. What EVER!"

Well, I did have a job. Doing cash flow forecasting. Hey, I could manage. I was eleven, after all.

And then there was the time that I tried to tell a relative (and I'm not saying who...) that I "finally" published my first book.



(You know, THIS one...!)

And the response was something like...

"Oh, that's nice. Well, So-and-So [*someone else related, and I'm not saying who*] has written a book, too, you know. I'm helping!"

(Uh, ok... But is it available in print? No? Oh, so it's not quite complete yet? Well, it's only been... how many months? Twelve years? Oh. Well then... I guess it ain't really the same fucking thing, now IS it?)

No one ever listens to me.

By the way, I have published six more books since then. After all, it's been a whole 3 months since the first was published! I've been busy. Give me a break.)

So, I guess my little books aren't such big deal after all. I sure know that the one person sure made ME feel like shit about it. Oh well... Family is like that I guess.

No one ever listens to me. Operation K-Mart in action once again.

The things I say are pretty unreasonable, I guess. I mean, the logic is pretty messed up, right? Do I say some really illogical things? I don't know... You be the judge:

"The kids really want you to be a happier person. Please don't be so angry..."

"I could go into the air-force and learn how to be a rocket scientist on a scholarship..."

"The world would be exponentially better if..."

"I think that you are the most amazing person I've ever met, and I think you are also..."

All discounted. *No one ever listens to me.*

Operation K-Mart.

Now, here is what I really don't get. (Stay with me now...) Why is it that innovation is suppressed?

Suppressed.

Notice I did not say repressed? That would be an unintentional thing. (Repressed, in case you didn't know, is not intentional. Innovation is intentionally suppressed.)

Please forgive the redundancy.

I used to work at the Houston Food Bank, and I told the CEO (who I think is a really amazing leader, by the way...) something like...

"You know, innovation is what helps an organization progress. Perhaps 'the way it has always been done' is blindly supported by mid-level managers, thus suppressing the attempts at innovation, which, in effect, affects progress of organizations like ours."

He saw my point on that one. I always did like that Brian Greene guy.

(Although he never did consent to my idea of having our monthly company-wide meetings at least occasionally in the park. Gee, thanks, Bri.)

...But since he appreciated that point, it obviously wasn't Brian Greene who quite rudely said,

"You know, *Lorin*... We sure could use your HELP here, passing out name tags. You don't need to be chatting."

(She forgot to add, *'Despite the fact that no one has arrived yet...'*)

It just so happened I was at a fundraiser, waiting for guest to arrive, and talking to a big-time leader for a big-time Krocery chain. (Yeah, not a typo.) We were casually, jointly theorizing on how certain problems might be alleviated. Yeah, the rude lady saw that as a real time waster.

Oh but the name tags? Yeah, OK. I guess the problem-solving was a lower priority than standing en masse with 5 or 6 other people waiting for an onslaught of attendees expected to be there no sooner than 45 minutes later.

No one ever listens to me.

(Although Brian Greene did listen to me, and seemed to appreciate my views, in fact. Others do listen to me, too, if you want the truth.

Leaders tend to like me. (Has a little something to do with my diverse thinking and creative problem solving abilities.)

But unfortunately, the world isn't run by leaders. It's *lead* by leaders, but *run by* the front line. And the front line generally doesn't appreciate what I have to say. (In case you haven't figured.) Not that they dislike it... They just don't GET it. And without a little hard and fast credibility on my side, I'm dead in the water. So I'm discounted.

Operation K-Mart.

The list could go on... Things I've said like "I want to study art in college" and "parents are too often mistaken about what their kids actually need" and "I am not too dumb to home school a child." are completely ignored.

Discounted again.

You know, I am nothin' like Einstein. Nowhere as smart, not nearly as male, not close in age, and nowhere as cute. But I do want to use him in this theoretical...

Einstein was a person who "thought differently". He had different perspectives, different views, and approached problems from a different vantage point.

He was brilliant, of course.

So why is it that Einstein's views were accepted, and others'... Aren't?

Well, to be honest, BRAINS might have just a tad to do with it, but if you think about it, is that what really matters?

(I mean... *really??*)

No, I don't think so. (Disagree if you want; No one listens to me anyway, so I don't care if you don't either, if you want the truth.)

Einstein's intellect gave him credibility. But it's because he viewed everything from a different vantage point, that's made Al what he is today. (Other than dead, of course.)

Perhaps his Theory of Relativity did not originate as a scientific theory, but rather one of interpersonal intellectualism.

Yeah, that's the ticket. (You listening now?)

I will bet you a Starbucks Latte that Einstein knew, before the whole $E=mc^2$ business, that he thought just a little differently than the rest of the cats in his dorm.

"I think that special education shouldn't exist. Kids with special needs should just learn to work harder. That's the way the world is. That's the way life will be."

(That comment just about made me fall out of my seat. And I wasn't even sitting at the time. I didn't try for too long to explain the faulty reasoning in that perspective. Why reason with someone who is choosing to be unreasonable, after all...?)

Am I bitching too much? I think someone might have to take a compliment back if I keep on, if I haven't earned an "outta here" already...

The point I'm making is that Einstein (yeah, I was talking about Einstein a while back) thought about things differently. Relatively speaking, his perspectives were different from those who came before him. He had theories which he asserted, and were accepted.

Thankfully, due to his credibility. (LOVE that.)

So, if a guy like Einstein can be considered, with regard to his perspectives which were not of the norm, then what about the rest of us?

Granted, not everyone thinks out of the box. As you know, I have Aspergers, and, although I can't take the "credit" for that, the very things which can create challenges, also enable me to think a little differently. (Ok, a lot differently.)

As I said, I'm not as smart as Einstein. (Hey. It's EINSTEIN. I'm allowed to be slightly below The Einstein Standard, right?) But I do think differently too. So do my sons, my buddy, and others I love. We are all... Different.

But why stop there? Why stop with me, my kids, Einstein and my 29 year old hottie BF? (Was that corker believable? No? Not even a little?)

Anyone who thinks outside the box, at any point in time, and about anything at all, really, should be considered. Ideas. Ideas are good.

No, really. Even if the CEO didn't think of it.

You see, it doesn't take a genius to solve problems. It just takes a new view. And because someone has a different view, it doesn't mean they should be subject to Operation K-Mart. Solving the big problems takes a fresh perspective, clearly best if not immediately discounted... It takes a new theory on the view of the situation, based on a unique perspective. A new opinion,

based on the relative juxtaposition of that person, and the problem at hand. There just might be a connection.

$$P=A+an(I)2$$

I'll translate...

Progress = Acceptance + (an)Idea...even by squares.

...And you can call that my *Theory of Ideological Relativity*.

(Yeah, and by the way... I like my latte flavored with French Vanilla.)

*"...It's when you have the guts to say the stuff
you don't want to say, being honest when
there's a risk, that the good feelings come..."*

RISK AND REWARD: WHY HONESTY FEELS GOOD

I had an interesting conversation with someone recently. I was posed with a hypothetical.

The details aren't that important, really, but one thing I really enjoyed about the conversation was the hypothetical if things were done differently earlier in the story. If the characters of the movie, if you will, had said or done something different. How would it have affected the plotline?

I think Gwyneth Paltrow was in a movie called Sliding Doors, and although I really don't remember much of the movie, I seem to remember that one part of the movie was what happened when she missed the train, and the other half was what happened when she caught the train.

Our conversation was a little like that, but had a different slant. Anyone who reads my blog, or knows me personally, knows how I feel about honesty. And, like I said in this conversation I had, not just "saying what is true" but living one's life in a way which is consistent with my feelings, beliefs and reality. I think it was Suze Ormond who says something about "when your friends want to go on a ski trip, and you go along with it, knowing you can't really afford it, that is not being honest."

So, in this hypothetical relationship scenario, what would have happened if the main character had been honest in the beginning. (Or even anywhere else in the story, other than the very end?)

I just love this shit.

Honesty feels good. Have a real, honest conversation with someone, and you build trust and good feelings. The interesting thing is that the content isn't really that important. One would think that in order to have a "great" conversation, it would mean saying "happy happy" crap. But that's not always true. It's too easy to say the happy shit.

It's when you have the guts to say the stuff you don't want to say, being honest when there's a risk, that the good feelings come.

And I know why.

When we say and do things which are consistent with our true feelings, beliefs, and reality, we are taking a risk. That's why people shy away from that. Risk. But what do we get in return? Not much... You get a false response, because it's not based on truth.

It's like buying a house because your stocks topped out, when the reality is that they tanked.

Honesty feels good because when we show others who we are, there IS a risk. That sounds like a contradiction. One might think that a risk would feel bad. And, in truth, risk feels scary sometimes. But the reason honesty, and the risk that comes with it, feels good, is that regardless of the result, you have done your part.

If you tell a person your scary truths up front, you run a risk that they won't accept that. They either say ok, or that's not ok. If it's ok, then you know that they accept you, complete with your reality. If they don't accept you, most people feel bad. No one likes to let another person down. So we say "Sure, I like your haircut!"

But if a person doesn't accept you for your truth, you know where you stand with that person. What if they accept you for your false truth? You still don't know where you stand.

When a person does not accept your truth, you know that is their decision, and is not a reflection on you. You can not predict how someone will feel about your reality. And besides, whose

place is it to feel one way or another about something which is intimately yours?

If I want to be a ventriloquist, that is my decision. If someone chooses to not accept that, how should it affect me? I am not telling them that they should be a ventriloquist. It is my decision for me. If they don't accept that, it's not my issue.

When we fudge about the details, we also rob others of the opportunity to be accepting. That said, we have the responsibility to be level-headed in our responses, or we teach those around us to be fearful. Conditioned responses. This is how people acquire the baggage they bring into new relationships... So, when we aren't forthcoming on the not so minor details, we are doing others a disservice, as well as ourselves.

So honesty feels good because you know that whether or not your reality is well-received, it is YOUR reality that is getting the response. The interesting thing here, that many people are slow to believe, is that an honest answer is more likely to get a positive response, regardless of whether it's what they want to hear or not.

And, frankly, you don't know the other person's reality.

How many times has someone said, "Hey, want to go out tonight?" and you said, "Not really! I ant to stay in!" and they respond "OH I am SO glad you said that! Me, too!" Your honesty will bring an honest response. People can smell BULLSHIT like a fart in a car, and even though they can't put their finger on what's wrong, the odds of an honest response go down. Give an honest answer and you will get an honest response. It's human nature to be honest, so when we make it easier for someone to be honest, they are thankful for that.

Look at babies. They cry when they are sad, laugh when they are happy... That is honest. We learn dishonesty.

So, After we've fudged on the details for a while, then what? Things get complicated. Too complicated to untangle. So, how do we clear everything up without destroying what we have left? We set the record straight. (Another fascinating subject in my opinion, because I always love the idea of wiping the slate clean, starting fresh. Like diving into a new tub of margarine! It's just... Special.)

When we get ourselves into a mess, how do we get out? How and when do we set the record straight? Well, as for the when, the answer is as soon as possible, because things only get worse. As for the how? We look for a rope to pull ourselves out.

And what does the rope look like? You don't know until you see it. But it might not look the way you expect. You might expect to see a knotted, cotton rope to pull yourself out of the quagmire, so when you see a vine, does it look like a rope? What about a low branch? What about someone at the edge, giving you their hand. It's not a rope, so is it ok to grab it?

