

# Dancing with Words, Dancing with Wisdom Show 19

Today I chose to speak to you directly about some topics with which I've struggled and topics that I promised to talk to you about and then we simply didn't have time on the (previous) one-hour shows.

These topics are, first of all, rage and anger. What do we do with these emotions when they infect our lives, and how do we transform them into useful energy?

Then the second focus is: how to use our words effectively and efficiently and creatively and with excellence to co-create the kind of world in which we want to live — all of us together. We are all creators, and we are all beneficiaries of a peaceful, powerful, prosperous planet.

Let's start with this challenge of anger and rage. As many of you, who have listened to the show before, know, there are certain forms of language I really prefer. One is simply storytelling. I'll be using a lot of stories this morning.

The reason for the storytelling is that it is non-authoritarian. You will get whatever meaning you get out of the stories I tell. Hopefully, they will connect, at some point, with parts of your own life, with which you have struggled, and where perhaps you have been able to overcome.

Let's start with this challenge of anger.

In 2011, a good friend of mine, Frederick Zappone, started a big discussion on his Inspired Living Blog Talk Radio show, because his topic was "Got anger? Find Out How to Make Anger Your Most Powerful Ally and Your Best Friend." You cannot imagine the resistance this topic brought up from people still stuck in their heads about anger, so very certain that anger was somehow bad.

I can only assume that those people who were resisting this idea of "Anger is okay and let's accept it and then transform it" have lived very comfortable lives. Have they ever been jailed for a crime they didn't commit? Raped? Tortured? Had their homes ransacked, and gifts from their loved ones stolen? Been evicted because their landlord could get more money from someone else? Lived in a society where disputes are resolved by bribes? Been forced to exist in a concentration camp? Been relegated to the back of a bus or forced to drink from a different water fountain because of their skin color? Been an innocent victim of a nuclear bomb? If they have not experienced any of these things, they simply can't understand anger and outrage.

The issue is not whether there is anger and outrage. There is. The issue is what we do with it when we experience it. Do we stuff it and pretend that the evil, abusive conduct never happened? Do we remain silent, tacitly supporting this kind of inhuman conduct and allowing it to continue?

I, for one — after I worked my way through my terror — chose to speak out against wrong, abusive conduct, bring it to the light of day, and make it transparent for the whole world to see; and then take action to transform it. It is *not* acceptable conduct in a co-creative, collaborative world.

Feeling anger and taking appropriate action is not the antithesis of love and understanding. It, in certain contexts, *is* love and understanding at the very deepest level of our Souls. I can still love the person who engages in this kind of despicable conduct and understand that he, too, may have been abused. However, I do *not* need to remain silent in the face of his dysfunctional conduct.

I get really tired of New Age gurus preaching that I shouldn't be angry. The fact is sometimes I *am* angry. I am angry when people I trust betray me. I am angry when people make promises they don't keep. I am angry when people treat me with disrespect.

Anger was not considered a nice emotion in my birth family. My mother rarely expressed it. Neither did my father.

There *were* some exceptions. When I was three years old, my mother and I were standing on the sidewalk along Roosevelt Boulevard, which is a multilane highway in Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Suddenly I jerked my hand away from my mother's grip and darted out onto the highway.

My mother was terrified and furious. Her only daughter, in whom she had invested so much time, energy, care, and love, was stupidly going to kill herself. Had I killed myself, I would simultaneously have killed much of the meaning in my mother's life. She ran after me, dragged me back to the sidewalk, and vehemently spanked me.

I deserved that spanking. It quickly taught me not to run in front of cars.

One of our focuses today is talking about this very challenging emotion — rage. I know, on other shows, I've mentioned the "power under" dynamic where you're going along, living your own life in a very comfortable, easy, supportive way, and all of a sudden, either an event or another person comes in and smashes you down, and you are shocked! First of all, "Why me? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why did this happen to me? What did I do wrong? What should I have done differently, so that this did not happen?"

Ultimately, you get to a point where you accept the fact that yes, it did happen, and then sometimes there's a transformation of the pain and the shock. (This is all energy we're working with, so there are different forms of energy.) There's a transformation of the pain or the shock into anger and rage, particularly if you were abused by another human being in some of the ways I mentioned in the first segment of this show. You were bombed! You were relegated to an inferior position somehow! You were raped! Your child was shot for no good reason!

That rage, lots of times, then transforms into a "power against" dynamic — a power against the abuser, the person who has abused you. Where we really want to go with this — and need to go with this, as a human society — is into a "power with" position — which means you need to get your own power right first and you need to transform your own rage into something constructive; and then, you can attract other people into a "power with" dynamic, so that together, we are working to co-create a peaceful, powerful and prosperous planet. It really isn't that hard, once we work through our own issues and start talking to other people.

