

Giving Oneself Away and Gaining the World in Return

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With the devastation that's recently occurred on the East Coast, we've all been called to see how capable we are of giving, as well as appreciate what we have that we often take for granted. After Storm Sandy many have been left with absolutely nothing and our collective hearts go out to those who have suffered so much, so unfairly. Perhaps that's what draws us to care so much--knowing that it could have easily happened to any of us. Even now as we see the pictures of neighborhoods that were destroyed or that now have to be razed for safety concerns, the suffering is monumental and impacts our collective unconscious. Perhaps this knowing now becoming visceral, and is just what may create the critical mass necessary for real change.

The devastation that has occurred is also something that each of us can use in our personal transformation, as it brings us face to face with how we are living each moment of our lives. We were all simply just living our lives days before the storm hit and then for many, life was irrevocably changed forever. Knowing how fragile life is can make us extremely aware of how we are living each precious moment. This awareness of how we are living our minutes, hours and days can help us see what we might be taking for granted. We can notice if our thoughts are focused on the non-essential, the inane/mundane dramas that often captivate and nullify our consciousness.

And more importantly we can see how we are treating the loved ones in our lives who often go under-appreciated until something happens and it's too late.

Let's first start with ourselves and what we have that we may not be fully appreciating, such as our wondrous body and its capabilities, our homes that provide shelter and comfort, and our work that helps create abundance and *raison d'être*. These things can rise to paramount importance when disaster strikes and any of them are taken away. If we take several minutes upon waking each day to give thanks, we can adopt an attitude of gratitude that will help us see ourselves and the world differently and help sustain real feeling of appreciation for what we have and for what's real. We can truly savor the things that support us or bring us joy, perhaps something as small as a hot cup of coffee or a comforter on a cold day. By taking the time to do this it forces us to really be in the present moment, as that's where any real savoring of our experience takes place. We'll find that there are many, many reasons to "be here now."

From here we can better see who around us might benefit from what we have to give. It becomes easy to give from our own feelings of gratitude as we can't help but to give what we have away, knowing that we are open vessels for more to flow through us. It becomes organic;

we see a need and then we fill it. This doesn't have to be a complicated process, as we simply follow what's unfolding right in front of us. We are in fact helping ourselves by helping others--the two are inextricably entwined or perhaps even one and the same.

Living from this place can be very rewarding indeed, as there's always something to do which can bring meaning great and small. Inevitably this leads to a life more deeply experienced which offers the kind of personal fulfillment that expands the frame within which we live.

We become more expansive human beings: to quote Walt Whitman in his Leaves of Grass, "I am larger, better than I thought, I did not know I held so much goodness."

Sometimes it takes a wake-up call to really get what we're capable of. Let's make this recent tragedy that has affected so many our own personal wake-up call, a waking up to a life of appreciation, responsibility and giving so that the world we create will be one we would want to pass down to those who follow after us.



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