Sure.

Opportunities to set the record straight come in the form of openings in the conversation, to bring up what needs to be said. The scary thing for most people is that usually they go through life without filling people in on the details, so when they change the plan, it may come as a surprise to others.

But the great thing about setting the record straight is that it's a stopping, and starting point. It's an end to all the problems which have developed as a result of people not knowing the story, and a start to everyone being in on, or aware of, the solution.

Things in motion tend to stay in motion. If the world moves forward with one belief, it will continue in that direction until new info is received. If a situation arises because reality is "bent", the problems will continue and even get worse until new information is received.

Keep money problems to ourselves, and our family doesn't know to be frugal.

Keep irritations to ourselves and our loved ones don't know that they are driving us crazy.

Keep to ourselves that we really don't like meatloaf, and we will be eating it for the next decade.

And then there are those things that we don't say, about our time behind locked doors... What does that buy us?

We generally don't say anything because we figure we can tolerate the consequences. But problems don't go away, they get bigger.

Debt grows. Irritations build. Your wife says "How was the meatloaf?" and you say "It's great, thanks." and now you are having it two times a week instead of one.

When we are upfront with what we like, who we are, what we want, and what our reality is, we are risking acceptance. Yep. It's a risk. But what are we risking? They will either accept us, and/or what we say, or they won't. (But there is another option...)

When we expose our honest selves with people, they may not like what they hear, but being honest earns respect... *ESPECIALLY* when it's something that the other does not want to hear.

(Which is more attractive? Someone who respects you, but may not agree with you, or someone who likes you, but does not respect you?)

Have you ever called a customer service number about an order, and they came up with every excuse in the book as to why they weren't to blame? Infuriating, isn't it? (Doesn't matter whose fault it was, it's infuriating.)

Now, what if that person instead said, "You are right. We messed up. I can't change what happened, but what I can do is fix it from here. I can ship it to you overnight. Is that ok?" Sort of takes the anger away, doesn't it?

Living a life with honesty is a choice. But when we choose to be honest, everyone wins. Not only do we teach our children how to be honest, what it looks like, we teach them that it's ok to be honest, because the outcome will be ok. We teach others that we are trustworthy, because there is no reason to doubt what we say. We feel a sense of inner acceptance, because we see that

people can and do accept our reality, even if not everyone does. Not everyone accepts our false realities anyway. And when we feel, inside, that it's OK to say how we feel, we have come to a place where we are good with ourselves. When I can say, "Well, y'all might like the movie, but I really didn't. Maybe I'm the only one, but really, I just didn't like it." Then I know I have accepted my own reality.

When we are honest, we ultimately teach ourselves that we are ok, just the way we are. We don't have to be different to be ok. When we know that we are ok, then whatever happens around us, we know that we will get through it without being torn up in the untangling process. We live with a sense of peace.

And that is why honesty feels good.

*"...but if the whole of the 4th largest city
in the country evacuates, I would wonder how many
deaths we would have trying to get
every single person out.
It's simply not possible."*

VENOM AND HATE MAIL TO HOUSTON AFTER IKE

So, I'm sitting here, wondering about whether or not my house still exists.

(Well, I'm guessing it exists, but does it have a roof?)

I live in Houston and evacuated to another city with my children before Hurricane Ike came through. I went into a local posting forum to see if anyone has said anything about the area... I've checked on friends and family... Now I am more than a little curious about what has happened to my home.

But this post is not about my home. And it's not about Hurricane Ike.

There were some really kind sentiments. Many people said they were praying for Houston and Galveston. Others gave suggestions, and some said "Don't stick around! I've been through it, it's not fun." What really gets me is the hate.

Yes, the hate.

This post is about the hate that has come into Houston from people around the country. I don't try to pretend that everyone

uses the best judgment. And I know that not everyone represents any city, Houston or otherwise. But on top of that, many people in other states may not realize the challenges that evacuation creates. Whether or not to evacuate, and when, is a big decision. Yes, it's often the safer route, but if the whole of the 4th largest city in the country evacuates, I would wonder how many deaths we would have trying to get every single person out. It's simply not possible. Evacuation is not a simple solution, and it's not the only solution, as many of the people who posted, imply.

Take a read...

quit crying about Ike, you chose to live in this shit hole

*You idiots made a choice to live near the gulf and get your ass kicked year after year by storms! Quit crying and acting like victims! If you don't want to weather the storm, rebuild your houses then suck it up and move to gods country... Chicago, IL
LOL*

No. #1 That Pisses Me Off About Hurricanes

It's those brain-dead cretin assholes who COULD but REFUSE to evacuate and ride out the storm. BUT as soon as they get in trouble, they whine and cry for rescue. Well, FUCK YOU DIPSHITS!! You wanted to stay, you can live in your own squalor the best you can for being STUPID! Any government

[sic] agent who attempts to rescue you from your own stupidity should be fired, forthwith.

ANYONE ONLINE IN SPRING OR CONROE???

I am wandering how it is out there... all I have is CNN... and they never speak of North Houston... phuckers!!! Any info especially flooding would be appreciated... I have a house in Conroe and I would like to know about the flooding!!!!

RE: ANYONE ONLINE IN SPRING OR CONROE???

(From: upyoursville)

Nope your house is gone! It blew right over my place as my roof was coming off! I got some great pictures of your place sailing by if you need them! Now I have to hurry and turn on my TV so I can see the bodies of the idiots that stayed floating down the street! Where did I put that popcorn?

HaHA!!! STUPID FUCKING MORONS! (In Philly)

You dipshits where told to leave! FEMA should let you all die and get rid of a few doorknobs. 250,000 less doorknobs sounds nice.all we ned now is the rest of TX to die then the world would be perfect.

Gee, people are nice. (That's sarcasm, by the way. Note the tone in my voice?)

By the way, there were more. Some were so bad that I could not possibly put them here. There was one with a picture (actually two pictures) of a woman defecating, and the message was that the woman was on her way to Texas to bring people who survived the hurricane some food. (Well, at least it was creative...)

Why must people be cruel? Why must people spew hate and venom? What is the point of this? Ok, so you don't care for Texas, you think those who did not evacuate used poor judgment... Why go into that city's posting forum and take the time and energy to post hate?

Usually I like to give my perspective on things I see in life. I can't offer one this time. I just can't see it.

*"...How is it possible for another person to know,
with that kind of detail, what is right for me?"*

(Or you?!) The answer is...

It's not."

THIS IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.

I just realized something. Something important enough that I could not blog about it right away.

Well, I could have, but then someone I know would have to take back a compliment, because I was pretty mad about this a little earlier.

Someone once said, "Lorin, I have read so much of your stuff... I spent hours reading what you have written online. And you know something? There's nothing bad!"

He meant that out of all I had written, he had never read anything mean-spirited. That is the compliment he would have to take back. (If not already!)

You see, I just realized that I let some people, who love me, get to me. I let some people who meant well, and wanted good things for me, have a huge, and negative impact in an important area of my life.

Sure there is the "typical stuff"... I am a child of a mother and a father, so there is the normal stuff that parents say to their kids out of love. Things like...

"Well, art is not a practical major. You'd best come up with something different, or you will starve."

He did have a point with that one, although looking back, I think a degree (even in art) would be of benefit right about now. The two semesters of psychology from TCU under my belt didn't really materialize into anything that helped me in the long run, other than I can identify my friends' (and their romantic interests') personality disorders with a fair amount of speed and accuracy.

Then there was the other stuff, like

"Oh, the boys DO like you! That's why they insult you incessantly!"

She meant well. Unfortunately, she was a little off base. They didn't like me much back then. I was a nerd when nerds were NOT cool. You can ask them. The guys I knew then will tell you now that I am on target here...

No, I am not talking about the typical BULLSHIT that we are fed by well-meaning friends and relatives as we grow up, the stuff that everyone hears and eventually learns the truth about. (If they are lucky.)

You know... Santa. The Tooth Fairy. The stork...

No, I was in a situation where I was unclear. There was in a time in my life about a year ago, when I had some doubts about someone I cared about. It was one of those "are things what they really look like?" kind of things.

He told me one thing. Everyone else told me something else. What he said made me feel better. What everyone else said made sense.

Turns out I believed what seemed logical. Unfortunately, it wasn't the truth.

People I love, and who care very, very much for me, were trying to watch out for me. And in their misguided attempts to help me, they pointed me in the direction of a wall to drive in to. (Figuratively speaking, of course.)

Anyone who knows me (or reads my blog) knows how I feel about things like... trust. Honesty. Faith. (And not just in the religious sense of the word.) Goodness. Truth. Integrity. Trust. (Did I already mention trust?)

I need to be able to trust those in my life. Actually, it's probably why I'm painfully selective about who I let into my life on more

than a very superficial level. I don't always know who I can trust. And I'm not just talking strangers here...

Family. Friends. Dear friends. Relatives. Not trusting someone is not about the other person giving false information intentionally. It's asking myself, "can I go with what they are saying and know that it is the right thing for me? Do they have my best interests at heart?"

Here's the funny thing about that... In order to have my best interests at heart, they have to know what is in my best interest. In order to know what is in my best interest, they have to know what my interests are in the first place. What I have invested, and what I need to get back.

When we look at it that way, how many people can really have our best interests at heart? I mean... Really??

I can dissect this out to explain, if it's a little confusing thus far. (I know I tend to complicate things. I'm working on improving that, by the way!)

How many people know every detail of my life? How many people know my innermost wants, dreams, desires, hopes, wishes? How many people have not just an understanding, but a clear, in-depth and comprehensive understanding of my views

and perspectives? Because all of those things play a part in what is best for me.

Of course, when we make decisions, we are over-doing it if we analyze it to that extent to make all of our decisions... That's why we rely on our "gut feel" so often. What "feels right"? All of the small parts which comprise who we are as individuals manifest in how we feel about a situation. NOW, I ask you...

How is it possible for another person to know, with that kind of detail, what is right for me? (Or you?!) The answer is... It's not.

Of course, kids are not capable of making certain decisions, although as they grow, we, as responsible parents enable them to be more of individuals and make their own decisions when there is not a lot at stake. (And, consequently, their own consequences.)

But, as adults, why do we rely so much on what other people think is the best direction for us?

I need to trust. It's important to me, and I need that in my relationships. All of them. It's not about whether or not people are being honest. I think most people are generally honest. It's about whether or not they know my best interests well enough to tell me things that are good for me. Healthy. Productive.

For instance, a person who is important to me appeared to be involved in a situation that was... Sticky. Not illegal or immoral, and I wouldn't say it was something that wronged me. He was just doing something that I didn't like. I wasn't sure of the details, so I was not sure of how to react to it. I didn't know what it all "meant".

Because he is important to me, and a part of my life, other people in my life decided to "help" me. They love both of us, but thought they knew the details without knowing the whole story.

I was told what I believed to be the details, both he and I passed those details on, and what I got from friends and family was...

"Yeah, right."

For some reason they thought there was more to the story, so they decided to let me know the details they (thought they) knew. You know, to "reassure me" lovingly.

The "loving reassurance" I got was completely off base. But, looking back, I can see that they did not only misunderstand the situation.