Another story from my own childhood: I think I've been a rebel ever since I was born, but you wouldn't have known it to look at me, because I was a model student and a model daughter. I didn't look like a rebel. But there were times that I found myself to be rebellious, and it's when I went into this rage.

As a ninth-grade student, I was editor of the school newspaper. I wrote an editorial upholding freedom of speech. The newspaper advisor didn't like it. She rewrote my article, toned it down, appended my name, and told me why what I had written was wrong.

As a model student, I rarely confronted a teacher, but this time I was outraged in ways that even surprised me. I remember being shocked again, in tears again. I stormed out of the classroom, saying, "You wrote it! You sign your name to it!" Then I went and cried for a half an hour. I was 11 or 12 years old.

Anger can be a wonderful messenger. For myself, I think it's really important that I listen to it with respect and decipher the message it is bringing to me. While the message might be partly about what someone else is doing or not doing, the real message is for me. How am I going to respond, so that the situation does not happen again? If I ignore the message, telling myself I *shouldn't* be angry, I am out of integrity and enabling injustice, disrespect, and lack of accountability.

Here's another story. This is the same dynamic — "power under," "power against" and then "power with." In fact, all these stories center around that theme, and how we all can shift our perspectives and shift our words to bring *ourselves* into harmony first. Once *we* are in harmony, then we can bring harmony to everybody and everything around us.

After 21 years of marriage and three children, I went through an absolutely shocking and horrible experience. My husband abandoned me and our children so he could have an affair with another woman.

I had been a wonderful wife. I had washed the family clothes, cleaned the family home, baked homemade bread, cared for our yard and organic garden, joined my husband on his sailing excursions and trips to Maine, watched football games with him, entertained his friends, played bridge with him, sung our children to sleep, read them stories, played games with them. He said we had the perfect marriage.

Yet he abandoned me and our children to rot after another woman!

My whole world turned upside down. What had I done wrong?

I lost my trust in people. I lost my trust in the social systems that had supported my family over centuries. I was hurting. My children were hurting. There was little I could do to make anything better. I was powerless. I sobbed alone at night, for hours, my heart shattered wide open and split into millions of pieces.

One of our sons went from straight A's to straight F's in a single year, got hooked on drugs, and became involved in physical violence and arrests. I was waking up in the middle of the night with such deep rage that it felt as if my guts were being ripped from my belly. Except for emotional and financial support from my parents, I might well have bought a gun and murdered both my husband and his mistress. That's how strong the anger was.

Why didn't I do it? I think two reasons. I didn't want to spend the rest of my own life in jail. The other reason was I didn't want my children to be orphans. There was self-love and love for my children within all that rage toward the man who had made vows to me to love, honor and obey (and then betrayed my trust).

How can one be grateful for such a life-shattering experience? What did I learn about myself?

I learned I was a survivor, and I was a spiritual warrior. Being used by this man as a convenient housekeeper, babysitter, and sex object was not the life I was intended to live.

At age 20, becoming a lawyer had never been part of my vision. At age 40, I needed to go to law school to learn how to use words and the patriarchal system to *protect* myself against words and the patriarchal system. I graduated *cum laude* and practiced law for 22 years in Atlantic City, New Jersey, at the time that Donald Trump was building his first casino there. On more than one occasion, bullies, incompetents and dysfunctional politicians disintegrated and disappeared as I presented relevant facts and arguments to support a dynamic, all-inclusive, co-creative community.

I learned how to think for myself and take care of myself. I became a free woman. I am beholden to no one other than the "Source" I have chosen to believe in, myself, and those humans who are accountable and conscious enough to deserve my gifts and my love.

I've experienced many "Dark Nights of the Soul," but I've learned to dance with the words and dance with the wisdom. I've even learned to dance with functional, respectful, appreciative men.

Here's another story. I have several from when I was practicing law.

As a woman entering the law practice in the 1980's when there weren't a lot of women in the law practice -- they were just starting to enter the law practice -- I think I was a token female in the law firm which first hired me, to make them look good, because they hired females. It *did* (partially) have to do with my ability. I had graduated from law school *cum laude*. But, I was still an outsider within that law firm. The guys would all go out to lunch together, and I would sit and eat my lunch at home alone. The guys that I could even talk with held me at a distance, because if they became too friendly with me, they would be looked down on by the other guys.

Here's a story from my law practice. I worked for a client whose home was damaged by fire. Her mortgage company lost the insurance proceeds check. She called, left messages, and sat in limbo, her calls unanswered.

When she did get through, the company transferred her from one employee to another, with no resolution of the problem. They were wasting my client's time, energy, and money.

My client could not repair her home without the insurance money. She was paying rent elsewhere. After a year of trying to resolve the problem, she wrongly, but understandably, stopped making mortgage payments.

The mortgage company figured this was just money in their pocket. They immediately began foreclosure. My client was never served with a summons and complaint. By the time she came to me, a lawyer, for legal help, her home was scheduled for sheriff's sale.