Adding new (and inaccurate) elements to the story (based on assumptions and over generalizations) would have been enough.

(Which made it more dramatic, of course. Did I ever mention I have a dramatic family?) They did not have a clear understanding of what my personal goals are, generally and specifically, nor did they have comprehension of my views or perspectives. They didn't have an understanding of his either, or any of the other people who might have been involved.

In short, no one knew nothin'.

(And yet, they all knew what I should do.)

The result was that how I wanted to feel about the situation was not how I ended up feeling about it. I was upset, confused, angry, and had lots of questions and doubt. As for trust? Well, let's just say that the whole situation took care of any that might have been left. In its place stood something less... trusting.

It has been almost exactly a year that all of this began. And yesterday I finally had the closure I needed. Now, that is not to say that I didn't resolve things. In fact, I decided to disregard what my friends and family had said, and I decided to feel the way I wanted to about it all. It didn't mean I had any concrete information. Just that I had decided to let go of anything that was getting in the way of having a healthy relationship with him. As I mentioned, he is an important part of my life, and a person that I will never not have in my life, so having a healthy

relationship is more important to me than knowing all the details that I didn't really know.

Those who were trying to help me meant well. They love me, and they also love the other person involved. They really did want the best for everyone, and thought they were doing the right thing by "warning" me.

A similar situation happened to another person in my life, about me. He was warned that I was going to take a certain course of action. He, too, was "warned". I really don't know if he ever realized the negative impact in his own life, of those who genuinely cared for both of us but thought they knew something that they didn't know. But I can tell you that their "love" created strife in my life (as well as his), to an extreme that I didn't know (at that time) was possible. He had ideas in his mind of what he was told I was "going to do", based on his limited understanding of my situation, and their even more limited understanding. I thought I was clear, and I think I was. But when well-meaning friends and family give their input, it causes problems.

There was one man, and one woman, who were particularly "caring" to this person. Gave loving advice on what they just "knew" would happen. You know, because they lumped me in with every horror story they had read on the internet. (Not to mention urban legends that circulated around their offices.

Because neither had first hand experience of this type of situation.) I'll add that both of these people are either now, or were then, very religious and very active in their congregations. (The point being, they weren't bad people.) But the "love" they tried to bestow upon this previous man, ended up ruining lives.

Ruining lives.

One time I saw the man, and he could barely look me in the face. I still am not sure of whether the reason was his own feelings of guilt for destroying me, or shame because he got the idea that maybe he was wrong. Maybe he just didn't like looking at the image of a woman who had lost probably 30 pounds, not realizing that he was largely responsible for my stress-induced frailty.

The woman approached me quite differently. Although she stayed true to her pattern. Bitterness came my way for a long time, and I just did the duck and dodge. When she had a new person to "warn" him about, she didn't need to be bitter to me anymore.

I probably don't need to mention that although they both feel like all that they said and did in the situation is now water under the bridge, I am reminded every day of the ramifications of their "love". I don't say anything though. I let them think that

time has healed my wounds. And, in truth, time has healed many of them. Hopefully the person they were "loving" in warning about me, never felt the negative impact. It's bad enough that I did. Although, I do suspect that he asks himself, from time to time, who he should have trusted those years ago. Them, or himself. He knew me, until they convinced him that he didn't know me at all. Had he trusted himself, things would be different today.

And, had I trusted myself approximately a year ago, when I was sure that I should trust how I felt, and what I thought, I could have saved myself some heartache. Not to mention, I wouldn't have been such a pain in the ass to a person that means a lot to me. (Then again, I think he's a little used to it by now!)

I can say that I am glad I didn't follow their "guidance" for long, and soon took it upon myself to follow what I thought and felt. Sometimes it's not popular to go against the grain. Especially when "everyone" is telling us that we are nuts to think or feel a certain way. But, in reality, whose business is my life, if it's not my own?

I don't think I will be upset at my loved ones for long. As I mentioned more than a few times, they really just want what THEY think is best for me. It's not their fault that they really do believe that they have my best interests at heart. After all, who

are we if we do not show concern for those we love? Especially when we believe they are in a serious situation or making a drastic mistake? We would be remiss if we did not say anything. Although, at what point do we draw the line? Who is responsible for what?

If we should show our love for our loved ones, by expressing concern in what appears to be a critical situation, is doing that a bad thing? I have gone on and on here about two tragedies in which well-meaning loved ones "cared" so much that they caused (in some cases) irreparable harm. (And, without question, unnecessary emotional turmoil.)

So, what do we do?

Who is responsible for what?

If we should show love for others by expressing concern, and yes, we should, then we should also be cognizant of the limit. We should, and can, be aware of the fact that the people helping us do NOT know the whole story. And although every single person might have the same perspective, the reality is that no one knows what is best for YOU, except YOU.

What else does that mean? Because we can turn that around and see the resulting impact on another level... (Stay with me here...!)

If we can keep in mind that we are the only ones who really know what is best for ourselves, and keep others' comments/warnings/suggestions/advice in perspective... Then we can also deduce that when we are loving another person, we do not know, with absolute certainty, what is in their best interest. We do not know the full situation. And even when we think that we do, we really, really don't.

So each of us are responsible for loving others. And we are also responsible for drawing that line between having a belief that we know what is best in the situation, and thinking that we really do know.

When we "love" another person by warning them of a fate worse than death, we are responsible for keeping a healthy perspective on things. Something like, "I really don't know the whole situation. I can say it seems like , but I really don't know. You are the only one who can decide what is best for you." But on the flip side, we are also responsible for drawing the line with loved ones. Loved ones, especially when they are being "loving" don't always understand when we say "I appreciate your concern, but you really don't know the situation, so I am going to disregard your warning." The reason is that if they think we are in a bad situation in the first place, we are more likely (in their eyes) to make bad judgment calls.

(More on that another time.... That's another story.)

I guess the bottom line here is that I finally realized that so much heartache that I have felt in my own life has been the result of others' tendencies to preach to me. Other, well meaning loved ones, who see a situation and decide to be the one to blow the whistle.

But who am I really mad at? By now, you probably know... it's me.

I'm mad at me for enabling others to decide the course of my life.

I'm mad at me for permitting others to have a powerful influence over my emotions.

I'm mad at me for not drawing a line when others were so willing to cross it.

I'm mad at me for not being strong enough to realize that I am perfectly capable of determining what makes me happy, and where I want my life to go.

I am mad at me for... Well...

I'm just mad at me.

Good enough? I think so. And if I think it's good enough, then it is.

Period.

*"...When you start to do what YOU really want to do,
others eagerly confess it's what they
really want, too. It's being in 'the majority' that
makes going against the grain seem like a crazy idea,
because they are afraid to admit the truth:
They aren't living the life they want, either."*

RELATIONSHIPS: RE-BREAKING BONES AND SAVING LIVES

Once again with the relationship talks.

(And once again, I love this shit!)

I actually had a conversation earlier today, in which someone asked why I probe into some relationship areas for which I already know the answer. I had told my girlfriend that I had a conversation with a woman I have known for years, who consistently tells me how she wants to do good things for people and how she says that I am important to her. So I asked for an "easy" favor. *VERY easy*. One of those favors that would be almost no work, and, if she did it, would reap a huge reward for both of us. It's something she is good at, and enjoys, and something I am not. I needed her help.

The conversation went a little like this:

"Lorin, why did you even ask her? You knew the answer was going to be no. You set yourself up for disappointment every time you ask for the smallest thing, that anyone else in your relationship would give, and you know she won't and yet you still torture yourself by having that expectation."

I thought about that for a moment.

"No, I knew she would say no. I think asking her was my way of convincing myself that her consistent rejection does not mean there is anything wrong with me. This was one of those situations where any other person would have gladly said yes, let alone someone I am close to. I already knew she would say know... Perhaps I asked so I could demonstrate to myself that yes, she will always say no. That is what I can expect, and it doesn't have a damned thing to do with me. I am not 'bad', so she rejects me. She rejects me, regardless of how I am, good or bad. She is not capable of helping anyone, her self included."

I am still learning about relationships, you see.

Something else I realized today is that women, when they break up with a man, can generally come up with a decent way to do it. They can anticipate his reaction and break up in a way that would be "easiest" on him. But turn the tables for just a moment. If I was in a relationship that was about to end, could I do the same for myself? Could I say, "Gee... The nicest way for a guy to break the news to me? Sure! I know how!"

Uh... Nope.

I couldn't think of how! Well, I do think I came up with something, but the interesting thing is that although, as a woman and an emotional being, I could anticipate the best way to break up with a man, but I could not anticipate the best way for a man to break up with me.

(The way I got to thinking about this isn't as important as what happened after that, in my opinion, so I am saving you some reading time...! Let's just say that the course was not exactly linear, but it had to do with an internet article. Now you are up to speed!)

I decided to take a very formal poll to get to the bottom of this conundrum.

(In other words, I called a girlfriend.)

"So, how would you want to hear the news?"

"Well, Lorin, I would want him to decide."

"That's a cop out! Work with me here... Say you are in a relationship, and you could choose the way he would end it."

"I wouldn't. But I'll tell you something else..."

She went on to tell me about a realization she had recently. She was in a relationship that ended, and for years she thought she knew what went wrong. (Essentially, that it was his fault.)

She hasn't really changed her mind on that, but how she got there was a little different today.

"I think that when that happened, I snapped. I realized that he could not make me happy. I wanted to move somewhere that he didn't want to go, and he refused. It was important to me, so important that I did not think I could be content if we didn't move there. The last time I remember being really happy with him, was when at first, he said, 'if that's what you want we'll do it. That's what will make you happy, and I want to make you happy.' But after that he changed his mind. I knew at that point that he could not make me happy."

We went on to discuss how this incident impacted other areas of her relationship. Even if he had finally done it, she would think he was pressured into it. Then what? What else would happen? What would be the next thing that would come along, that would be important to her, that he would dismiss? It was not as important that they did not move to the location she wanted to move to. It was that he was not capable of doing things that brought her joy.

(I probably don't need to mention here that the relationship has long since ended...)

Fortunately, I saw a tie-in. I was determined to get to the bottom of my puzzle.

"So, the time came when you were not happy. You knew that you could not be happy. And you eventually left. BUT... What if he realized that before you left him? What if he said to himself, 'I can not give her what she needs to be happy' and as a result, he was not happy either, so he decided to end the relationship. Then what?"

"It still would have hurt."

"Because your life with him was familiar. A habit."

"Yeah, a habit."

Here, she finally gave up the goods I was looking for in the first place.

"If he knew I was not happy, I would want to know that he saw that, and that he would want me to be happy. If he knew I could not be happy with him, I would want him to tell me that, and let me find someone who could. It would still hurt, but I would

respect that, and know that he was doing it because he wanted me to be happy. Yeah, that's the way I'd want it to happen."

I was in a relationship similar to the one she was talking about... Someone who did not have a specific, interpersonal relationship element within him that I needed to be happy. My friend decided her relationship was over when she realized that he would not do what would make her happy. Mine ended when I realized that he *could not* do what I needed.

Now, don't get me wrong... I hoped that what I needed for my own happiness was simply a thing that could be improved. A relationship element between us that would develop if we both tried. You know... Two people working together to make a relationship better? We did love each other, after all.

But as time passed, I grew increasingly unhappy, but I put on a happy face because I was trying to make things ok. It took a long time for me to get "unhappy enough", but when I looked at him one day, and realized that he was acting as unhappy as I *felt*...? I knew we were in trouble.

I had always told him what I needed from him, but at some point, he has still saying "I'll try" and started saying firmly that this is just the way he is, and he can't give me what I need. He

just didn't have it in him. (And in truth, he didn't Not then, anyway.)

He never saw the relationship element, that I longed for, in his parents, he never experienced it, never heard about it from friends. He didn't understand it, didn't feel it, didn't know it... Could not relate to it... It did not exist in his belief system and certainly not in his world. It's no wonder that it didn't exist in our relationship, either. I finally realized that it never would. It never *could*.

Eventually he told me that the "thing" I needed was only in my mind, that it doesn't exist. He could, and would, never give me what I was asking for. It was a fantasy and I will never have it.

Yeah, I was starting to feel pretty crazy, like I was looking for the Loch Ness or something! But some how, I saw glimpses of it in other couples, in movies... How could it simply NOT exist? What was this thing called, anyway??

Turns out the "thing" was emotional intimacy. I didn't know what to call it at the time, but I had an idea that there was something very important missing. I could describe what I wanted, but I couldn't define it at the time.

I wanted and needed emotional intimacy with him, in order to be happy with him. (I don't know, call me crazy...)

Interestingly, after our relationship ended, he decided that learning how to develop and cultivate the specific relationship element was worth the effort. But he never would have taken that step if we had stayed together, so it was a real catch-22.

(And a perfect example of how people grow from suffering, by the way.)

But long before he learned what he did not previously know, we were over. He could not give me what I needed to be happy. Me not being happy made him unhappy, too. I could tell that we were both unhappy, although out of the two of us, I was the only one who noticed it.

He couldn't understand, at first, when I said I knew he was not happy. "YES I AM!! I AM HAPPY!" he responded. It was a funny moment, in an ironic kind of way, if you want the truth. I don't think I ever told him that... Maybe I never will.

He had confused happiness with comfort. In the time we spent together, he knew what to expect, and was comfortable with that. The reason that he thought he was happy was the very same reason that my friend said she would still be hurt if her ex

had broken up with her, before she had broken up with him. It was a change.

A couple of years ago I went through some tough times with a relationship transition. I had recently connected with a good friend of 20 or 25 years, who had some words of wisdom about that.

"It's a chemical thing. Ending something is hard. But we learn to adjust."

When two people end a relationship, the length of time it takes to "recover" is based on the nature of the relationship, the stage of the relationship, the current state of the relationship, and other variables. Is it a friendship? A casual dating situation? A marriage? An internet fling? Not to mention that how fast each person recovers has a lot to do with their own perspectives.

I know one woman who got separated, immediately started looking for another husband to fill her needs. I know another woman who has been divorced for many years, and doesn't really get serious with anyone, because her kids are resistant to her having a new relationship. Another woman stays in a dead-end relationship because she doesn't want to have to find and train a new boyfriend. And many, many wives stay in marriages where they are terribly unhappy, only because they are afraid that the

con of being independent outweighs all of the pros of leaving a miserable, even emotionally abusive, relationship.

I will tell you a secret. (This is for the women only, so if you are male and you are reading, you can close your eyes now. Thanks.)

Ok girls... I was married, and I decided to go against the grain and end my marriage. Looking back, it seemed logical, and I don't know that I would do it differently, given the opportunity. This is a funny, strange thing that I don't know that I've ever publicly said: After I did it, I realized how uncommon it was for a woman who is unhappy to leave her husband. But not only that, how *common* it is for a woman to be completely miserable in her marriage.

Consider some of the things that were said to me... Some surprised me, some shocked me. Some made me sad, and some were actually disturbing. Leaving my husband was the single most eye-opening thing I ever did. When you start to do what YOU really want to do, others eagerly confess it's what they really want, too. It's being in 'the majority' that makes going against the grain seem like a crazy idea, because they are afraid to admit the truth: They aren't living the life they want, either. Everyone wears a mask. Everyone looks, acts and talks the same.

Note that many of these things were said by perfect strangers that I ran across in my day-to-day living. Others were by a friend-of-a-friend kind of thing. (So if any of this sounds familiar enough to be your words, it's a coincidence, I promise!)

"You are my hero! You actually left?? Girl power!!"

"So, me and my girlfriends were joking about finding a hit guy for our husbands, and one said maybe we can get a discount! Isn't that funny! We were kidding, of course..."

"Hey, when I decide to finally leave my husband, can I maybe room with you?"

"Why did you leave? It doesn't make any sense. We are all miserable."

"You think he's such a great guy? Well, he's not."

"Man, what I would GIVE to be free! I would give anything to just have... Even just a break. For just a little while. A break from being married. I hate him."

"My money is my money. And his money is my money. If I have to stay with him, and I have put up with my fair share of crap, I will take what I want and he will get what I give him."

"Yeah, I have a cash stash! Don't you? Every time I get groceries I get cash back. I spend \$22 on groceries, get \$40 back, and all he sees online is a \$62 transaction. He doesn't bat an eye. I do this 2 or 3 times a week and I'm making about \$500 a month. Who needs a job?! Not me!"

"I admire you. That's a really brave thing you did. I wish I could leave too. I'm not strong enough."

"Come? Hell no! But he thinks so. I put on a good show. If I do that, then it keeps him away from me for a while."

"I told him years ago that I was leaving him, and he cried like a baby. I lost all respect for him, but I stayed. Now I know that he'll do whatever I say. I do what I want, and he's not going anywhere."

"You think YOU aren't happy?? Let me tell you about MY husband! He's a fucking asshole!"

"I hate him because he didn't take good enough care of me after the baby was born. He went to work and had to go places. He should have stayed home. So now I make him pay."

"Why would you leave when you can do whatever you want during the day with the kids at school? Go have an affair. That's the smarter thing to do."

"Girl, if you can't be happy, let him give you jewelry. I'm not happy, so I take what I can get since he can't make me happy."

"I know he's having an affair. Care? Hell no! Ha ha! Why?? Because for starters, it keeps him out of the house! She has to deal with him while I spend his money! He'll never leave me. I let him have his cake and eat her, too. If he left, he would have half the life he has now. No, he'll never leave. I don't care that he's having an affair. At least I don't have to sleep with him."

"One day I opened my eyes and thought to myself, 'is this shitty lay the last man I'm going to sleep with for the rest of my life?' Then I felt like crying. Unfortunately it was during sex."

"Well, I don't know if losing weight will make our marriage any better, but I don't mind, because then I can find someone else when we get divorced! It's all good!"

"Shit. He's back. Oh well... Gotta go take care of the biggest child now. Bye."

"He's out spending MY money. No, I don't work, so any money he spends is mine. I resent that he spends money on what he wants to, then he tells me we don't have money to buy new clothes. He's selfish... Just look at his priorities! He could have waited to get the clutch on his car fixed, but I need an outfit for TONIGHT! So I'm just going to get one anyway and let him be mad about it. What's he going to do? LEAVE me? Hahahaha....!"

"Well, technically it's not an AFFAIR, but letting this guy tell me how amazing I am gives me what I need emotionally so I can hang in there, in my marriage. You could say he makes my marriage bearable. If it weren't for him, I would leave my husband, but now I don't have to. I get financial support from my husband, and emotional support from my married friend. It works for both of us. My husband just doesn't see the whole picture."

"He spends so much time with our daughter that I hate them both."

Does any of this sound familiar? I hope not, really! If you are in this kind of marriage, I am very sad for you! The one thing that it did make me realize that as unhappy as I was, there are marriages out there that are worse than mine, and yet are "whole".

But are they, really?

Ok, ok... I digressed more than just a little. Back on track and I'll try to wrap it up.

I know that, despite the fact that I was the one who ended a relationship or two, it was hard on me. I knew that it was "for the best" and even so, I hurt. I mentioned earlier that people "recover" differently, based on a number of variables. But one thing is the same.

The end of anything is cutting it off, and it cuts.

But, as I mentioned to my friend about the other, completely different relationship, re-evaluating my help-worthiness is like breaking re-breaking a bone.

I learned, long ago, that things "were" a certain way. The problem was, they weren't really. It's like a bone was broken, and it didn't heal properly. Over the years, the broken "bone" caused problems through other relationships I've had... So going back, and demonstrating to myself that the rejection I felt was not me, but her, was like re-breaking the bone. It hurts, like the rejection she told me to protect myself from, but in the long run, I am better healed.

When we end relationships, it's like a cut. But cuts can be good, or they can be bad.

I watched my grandfather behead a chicken once and I was mortified, because he didn't quite get it with one shot. It took a couple of times and I have a feeling that was worse for the chicken! When our bodies have cancer, sometimes we must remove a part so the rest can be saved. Relationships are not like cancer, but sometimes the pain we feel when we are unhappy with the person we are supposed to be closest to in the world, it is almost as bad... (Some would argue worse.)

If we have a part that is sick, and we leave the part on our body, the whole body dies. Operate on just a part, and, depending on how sick the part is, you might not get it all. If we are our body, and our relationship is affecting a part of us, a clean cut ensures that the bad parts are gone. Yes, a part is missing, and that is worth grieving, but what have you gained?

Your life.

*"...the key is to think NOT about HOW to get
what you think will make you happy, and go
forward, but think about WHAT will make you
happy and go backward."*

WHAT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY?

In response to aguales , who, in addition to some kind comments about my post The Risk of Transparency, also said...

...When I get in "perfectionist mode", risk becomes all about what I can lose. It's hard to break the perfectionism habit and learn that allowing imperfection actually allows room for growth (which is the gain). Do you ever get in "perfectionist modes"? And if so, how do you deal with that? ...

The answer? I do stuff to force limitations on myself. Like now. I'm about to blog about something I was thinking about this morning, and I need to get it done in...

Ummmmmm..... Let's give it fifteen minutes.

Ok, so I've got 15 minutes to blog about... About... What was it again? Oh yeah!...

It's about getting the most of what you want in life.

(Ok, ok, it sounds corny, but bear with me for a minute...)

What do we do in our daily existence? Really think about it. What do we feel like we have to do? We have responsibilities,

leisure, family, spirituality, community/giving back, friendship, fun, work... All of these things and more. How many things do we do in our life that we really don't want to do?

For most people, a lot, probably.

Let's take work as an example. Personally, I believe that the way we earn a living should be based on something we enjoy, but that's not always reality, as some people "fall into" their jobs. Although they may not hate their work, it's not really a part of who they are or what they enjoy.

"Falling into"... That is a topic for another blog. For sure. I don't like that "falling into" unless it's talking about love. (Yet another topic.)

Ok, Lorin... back on track. Tick-tock-tick-tock, remember??

So, if we are to get the most of what we want out of our life, we must first consider why we do the things we do. In truth, NO ONE does something that they do not get one benefit or another from. The benefit might be that you succumbing to someone's unreasonable demands, which contradicts what you want, may leave you with the feeling that the alternative (what is threatened) is worse. (If this sounds like you, please go read my

blog titled The Risk of Transparency, specifically the parts about the way risks statistically result... You might like that.)