She had done nothing wrong. However, because she had never been served with a summons and complaint, she didn't even know about the sheriff's sale.

Serving a defendant with a summons and complaint is legally required in the United States if you are abiding by the rules of law. (It's called "due process.") My client was totally shocked (when she learned) that she was about to lose her home.

I called the attorney for the mortgage company, requested his cooperation in postponing the sheriff's sale, and asked him to provide me with documentation so we could get the insurance check reissued, the property repaired, and the mortgage paid.

One of the things I really get upset about is when people make promises and they don't keep them. Although he promised to speak with the mortgage company, he did not postpone the sheriff's sale, didn't provide the requested documentation, didn't answer my follow-up letters, and refused to accept my phone calls.

Again, I was furious. This was not my client's fault. This was not my fault. We were trying to work together to save the property. My guess is the focus of the mortgage company was to put money in their own pockets, however they had to do it.

In New Jersey, where I was practicing, an owner of property being foreclosed is allowed two automatic postponements of a sheriff's sale. I requested one *from the court*. Now I was no longer talking to the attorney for the mortgage company, because he clearly wasn't talking to me. So, I requested (a postponement) and immediately filed a motion to vacate final judgment.

I enjoyed letting my outrage show. My courtesy to this corrupt mortgage company and its attorney had accomplished nothing.

Interestingly, my anger got the opposing attorney's attention. I have seen this happen so many times when I've been in a "power against" situation (even though) I want to be in a "power with" situation — but the other side doesn't want to be there.

My anger got the opposing attorney's attention. At 5 p.m. on the day before the court hearing, he called to tell me his client had consented to vacate the judgment, would provide the requested documentation, and would cooperate in getting the property repaired so that my client could move back in. Really interesting!

When you stand up to bullies, and you present the facts, and you use the law to make the appropriate legal decision, then you are transforming rage into personal power, but also "power with." It's power with someone who has been abused; it's power with a healthy legal system; and it's internal power with oneself (and one's own values).

I could have chosen to stuff my outrage over the treatment my client and I (had) received. I could have chosen to radiate a hot bright light outward (which is what some gurus recommend), toward the mortgage company and its attorney. But I don't think those actions would have stopped the sheriff's sale, saved my client's home, and transformed the attitudes of the mortgage company and its attorney from "Don't bother me" to "Of course, we'll work with you."

I have many, many stories about my own rage, particularly as a female attorney in Atlantic City.

This one is another transformation of rage. I've called it "From Rage to Compassion." This is really beginning to understand what the abuser has been through and why they've become an abuser.

In 2005, I purchased a beautiful piece of land in the western mountains of Panama. I intended to build my dream home there.

The developer insisted I use their builder for construction. This immediately raised a red flag, because I *did* have some experience in real estate at that time.

I asked friends, knowledgeable in construction, to evaluate the builder's work. They said the block work was good and the builders were using enough steel rebar. I decided to proceed and had architectural plans drawn up to my own specifications.

At first, things seemed to go okay. Although there wasn't much onsite supervision, the builder *did* agree to correct a master bathroom that was too small for the tub I had purchased. (They had started to build the bathroom according to their own model rather than my revised model.) They corrected the slope of the septic system outflow line so it would actually serve the purpose for which it was there, and agreed to make other minor changes.

However, (I soon discovered that, not only was there little construction supervision on site), but the employees — the people who were doing the actual building — a few years before, had been taxi drivers and farmhands. So, the people building my home had no experience and no supervision. They were hand-mixing concrete for the foundation, so when we had it tested, we discovered it wasn't strong enough to hold up the building.

I was picking my battles on this, but there were some things that were simply *not* acceptable.

What I didn't realize, when I signed the original contract, was that contracts in Panama frequently don't mean anything. If you're an American, you're going to lose in court, so you don't go into court to enforce them. Even though I thought we had an agreement, that soon went totally out the window.

I had hired, first, a Panamanian inspector for a couple of months, and then (when he suddenly abandoned me to return to Panama City), I hired a US inspector, who was a guy with not much education, but he did have about 35 years of experience building houses in the United States. He knew what needed to be done.

Of course, the other thing I didn't realize when I went down there (to the Boquete, Panama, area) was that neither the developers nor the builders nor the employees who were actually doing the construction had much training or experience or education in how to build a house. They were in a lot of rage toward me and my inspector, who were coming in and suggesting that perhaps it would be a good idea to have the water pipes work so they didn't leak; perhaps it would be a good idea to change the ceiling in the bedroom so that you could see out the window and the ceiling didn't cut off the top of the window; fix the septic tank so that it actually was useful.

When my inspector suggested to the Panamanian plumber how he might correct some issues in the plumbing system, the Panamanian plumber threw his tools across the yard.