If I have a financial responsibility... Say I own a home, I need to keep my home by paying for it. To pay for it I must have income. So if I have a job I hate (theoretically, because I would not work in a job I hate) I am working in that job by choice because I need the money. Why? Because I need the house. Why? Because living in a home is a lot better than living in a shelter.

My home makes me happy.

If I have a child who needs financial help, and I have to struggle to support that child, I may feel stress from having to work two jobs. But if the "warm and fuzzies" I get from the smile on my kiddo's face is worth it when I can gift the gift of a teddy bear, then the second job is getting me more of what I need.

Happiness.

Yep, that's right. Whether we are volunteering or working or helping family or scraping up dog poop, or even...

Oh crap. Time's up

Well, I had some computer glitches and freeze-ups. I'll just set it for another 15 minutes and add in whatever editing time. That's about right, right? (Besides, 15 minutes was unrealistic to start with, right? This shit is important!)

No matter what we are doing, (even blogging) we are getting something out of it. But here is the enlightening thing. (Well, I think it is...!)

Sometimes we do things thinking it will bring us what we want or need, when there is an easier way. Or a better way.

Remember that Teddy Bear? Say it gives me warm and fuzzies to see the smile. I could say that giving him toys makes me happy. Why? It makes him happy. But what if I found out that he was smiling to make ME happy?

What if I said first, "Son, I was going to get you a Teddy Bear, what do you think of that? If I work on Saturday I will get a check, and with it I can give you that Teddy Bear." What if the response would be "Um, mom...? I like the Teddy Bear, but I would like it better if on Saturday we went to the public skate park instead."

Dumb me.

Here I am thinking I'm working to make my kid happy, I'm working at this job, slaving away, and that the result will be my happiness because of his happiness, and his happiness comes in the form of something I want to buy that I think he'll like. But that's not reality...

What I want most is happiness. What brings me happiness? His happiness. What would make him happy? If I spend time with him at the park on Saturday instead of working.

Oh, but what if it were my older son?

"Son, I love you so much, and making you happy makes me happy. What would make you happy my love?"

"Well, mom, I love candy. Lots of it. I want candy for every meal. And although I'm not 16 yet, I really want a car to drive. I'm almost 14, so I think I'm ready. As for bedtimes, it would make me happy to stay up as late as I want, every night. And it would make me happy if you let me drop out of school to run away with the circus. I love you so much, mom, you are the best."

Uh... Well, yeah, I want him to be happy...

Am I about to thwart my own happiness by giving him some bad news?

"Wow, son... Those are some things, now! I love you very much and I AM going to make you very happy. Here's how..."

I'm not going to let you eat that candy because you will be happy when you are an adult and still have your teeth at age 40. If I let you have all the candy you want starting now, you will likely lose all your teeth at a younger age than you would otherwise.

You are almost 14 and so brave, but one day you will want to get married and have kids, and you can't do that if you are dead. It will make me so happy to see you happily married and grow to do all the things you want to do, so I will not let you have that car just yet.

Bedtime... Hmm... I know how you feel at school when you have to struggle to work and keep your eyes open. And if you don't stay awake in class you will get poor grades. That will make it difficult to get into the college you decide to go to and have the career you choose. Although we don't know what those things are just yet, letting you stay up as late as you want will certainly limit your options. I love you and seeing you have the whole world to conquer when you graduate from school will make us both happy!

Drop out of school? Well being with the circus sounds like fun, although leaving school limits your options. Instead, I will be happy to sign you up for a clown class, but I think one day you will be happy to have the option of being a professional in the circus field, instead of a pooper picker upper.

You can thank me when the time comes, son. You have made me so very happy by giving me this opportunity to bring you future joy! "

I can't remember what book it was (yes I do, but it's irrelevant) when I read "sometimes the easy way out is the right way in". The point was that so many...

Oops... Forgot to set the damned timer. Hang on...

Ok, I'm back. So many people work and work on something and over do it, because they believe that is the way to get what they want. You know the type. You normal people call them perfectionists, right? Yes, Aguales, my new blogging buddy, I fall victim to the very problem you do. But when we get going on a task, (the task of LIFE for instance...), we forget about what we are working toward!

Let's go back to the example about me working in a job I hate to keep my house. (Again, I don't, and wouldn't, have a job I don't

like, but I am willing to consider a job I would enjoy, if anyone reading is hiring!)

If I believe that working in a job I dislike brings me happiness (ultimately, by retaining my home) then why not seek happiness straight out?

That sounded confusing, didn't it?

What I mean is that if you are at the store and you know that you don't enjoy cooking, what's the point of buying every ingredient to make a home made pineapple upside down cake, if you can get it from the bakery? If it's the cake that brings you joy, get the cake, by gosh!

Sometimes you can't go straight to happiness. For instance, I hear jokes about "squatters' rights" in reference to homes, but I imagine that I can't keep it if I don't pay for it, right?

But what does this have to do with getting the most of what we want?

So instead of picking up the cake pre-made, I can get a box-mix, canned pineapples and go from there.

The bottom line is that what we want is happiness. If making our kids happy makes us happy, it means keeping our kids happy. If we think the answer to keeping them happy is working two jobs because we think what makes them happy is lots of “stuff”, then we will do what we don’t want to do to get something we want more. We will struggle doing work we don’t enjoy (for instance) because we think giving our kiddo a teddy bear is what will put a smile on their little faces.

But do we know that??

I’ll tell you something... I have a son who turned 13 last year. He loves magic. I wanted to make him happy, so I paid out the nose to take him and his brother to Magic Island. Not a hit with the kid. He liked it enough, but what would have made him happy was if I had called up some of his buddies and said “hey, meet us at Double Dave’s pizza, but don’t tell Addison!” I could have paid half as much, and he would have been twice as happy.

But I thought the only good way in, had to be expensive.

My mom used to buy me lots of clothes. All the time. I wanted nurturing affection. That’s what would have made me happy. I wonder if she ever thought boy, keeping Lorin happy sure is expensive! Seems like no matter how much I give her, she isn’t happy! When I see the way I hoped my son would be a little

more thankful for a celebration, and not realizing he really wanted something very different) I can see how my mom would have thought I was "hard to please". After all, for her, gifts are GREAT! For me, it's about hugs and affection and statements of pride and love. The sundress with matching cardigan and sandals just didn't quite accomplish the same goal for me.

(Call me crazy, I guess.)

My ex-husband was really good about "taking care" of me. (Notice the "ex"?) What would have made me happy was to have an emotional bond with the person who was my husband. You know, emotional intimacy. When we began the separation process, he was confused as to why I wasn't happy in our marriage. After all that he "had done" for me as his wife? But for me, changing the oil and home repairs didn't mean quite the same without lots of hugs, kisses, cuddling.

Since then, I've been in another relationship that started out that way... lots of help, and the affection would be the #2 priority. Lucky for me, he learned that the affection does come first, because when I feel loved, I am better equipped to get my own tasks done.

I have a theory on that, it's called the Theory of Touch, and at one point I will write about it, although I do find myself talking

about it from time to time. As my Theory of Touch applies to this situation, the touch regenerates my energy so I have more independently. It's a science thing. (I think.) But then again, that's another story for another blog...

(Remind me, will you? I keep forgetting to do that one!)

When it comes to getting what we want, we have to ask ourselves, what do we want in the first place?

(Yeah, I know... Time is up again. I'm not trying to be perfect here, but I am trying to wrap it up.)

I was in a relationship some time ago, and I thought what I wanted was to be married. One day I thought, If we are to marry, that might not make me happy if he is not happy being married to me! What I wanted was a happy, long term relationship.

Same with time. If I have a person in my life that I feel close to, do I want to spend every breathing minute with him, or do I want to enjoy the time I do spend?

I have a friend who is staying married for her children. She wants her children to be happy, so she remains with a man who she is constantly fighting with, or are otherwise ignoring each

other. But does she know what her child really wants? Maybe her children really want to see their parents not fighting, not “stay together”. Maybe the only way to not fight is to be apart. Maybe my friend is sacrificing her happiness for no reason. How will the mom feel if she finds out that the time she spent married so that her child could be happy, in fact caused more distress? That doing what she wants, ending the marriage, would in fact make the child have a happier existence?

I happen to be one of those kids who was the victim of an in-tact, unhappy marriage, so I have some very strong feelings about “staying for the kids”. There are several interesting studies on that, which state that when parents are unhappy, their kids become distressed and grow up to be generally unhappy people. Although, when unhappy parents become happy people through separation / divorce, unhappy kids become happier when their parents do, even if not together. The marriage of parents who are not in a loving relationship is actually proven to be detrimental to a child. Parents “staying together” is not nearly as important to a child’s happiness, as the happiness of each parent as individuals.

The study I’m referencing goes on to say that kids who grow to be happy people are more compassionate towards others, more successful, have better relationships, have better self-esteem, and have the ability to elevate their moods more quickly.

(Among a lot of other things.) Essentially, if you apply the information in the study to the “should I stay for the kids?” question, staying together for the kids creates an unhappy person, but making yourself a happy parent sets *them* up for a successful life.

(For more information on the study of the clinical and all other affects of happiness on a person’s life and those around them, read THE UTILITY OF HAPPINESS by Ruut Veenhoven
Published in: Social Indicators Research, 1988.)

Since I was a kid with unhappy parents, like my girlfriend’s daughter above, I have some pretty strong (oppositional) feelings about the decision to use kids as the main reason to stay in a marriage... But that’s another story, so I’ll leave that as yet ANOTHER blog for another day.

So getting back to the issue of getting more of what you want out of life (yep, that’s happiness), maybe the key is to think NOT about how to get what you think will make you happy, and go forward, but think about what will make you happy and go backward.

One way goes like this...“If I get a degree from a good school, I’ll get a good job that pays a lot. Having lots of money will make

me happy so I’ll get a degree from a good school.” (Not the best way to approach it...)

Another way goes like this.

“I want to have a career doing something creative. There’s a great trade school offering degrees in design and graphic illustration, so I will go that. In order to pay for that, I need a job. I would like a job doing something I enjoy, like writing, so I’ll look for that kind of job. When I have that kind of job, I’ll enroll and get going on my career path.” So when we think about why we are doing things, doesn’t it make sense to stop and say, “what do I hope to accomplish?”

What do I hope to accomplish?

Actually it should be the first question. (Maybe that’s how I can stay on track a little better!)

If we ask what do I hope to accomplish? We can re-evaluate our process. If I hope to accomplish making a clean area in my bathroom, it doesn’t make sense to paint the bathroom first.

If I hope to accomplish getting a job I enjoy, I need to be looking for jobs in the right fields, not at jobs which I “think I can get quickly”.

If I want to have steady income, I need to be considering employment, not scrounging for cash.

If I want my child to respect me as a parent, I need to be the authority, even if he doesn't understand, instead of giving in to his pleading.

If I want to leave my job, I need to stop putting 150% of my effort into a job I don't plan to keep. Better is to contribute what is necessary for the job, spending extra effort on fostering a new job.

If we want to spend more time with people who make us feel good, we need to distance ourselves from cynics and those who make us feel uptight, and move toward those we enjoy.

If we want a new relationship, we need to end the one we don't want in order to begin one that we do.

If we want our child to trust our actions, instead of giving up on our dreams, or what we know is a good idea, we need to stand firm in the decisions we make for ourselves and them, so they will realize the positive result of our decisions.

If I want to... Want to... If I want to... *Uh oh.*

If I want to learn how to keep my blogging time down, I need to set a reasonable time on the timer and stick to it, instead of saying “what the heck...” when the timer flashes “Time’s up! It’s good enough!!”

(At least blogging makes me happy...!

*"...Faith is the acceptance that
everything is already OK, regardless of
how things might appear at the moment."*

FINDING FAITH: CONFESSION OF AN OPPORTUNITY, WASTED

So today I had an opportunity.

Let me tell you a little something about me. (In case you didn't already know...)

.....*Shhhhhhhhhhh*.....

I am afraid to trust.

Yep. I am afraid to trust. It's true. It's ironic, actually. You see, I can have a little (haha) difficulty understanding others' motives, so I tend to trust pretty generously, most of the time. It has gotten me into some trouble, unfortunately. (The heart-break kind, not the law-break kind...) I guess, as a result, I try to be über-aware and as a result, I am afraid to trust.

But today... Today I had an opportunity that doesn't come along very often. (Well, I had a couple of opportunities in fact.)

Picture this: There's someone you love. Without limits. Let's just say it's your..... sister.

Yeah, that's it... It's your sister.

You love your sister more than life itself, and would do (and have done) so much for her. But for some, er... "odd" reason you suspect that she is... um.... cheating on her husband. Yeah... that's it. You think she is cheating.

Now, why do you think this?

Well... Behavior change. Change of activities, friends... Suddenly she's hard to get a hold of. Her stories don't match up. You... find some of what appears to be "evidence", but she has good explanations (which you aren't buying.) Nothing completely damning, but certainly more than a little suspicious.

And she knows it.

"No really! It's the tip of the latex glove from when I was coloring my hair!"

Uh, ok...

Unfortunately, you are in the situation where you really don't have the right to tell her what she can or can't do, but you have a reason for getting personally involved in stopping what you think is going on. (Pretend that she signed a pre-nup or something... Whatever the reason, it matters to you. *A lot.*)

After a number of months of this, your trust erodes. The thing about trust is that when it erodes in one area, it erodes in all areas. By the way... This is why relationships fail with regard to trust... When a couple gets to the point where (for instance) he can't trust her to be responsible, and she can't trust him to be compassionate, the rest goes out the window. Suddenly she can't trust him to be responsible and he can't trust her to be compassionate. Trust is gone.

So the trust erodes over months. You suspect that... on Friday nights she goes out with her new lover. But you have children, a spouse and are (very) rarely free on Friday nights. But you wonder... if, by chance, I'm free on a Friday? By gosh, I'm going to her place to find out! I want to know if she's really cheating on her husband! In fact, I need to know...

Never mind that her place is 50 miles from yours, or that the only way you would know she was actually seeing someone else would be to elaborately follow her, spy on her in a compromised situation, etc... The fact is that it's actually a wish to have the information available, and the mind tries to figure out how to make it possible. Right?

Right. (So, a little time passes...)

At the end of a particularly grueling week, your spouse takes the kids to Chuck E Cheese's, because you are working late and need a break. It's Friday night. You are tired. You check your voicemail.

"Hey, Hon... Mom called and wants us to come stay at the lake house this weekend.

How about I go ahead and take the kids now... You go home, get some rest, and come up in the morning.
I love you and I'll talk you you later. Bye."

Opportunity is knocking. Just so happens the reason your week has been grueling is that the client you have been visiting is 50 miles away. Out by Ol' Sis. Oh and right here is the exit...

You have a decision to make.

For months you thought about this, thought that if you had the opportunity, you would want to know. You needed to know. Pre-nup, remember? This is your sister. Your, uh.... LITTLE sister. This guy is super rich, she is a free spirit, and certainly not likely to be able to get along without her "half"... She's cheating on him, by gosh! Your precious, adorable, incompetent little sister is cheating on her rich husband! And she's making the biggest mistake of her—

Wait. Hang on. This isn't your sister. It's not my sister. I don't have a sister. But I did have a decision to make...

This morning I came to a (proverbial?) crossroad and had to make a decision. I went right. (Or was it left?)

I had been lacking trust, and now I had the opportunity to either prove myself right or wrong. I had the opportunity to learn that which I didn't know for sure. Learn things which I thought would make a difference between whether someone was right or wrong. This would enable me to be either really mad with good reason, or prove to myself that I had been a fool for not believing someone I care about. (Although not "seeing" what I'd expect to find is not fool-proof evidence of innocence... The cycle of mistrust would be likely to repeat, which is also unfortunate.)

So what did I do? I chose trust.

Funny thing is that I didn't even really have to think about it. It just happened. I guess you could say that the trust chose me.

I might have proven myself right, or I could have hoped to prove myself wrong. Instead I proved, to myself, something much more.

I proved to myself that I was OK not knowing what I didn't know. (This is not the same as denial, by the way...)

No matter what happens outside of me, I am ok. This is the basis of faith.

You see, faith and trust are two things which must be given freely. They can't even really be earned. If one person does something which causes another person to have a hard time trusting...? Well, the trust still has to be given back. It can't be earned. I guess the litmus test of love is how quickly is one willing to trust someone who has hurt them? But is that really a litmus test of love? Probably not... It's a litmus test of the ability to trust.

Faith is like trust in that it must be given, not earned, but there is something extra special about faith...

Faith is not the belief that everything will be OK. Faith is the acceptance that everything is already OK, regardless of how things might appear at the moment.

This is why religious sects talk about faith (although they may not be able to articulate it if you ask them to go into depth...) When people talk about God's Plan, they are saying that regardless of how things may look at the moment, we need to

have faith that things are the way they should be. Things are good.

Now don't blog out on me, this isn't a religious blog. (Not that it would matter if it were, would it? God is a pretty cool Guy...)

I'm just saying here that faith is NOT the same thing as hope. Hope is the anticipation of things being different in the future. Faith is the acceptance of what already is, regardless of how it may appear on the surface.

That's what I experienced today. On the surface, things had (I like using the past tense... Feels good.) HAD seemed suspicious. But in an instant... In ONE small minutiae of time, I realized that despite what may be the appearance, all is ok.

Is. Present tense.

So, today I had an opportunity. I had an opportunity to learn.

I thought I chose trust, but trust chose me.

And luckiest of all, I found faith.

"...Violin, piano, flute, drums, guitar... No, I'm not musically talented... I just haven't found one yet that I can play with any level of skill!"

THE IGNORANCE OF GENIUS

"You are so smart!"

"I think you are really bright..."

"You should be *proud* that you are so intelligent."

Ummmm... Thank you?

May I make a confession? I don't deserve the credit for being smart. Ok, I know I'm intelligent or whatever... But I really don't deserve a compliment simply for being smart.

Tell me you really make me laugh or you are really insightful or I really enjoy your company. Tell me you appreciate my talent. (Wherever you may see it, and whatever talent it might be.) I even like your writing is intelligent and you are so smart to put that in a way that I could relate to. Yep, I like those, too.

The "You are smart!" compliment is nice to hear from time to time, especially from someone whom I think is pretty intelligent, too. In truth, it's always a gracious compliment, and sincerely appreciated. But as nice as it is to hear, can I really take credit for something over which I had no control?

We don't hold people accountable when they are lacking in cognitive functioning (well, we aren't supposed to), so why should we give credit for above-average intelligence? It has been said that a person is born with a certain IQ that only varies a few points over the course of their lifetime.

Interestingly enough, that's not completely true... You can systematically increase the effectiveness of your brainpower over time and with effort, thereby increasing your capacity to process information (and IQ score by a small percentage of points). But really, the potential was already there. There was still a potential range that can't really be controlled. Consider that a person who is born with a fairly serious impairment in cognitive function (let's say scoring an 80 on a clinically-administered IQ test), isn't likely to ever score a reliable 140 on the same IQ test.

So why do we bestow the compliment "you are smart", as if the person had worked to earn it?

I received one of the nicest compliments I think I have ever received in my life the other day....

"I Googled you and there were pages and pages that came up. Some were duplicates, but there was so much there that you had

written. I spent hours just reading what you wrote, and I have learned so much. I am learning so much."

Of course, I'm paraphrasing here. I left out "*you are the most amazing writer I have ever met!*" and the other part that went "*...I have never learned as much from anyone as I have from you!*" and then there was "*...I think you are without question the most...*"

Oh wait. No, none of those last ones were actually out loud. But I think I thought I heard him thinking it. (I'm pretty sure...)

The point I'm making here is that not once did I hear "You are so smart", although I know that the opinion was there, and that's great. What was more important? For starters, that a person I already knew stopped to think I want to learn more about Lorin, about what she likes, dislikes and has to say. What else impressed me? That a person actually spent what turned out to be many hours over a period of consecutive days to read my words. Not words to anyone in particular, just... Everything. But the thing which was the most moving to me was that this really intelligent, educated person said they had learned something from me. Me. And was still learning. From stupid little ridiculous me. (Yeah, I said stupid.)

Sure, anyone can be smart... But when someone tells you they have learned something worthwhile from you?

Now that's a compliment.

I think when people talk about another person being "smart", I think the compliment is really an acknowledgment that there is the potential for something good resulting from someone's intellect. That makes more sense, right?

If someone uses their smarts to find a cure for cancer, that's a good thing. It's the cure which is lauded. A genius theorizes on how the laws of the enormity of the universe can finally coexist with the minutiae of quantum physics, and that gets, um, a little attention. Another good thing. A brilliant teacher spends forty years educating countless kids, many of whom go on to make a societal impact. Not too shabby...

Of course this is all great stuff. It's genius in action. But how much control did they really have of the brain power they were blessed with? It's what they did with it that made the difference.

They took their potential, combined it with their natural talent and did something good.

Here's a little secret that most "geniuses" aren't going to tell you:

(Now, listen closely, because I'm only going to say it once.)

Tests, including IQ tests and achievement tests, are unfairly biased towards "traditional intelligences", which, probably not coincidentally, the people who created the tests were likely strong in.

Now, don't blog out on me.

Yeah, those tests are bogus. They are ridiculous, they measure the wrong crap, they are not realistic measures of ability or success... When it comes to measuring how "smart" a person is, basically IQ tests are crap. Actually, I hear that there comes a point where once you hit a certain score, your odds of "success" do not continue to increase. I could go into the reasons why, but I will spare you. So, who really cares about a number? (And this ain't sour grapes talking...)

When we talk about intelligence, who cares about a number? If you look online, apparently a lot of people. And yet, an IQ score is pretty irrelevant in the grand scheme of things. But that's just my opinion. (If it's worth anything.)

Hang on... Did I already send in my Mensa dues? Oops... [delete, delete, delete...]

I haven't done research on this and I'm not a scholar. What I do know is that the IQ test is unfairly simple for some people. Some.

And that's because blah blah blah blah blah blah and that's how I know that. (I just spared you about 3.7 minutes of boredom. You can thank me later.)

I have a kid who is amazing. AMAZING. (Well, two amazing kids, but I'm talking about one at the moment.) He is popular, smart, creative, intuitive, and hysterically funny. He wrote skits for a school variety show and loves to make "movies", complete with scripting and direction. And yet, if he was matched up with my other son in a game of "let's solve the math problem" I don't know that I would buy a ticket.

(Not that there wouldn't be a show, it just wouldn't be fun to watch.)