The construction company owner could only say that I was the worst client she had ever had, and that none of her employees wanted to work for me.

We repeated a water pressure test dozens of times because the gauge dropped 40 PSI on each test. The builder said the drop resulted from the temperature and atmospheric pressure changes. My inspector said there was a leak.

Finally, the roof got on, the ceilings were being installed. The installers were asking technical questions that I couldn't answer. There was no onsite foreman, so I brought in my own inspector. Together we brainstormed how to deal with the bedroom ceiling that was too low to clear the window, as well as the slopes of other ceilings. I thought everyone was satisfied.

Then, suddenly, out of the blue in September 2008, I received an email from the builder's husband accusing me of breaching the contract (by interfering with their workers) and telling me that the builder would not do any more work on my home. Moreover, if I wanted to finish it with another builder, I would have to pay the first builder over \$40,000, which certainly was not due (under the terms of the contract). In other words, they were fed up with me, and I was pretty frustrated with the (poor quality of) construction I was receiving. Again, I was stunned that they would demand money from me for walking off the job. (What I didn't realize was that making money was all they were interested in.)

At first, I apologized, explaining it was not my intention to upset them. It wasn't — but none of my apologies made any difference.

(What I didn't realize then, but do now, was that our intentions had simply been different. I had intended to build an exceptional home. They had intended to make money with as little cost and effort on their part as possible.)

Ever since that (moment), my beautiful dream home began to rot. I flipped between trying to understand, looking for solutions, and feeling outraged.

My rage was making me ill and contaminating every cell of my body and every aspect of my life. I knew I had to make an energetic and perception shift — not because the builders necessarily deserved it, but in order to retain my own sanity.

I stopped thinking about my beautiful dream home. It had been heaved into the mud and trampled on. To see it in that condition and know there was nothing I could do was gut-wrenching. It was exactly the way I felt when I walked out of my first marriage. It had been heaved into the mud and trampled on, and there was nothing I could do to save it.

I made a conscious choice to leave Panama, return to the States, and focus on my life purpose of helping to shift the consciousness of every person on this planet so that together we can live in peace, power and prosperity.

Can I feel compassion for the builders? Yes, I can. How must they have felt to be doing the best they knew how, the best they were trained to do, and be dealing with a client from another country who had different training and perhaps different intentions and different standards of excellence.



At this point, having observed this dynamic so many times, I think it is true — this is my understanding at least — that anyone so full of anger and blame must be steeped in low self-esteem. It was not a place I wanted to stay.

Do I want to live in that community? Not on your life. Do I want to sell the house, salvage what I can, and move on with my life? Absolutely. I ultimately did that.

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Now that — maybe — I've worked through the rage, to an understanding of the other person's position, and can actually feel compassion for them — without condoning their wrong conduct — let's switch, for the final segment of the show, (we may not get through all of this, but we can start) what I promised I would bring you . . .

How can we use our words skillfully and powerfully to co-create the kind of world in which we want to live? (This is just an aside. If any of you are familiar with the [Buddhist Eightfold Path](#), one of the paths is right speech.) What if we ask ourselves, first of all, what kind of world we want to live in?

Again, if you look at the Buddhist Eightfold Path, this goes to the issue of intention. It's setting our intention to co-create the kind of world in which we *do* want to live, where we would feel comfortable and safe. What would that look like?

Enough food, water and shelter for all? A safe world where we're not shooting each other with guns all the time and where we're (not) verbally abusing one another? An interesting world? An exploratory world? A dynamic world? A mutually respectful world, respectful of all life? Perhaps a challenging world? And certainly, a creative and co-creative world. These are my ideas. Maybe you have other ideas.

What are some human-created practices that support, first of all, knowing yourself? Because until you know yourself, you can't know others, and you can't really co-create with others.

These are practices, that support getting to know yourself and working through your own shadow work, your own rage, your own terror, your own guilt, and issues like that:

**Affirmations** — positive, supportive speech that builds self-esteem, such as "I am beautiful, I am intelligent." You write these down and you say them over and over and over again.

**Prayer or meditation** — sinking into a deep, grounded connection with a "Power greater than ourselves," whatever that means to you. It's something you experience. It's not something you conceptualize.

**Watching one's own thoughts** — Again, going to Buddhism, this is the Witness. You watch your own mind. Watch where your thoughts are taking you and then how those thoughts affect your emotions and your body (and your actions).

**Vision boards** — I think I've talked a little bit about these before, and I don't have time to go into them, but you can Google them.

**Gratitude.** It helps us focus on the good in our lives and not just the problems and challenges. Even in a challenging situation, what do I have to be grateful for?

And real fast — **appreciation, journaling, mastermind groups, asking the right questions, speaking in first-person singular language, meaningful storytelling and poetry and circle work.**

(Substantially edited from the original for clarity.)