Now, the jokster is smart. Really smart. The boy gets the "You are so smart!" compliment all the time. ...And I get the "He is so smart!" compliment, too. As for math? Well, he qualified for Advanced Placement math. Like I said, he's "really smart". But

with my other kid? It would have been an unfair match. My other amazing son easily comprehended the concept of square roots and exponents in kindergarten and was doing algebraic equations in first grade. He was nine when he came to me and announced, "Mom, I finally understand calculus." Oh, after reading about it for an hour at the bookstore? Oh, ok... The funny thing is after that hour he could explain it to me in depth. He really did understand the concept. That boy goes on about math the way I go on about... Well, the way I go on. So as brilliant as both boys are in math, is it still a fair comparison?

Now ask me about the math whiz's refined social abilities. (On second thought...)

So, I ask you... Who is the genius? The answer is: Both.

Here is the list of what are generally considered as the Multiple Intelligences, a theory which was developed in the early to mid-eighties.

Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")

Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")

Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")

Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")

Musical intelligence ("music smart")

Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")

Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")

Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart")

Now, this explains a lot, when you think about it. It explains why a person with seemingly "average intelligence" can have brilliant success. That IQ test I mentioned? It focuses on the top two. But what about the rest?

What about the people who are brilliant with plants? Among other things (like, you know, curing diseases and feeding people... Little stuff like that,) plants are also a wonderful renewable source of energy. (Those plants... Love them.)

(Have I mentioned that my younger son has said he wants to be a botanist in the field of medical research? Yeah, like I said, two amazing kids...)

What about people who know how to negotiate? Can get along with just about anyone? What about those people who are so diplomatic that they are sought out in times of crisis? Those with "people smarts" are the ones who are quickly promoted and get to go to the best parties. Those people have value, you know... Geniuses.

Can you imagine what your life would be like without music? I don't watch TV so without music my life would be, uh, quiet.

(Mostly.) Music evokes emotion, and emotion is good. (Despite what you may have learned in your childhood.)

Math, literary and spatial geniuses... All important fields. The spatial geniuses theorize in ways that no one else can, the math geniuses prove them right, and the literary geniuses put it all on paper.

Unfortunately, there are so many people out there who "feel dumb." My son, the one who is popular and intuitive and creative? I sort of think he used to feel dumb about math around his brother. But remember what I said about his qualification for advanced placement math? His belief system about his intellect had nothing to with reality. I kept him out of AP math, so somehow he didn't realize he had qualified like his buddies did. What he didn't know was that he qualified for every AP class for the grade. I left him in some, but I had to draw the line somewhere so he could have a life that existed outside of schoolwork. (I'll let him thank me when he's 40.)

Just because a person believes something, doesn't make it so.

(Well, and the truth is that it doesn't mean it's not so, either... Only that belief does not create a contrasting reality.)

Ok, a lot can be said for the power of positive thinking, law of attraction, all of that. Hey. If you know the first thing about me, it's probably that I appreciate a good theory, and the philosophy that universal energy is something which transfers between objects in order to... Oops. Well, there I go again, off track with the theory stuff. Ok, determination through belief can accomplish a lot. But that's not what I'm talking about here...

How many people have not realized their full potential because they thought they weren't smart enough? How many people dropped out of college because they thought low grades meant stupidity, instead of boredom? How many people think that a lack of financial success in their current profession is an indication that there couldn't be financial success in a more preferred occupation?

I have a pretty prolific online presence and get contacted fairly frequently. For those who know me on a personal “in person” level, my online stuff simply adds another dimension to what they think they already know about me. But with those who don't know me personally, I hear (usually very complimentary, thankfully!) comments where assumptions are made about this or that, and I think, *oh boy! I just don't have the heart to say 'hey, thank you for that, but... I really ain't THAT great.'* (Well, then again, I'm not that "bad", either, let's just get that clear...!)

I guess I mean... Is anyone really exactly what they look like on a "public" level?

Let's just say that the belief that "I am my persona" is... Well... It's simply faulty.

But how many people put all their faith in one basket, trying to force a round peg into a square hole, instead of finding the shortest path from point A to point B? Regardless of beliefs, societal/cultural "rules", shoulds, and ought-tos, decide what you really enjoy, and go do it, (whatever your "it" is), you genius, you...

My creative genius has come to terms with the fact that he and his brother are different. People are stronger in areas and not as strong in others. I'm glad to see that he is comfortable in his own skin, happy with the intelligences he has. I'm proud of who he is, was and is becoming. Both of my boys. Like little lights.

So, if I go back and consider the original compliment "You are so smart!" how seriously can I take that? If there are eight "intelligences", where do I stack up? Hey, I'm pretty smart, I hear... I'll measure up, I'm sure. (I'm faking confidence, can you tell?)

Nature. I like nature. Love it, in fact....But I might not be so kind to it? I was asked once, maybe you should just get silk plants..? Some people think it's cool that around my house I have plants growing out of pretty bottles and jars. I see it as practical. Hey, they never need watering. Problem solved. (But please don't ask me about the grass in my yard.)

I do think I am "self-smart", but no one gets me anyway, so I won't bother explaining that one. Now, people smart? Well, I don't get most other people so maybe I couldn't explain that one if I tried. (Ok, cross another one off the list.)

Music. I have played a few instruments in my life. Oh, list them in order? Um, ok... Violin, piano, flute, drums, guitar... No, I'm not musically talented... I just haven't found one yet that I can play with any level of skill. Probably has a little something to do with not being able to read music. (Oh yeah, see how smart I am now...?)

Body smart? Um... Well I guess my weaknesses and strengths might be a washout on that one.

Spatial, number/reasoning... Yeah, I'm good on those.

Word smart? Um... I don't want to talk about it.

UNDONE

Trickle, trickle... Time, it trickles
Like fiery feathers melting to the earth
Fierce and red, the feathers they float
Trickle through time, like song to a note

Time and space, unfolded again,
Unfolded back on top of another
Overlapping and blacking and closing this place,
Time it trickles right into this space...

Space of life, space of heart
Space of words and worlds apart
Space alone, and in fierce feather beds...
Space of things gone, thoughts left unsaid

Unsaid words, undone deeds...
Untied shoes and unpulled weeds
Unwished birthdays and unanswered prayers...
Uncut ties and unplucked hairs

Hair it's draping, making, saving...
Messy rat's nest has undone its maybes
Soft and strong and cold like snow
Snow melting off, when the sun, she does show...

The sun shows again, and the water, it trickles...
Dripping, lapping, giddy, laughing
Water, first cold, and it warms in the sun
Water flows passing, yet it's always undone

*“...When we keep our eyes and ears open,
and connect to those around us, we are constantly
filling our cache of opportunities...”*

THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF OPPORTUNITY

“Lorin, don’t you dare...!”

“Ok, Grandma, I won’t tell anyone that the guy in the picture is Lee.”

(And I’m not gonna, either.)

The trip the boys and I took to Grandma’s ranch this summer marked a turning point in the life of each of the four of us, for varying reasons.

For starters, it was the first time my boys spent more than maybe 24 hours at the ranch in the summertime, much to my embarrassment. Grandma and Grandpa bought the 88 acre piece of land in 1976, and I have spent probably more time there than anywhere else, excepting my own individual homes. So yes, that my sons are 11 and 13 and just now spending several days at the hunk of hot land, which I secretly refer to as a private haven... Yeah, Mom of the Year, right here.

Secondly (or thirdly, if you count the boys individually...), Grandma came out of her shell in a way I had never seen before. She had been re-arranging her photo albums, and it appeared as

if she had been eagerly anticipating the opportunity to share her memories.

Opportunity.

As we perused the albums, she remembered such detail, that I was genuinely surprised. My grandma is not a young woman. Family, girlfriends... Guy friends... (Notice I did not say "boyfriends"?)

Grandma was engaged to a young man who went to WWII. The story I had always remembered was that Grandma's fiancé died in the war while she was waiting for him to come home and marry her. I guess I didn't learn that story from Grandma, because that isn't what happened.

"Well, Dear, your mom assumed whatever, and probably just because I didn't tell her the rest of the story."

Well... Grandma did tell me the rest of the story.

When Grandma's fiancé came back from the war, things didn't exactly work out for the two of them, and they broke off the engagement. He did live through the war. He died later, but it wasn't in the war while Grandma was waiting for him back

home, as I had always believed. He passed on in a more “typical” way. (Is death ever really “typical”? Hmmm...)

But this other guy, the one Grandma got all-a-twitter about? She was pretty sure that had she been unattached, they would have dated. But back in that time, the young soldiers left for war, often planning to return to marry his bride... It was a Quixotic time.

“Lorin, all I have to say is that I wish I would have known that when my fiancé returned, it would not have worked out. I couldn’t have known that, so I wish I would have just... Done things differently.”

We talked at length about people having the tendency to hesitate, to wait for something which hasn’t happened yet. Planning for things which aren’t quite within reach, or, in other words, waiting for just the right circumstance. Of course, the “right circumstance” never comes. Things are never perfectly planned. But the circumstance which does come is really simply an opportunity.

Opportunity.

When we sit and evaluate our life and decide when X happens, I can do Y. When I do Y, then I will feel Z. (Z typically

representing happiness, of course.) And so many people say X is the circumstance. They wait for the world to change around them, so they can do Y. Y is action. Whether a decision, an outward-reaching action, or a change in perspective... Y is what we do to accomplish Z. The elusive (to some) happiness.

So... What's wrong with going straight to Z?

(Another topic for another day, I think...)

Ok, so maybe people aren't always happy with the hand they've been dealt. Despite that we are all generally responsible for the station we each are in our life, I'll accept that opinion. It's true, actually. I know there are some things I would like to be different about my own life. I think everyone would change some things if they could. So, making that change is the Y. If we are in control of the Y to get to Z, then why do we need the X?

I mentioned before that X is the circumstance. That which many people rely upon, to create the right environment for Y to be possible. (Or, at the least, comfortable.) But why does X have to be what happens around us? Why can't X be opportunity?

(I haven't strayed too far from Grandma, trust me.)

If X is circumstance to most, why couldn't the circumstance be the circumstance of opportunity?

Here's the cool thing... We don't have to wait for opportunity to find us. We already have opportunities in our back pockets.

When we reach in and pull out an X, we can go through with Y. That will get us to our Z.

Me, I'm a Z Girl. I reach for the opportunity.

When we keep our eyes and ears open, and connect to those around us, we are constantly filling our cache of opportunities. Well, potential opportunities. It's the person you met at a dinner party who happens to be a publisher, the dad of a friend who happens to have an advertising firm, and bumping into a graphic artist at the grocery store... Maybe not all contacts are opportunities we can jump into at the moment, but opportunities with potential.

I guess that's what Grandma saw with her, uh, friend. Opportunity. With potential.

Back in 1942, Grandma didn't engage in anything "inappropriate" with this friend of hers, of course. But the opportunity for a relationship might have been there, and

there's a part of her that wonders what would have happened if it had been realized. (I can tell you that if she had, I probably would not be around to be having the conversation over 65 years later...) But Grandma is one tough cookie, who has taken on her fair share of opportunities.

"Dear, all I have to say is when you see your opportunity, you'd better take it. You never know what will happen if you do, but you'll never find out when you don't."

I guess that makes Grandma a Z Girl, too.

*“...In the pockets of people, there is color and
music and laughing. And it’s completely
up to you to find them...”*

I WANT YOU TO ASK ME.

I want you to ask me. Although you may not understand the answer...

Desolate. You are walking through streets of a desolate city that you have always lived in, and yet you don't know your way around. It's bright and dusty, and despite the sheer volume of things going on, it's quiet and surprisingly bland. It's what you might imagine a city would look like after a nuclear war.

As you walk around, you see people who are shuffling about, although you can't tell where they are going or what they are trying to accomplish. And unfortunately, everyone's faces look almost the same. There are people you have known your whole life, and yet when you look at them, their faces are so similar that sometimes it takes several seconds to tell one from the other.

One thing you do know about this place is that there are rituals, rules, and restrictions which seem (to you, at least), to be highly illogical. The unfortunate thing is that violations of this conglomeration of protocol can have highly detrimental consequences. But because the rules seem illogical, it's difficult to predict what is and is not ok. The laws are easy to follow because regardless of the logic, they are clearly defined. It's the

unwritten rules which are almost scary, because violating them means losing a job, ruining a relationship, and ridicule.

They speak your language in this place, but that doesn’t mean communication comes easily. Many of the words still mean the same thing, but there are just enough differences that while you know misunderstandings are very possible, it’s difficult to know when the misunderstanding is actually occurring. Unfortunately, the people around you don’t know that these misunderstandings are possible, so although you are on alert, the other people around you are sure that you mean what they think you mean. And when you try to clarify, it only becomes more confusing to them.

Add to this that the others are physically accustomed to the debris of the nuclear mess, but it makes you very sick. The others can’t understand why sometimes you have to wear a mask, so you are ridiculed for that, too. You may even lose your job for wearing it. (But you’ll also lose your job for being out sick from not wearing your mask.)

There are many beautiful dimensions to the strange world, but they need to be found. They are secret places that are hard to find. Like the colorful butterfly garden hidden in a warehouse, and the sunrise which you can only see with your blinder goggles on. There is grass between your toes, but only when your

eyes are closed. There are things which you see in this place which you love, so you cling to them.

When you see a blooming tree with pink blossoms, you spend many hours sitting under it because it shelters you from the blistering sun, distracts you from the others passing by, and calms you in a way that the others just don't understand. But you cling to it nonetheless.

As you walk around the streets of this frightening place, you are pretty sure there are others like you. Although they, like you, are hiding. Some are hidden in nooks and crannies.

Others like you congregate in pockets, but no one knows there whereabouts because once they go into their preferred pocket, they never come out again. In the pockets of people, there is color and music and laughing. And it's completely up to you to find them.

If your parents are like you they could have helped you learn about this odd place. But they aren't, as they are like the rest of the others. They didn't know how to help you, or even what you needed help with in the first place. So your life is like this, and your parents try to cope with helping you down the right street if you get lost.

"I NEED MORE HELP THAN THAT!!!" you keep shouting. But as much as they love you, all they know how to do is point you down a different street, which may or may not get you where you are going at that moment.

Or maybe they were like you. If they were, they taught you about this place, showed you where the pockets of people are, and how to hide your mask. They knew what you would need to know as you grow, so they knew how to help you. Maybe your parents were like the others but knew about people like you. So they did the best they could for you, with what they had. And for you, it was good enough. What happens when your parents die? You are alone in this place.

Imagine this was your world. Now ask me what it's like to live a life as an adult with Aspergers. Although, you may not understand the answer.

"... Ask me about how two Universal Laws can be diametrically opposed and yet tied together to write cosmological realities. Ask me about the universe, but don't even try to get me to figure out a RSVP. (By the way, that's cosmology, not cosmetology)..."

ORIGAMI, DNA AND CAFEPRESS (THAT'S A PLUG, YOU KNOW.)

"Mom, my teacher was mad at me for asking to go to the bathroom each time I had to go, but what would happen if I left without asking? She wouldn't know where I was, and she wouldn't like that either, now would she?"

Ok. Tell me if I'm crazy.

So I was talking to someone just the other day about participating in a Life/Finance Coach's radio show. Part of the preparation process is to chat about background, my occupational concerns and of course Aspergers.

"You seem perfectly clear to me!" the producer said to me. (More than once.)

He was really nice and I know what he was saying. Although possibly a little detailed, I am typically able to get my point across. (Eventually.)

But consider another exchange. Now keep in mind that I am a writer and I get some pretty good feedback on what I have to say "on paper", and how I say it. ...And yet in an exchange with an

organizer of a grass roots parents-of-kids-with-autism, I totally fucked up.

Here is what happened. There is a "playgroup" for people with autism. (In society today, I think that means "kids" since I think adults with autism feel pretty much invisible.) They have craft tables set up, a bake sale... You get the idea.

Last month I asked if I could volunteer at a table, doing crafts with kids. They already had face painting, balloons, coloring, so I suggested origami. (Although I'd be happy to do anything to help out.) Now, I happen to know that high-functioning kids with autism/Aspergers, not to mention adults, would enjoy origami. (Has to do with the complexity of the folds.) In May it wasn't going to work for them and that was fine-- She suggested my sons and I attend as a parent and just mingle. So I did.

This month I began receiving emails for the volunteers, that it was "that time again" and who would like to volunteer for a table? The email specifically mentioned letting the organizer know if we had any hidden talents.

(Uh, *yeah*. I do origami.)

I emailed her and mentioned that I would love to do an origami table. She sent a great, enthusiastic response! She said she

might even want to spend some time at the table, and let's plan on that: an origami table. She asked if I had the paper. (For 200 kids to use at least 3 or 4 pages each? *Uh, no.*) Were there any other supplies I'll need? Please respond asap so they can send out an email to the group, and add that origami will be attending. (That's my paradigm, not hers.)

I responded about the paper, and oh by the way if that won't work I can do simple balloon animals or face painting. In the email I casually (I think) asked if it would be OK to bring a few small-sized fliers to just set on the table for a class I'm teaching. I mentioned that I am trying to support myself independently and if I can bring the fliers great, if not that's fine. too.

Suddenly the organizer wasn't so excited about the origami.

Personally I was more excited about volunteering, rather than the possible opportunity to promote a class. I thought hey-- two birds with one stone. But Origami? That definitely takes top billing in my book. She seemed to think I was some flunkie.

"I think once you come to your first event, you will understand the direction of the group."

I was maybe just a little bit miffed. (Just a little, of course.) I hadn't yet mentioned to her that my older son already asked if

he could volunteer to do balloon animals at the June event. You see, my sons have a special place in the heart of a popular local performance clown. Had a little something to do with when Chili, my Aspie then 5 year old, asked her to make him a strand of DNA out of balloons. Add to that, that my older son Addison is like the pied piper with younger kids. (Without the funny pants. But he does like to skip every now and then...!)

Now, keep in mind that I also volunteered to do face painting. (If you've visited my shop on CafePress.com then you have already seen that I enjoy art and like to design. You can visit it at <http://www.cafepress.com/APanopticLife> . That's a plug, by the way! Make no mistake about it!)

So the point I'm making here is that the three of us were willing to come and contribute 2 volunteering bodies, at least. I also wouldn't have a problem contacting that performance clown, who very likely would have volunteered her time. And oh yeah, I get paid to work with kids- preschoolers- teaching them how to use the computer. So I'm pretty sure the kids would love me. (I'm not making any claims about the parents.) And all of this was overshadowed by the fact that I asked-- not insisted-- ASKED if it might be OK if I just left some fliers on my table while I am making cranes with the kids. The organizer's message was pretty clear:

Maybe next time.

As a side note, she did ask me if the company where I'm teaching the autism class wanted to sponsor the event.

(I thought to myself, *really? Did I hear her correctly?* As it turned out... Yes. I did.)

Is it just me, or was I blown off?

I responded to her, and although I tried to hide my "miffed-ness", I'm guessing maybe a little bit of it leaked out anyway.

She didn't respond, although that email was sent to the whole group, with a long admonishment regarding solicitation. They "will be asked to leave". (Wow. Harsh.)

So here I am, a person with Aspergers, trying to communicate with an organizer of an autism event. And yet I still can not get my point across. She seemed to think that my purpose was to solicit, when all I really wanted to do was volunteer, and now I'm not allowed to. Where did I go wrong? What happens the next time I have a question? Will I not be allowed to come at all? I feel like a puppy on the highway.

This is the dilemma of people with Aspergers. Everyone misunderstands. (Well, practically everyone. Aspies seem to understand each other, surprisingly. At least they understand that they may misunderstand. That makes Aspies, uh... more understanding.)

And I'm not even going to go into the trouble I had with whether or not to RSVP to the volunteers. Do I RSVP no for volunteering and yes for attending as an attendee? Jeez...

Life can be so confusing. Ask me about how two Universal Laws can be diametrically opposed and yet tied together to unite cosmological realities. Ask me about the universe, but don't even try to get me to figure out a RSVP.

(By the way, that's cosmology, not cosmetology.)

The point I'm making here (yes there is one) is that as a person with Aspergers, how is it possible that I can express myself so clearly in some ways and be so completely unclear in others?

This guy I was talking to yesterday, the producer. He was really nice. He asked about why I had such trouble fitting in at an office, and the other ways my Aspergers is a challenge in my life. I told him it's my communication. I wasn't sure of how to respond when he said "Well, you sound clear to me."

Uh, thanks?

(Just wait until I try to ask where the bathroom is.)

**Autism Awareness stuff...
...for the *terminally cool*.**



www.Zazzle.com/lorin_neikirk

Note: Since this blog was written, the Cafepress shop has been all but abandoned, and replaced with a much cooler one on Zazzle, at www.Zazzle.com/lorin_neikirk, So... check it out!*

CATCH THE LIGHT

A sky isn't so beautiful without the clouds,
A silver sun, poking through
Shines its rays of joy on down,
Looking, I catch the light

God has His eye on us,
His eye on me and you...
The rays of light says He knows our hearts
Shining hearts, still full of life

Looking up at the sky,
I catch the rays of light--
The rays that tell me He still loves me, and that
I was meant to be

Looking into the clouds in the sky
I see your beautiful face...
Shining with the light of love,
Tossing rays back down at me

The feel of your love is like the sky itself,
Dazzles luminous, glowing and bright!
I can't help but close my eyes
As I smile and catch the light

Love, you are my light.



LORIN NEIKIRK has been writing behavioral stories for almost a decade, and has recently crossed over to adult non-fiction, with “...But That’s Another Story!”

As a Houston-based writer and consultant on the autism spectrum, Lorin looks for opportunities to spread her message, “**Kids with autism grow to be adults with autism**” asking parents and educators to shift their frame of reference about what, and how, to teach kids. The goal is to foster not only independence, but positive societal resonance.

No stranger to being misunderstood, Lorin strives to change the global perspective about people with autism, with her grassroots movement, Aspie Friendly, as well as helping individuals with her tools, writing, and consulting, specifically in the area of Aspergers and education..

Other books by Lorin include *Jack’s Fantastic World (...And the Time He Decided to Paint His Brother’s House!)*, *Talking, Following Directions, and Disruptions in Class: Three Learning Stories for School* and *My Little Social Story About... Understanding Autism*.

Autism. Understand it.



Are you proud of me?!