

Abundance, What We Humans Do with Words, Dark Night of the Soul, Transformational Practices, Power Greater than Ourselves

I'd like to start out with a story about something that just happened to me in Panama. I was in Panama for New Year's and the week afterwards.

Very interesting. I was renting a small little condo unit in the heart of Panama City near shopping and all kinds of stores and restaurants. I had stayed there before. I paid my money through PayPal.

The owner of the property (Scotty) emailed me and he said, "I see you've written a book that sounds really interesting. Would you please bring me an autographed copy? I'd be happy to pay you for it."

I wrote back and said, "There is so much abundance on this planet. I'm happy to bring you an autographed copy, but you don't need to pay me for it."

When I brought it down, the owner was not there. But I brought it down and left it with the woman who was managing the property.

When I left, I also left a little container of face cream, and I thought, "Oh, darn, I really like that face cream." I wrote to the owner and I said, "Please tell Marlana," (who was managing the property) "to just take it and use it."

Yesterday, (to my amazement) I received a \$100 refund (from Scotty) for my stay in Panama City.

This is the way abundance works. It's the way the universe works when you allow yourself to give and receive and serve others wherever you can.

I'm astounded over what happened. I'm amazed. I wasn't looking for any money, but it flowed to me.

Let's continue on the topic of abundance for a minute.

This is about Nokomis, Florida, Beaches. They offer a cornucopia of gifts: gorgeous sunsets, puffy, shape-changing clouds, fresh air, blue herons, egrets, seagulls, baby turtles plodding their way from their nests back to the sea, shark's teeth, seashells, warm sun, blue sky. Every single one of these gifts is free.

Do we stay mindful enough to notice them, breathe them in, and allow them to renew our minds, bodies and spirits?

This morning, as I waited in the warm, turbulent gulf surf, shells and shark's teeth washed over my toes. If I didn't scoop them up quickly, I lost them. The surf churned them back into the sea or underneath the sand. The supply was constant, but if I didn't stay alert and take action, I lost everything.

A friend of mine recently made a public offer to give \$25 to anyone who would contact him and ask for money. At least 100 people looked at the offer. Only one acted.

Are you going to be the one to act and receive? Are you open to accepting the gifts that constantly flow into your life? Or would you rather just sit there, think about it and lose a life of wonderful moments?

I wrote a poem. This is again focused on abundance. I wrote a poem a number of years ago.

Drop
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by
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the
dew
drips
onto
alabaster
lily
petal
Drop
by
drop
by
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That is what this idea of abundance is all about. It's a constantly flowing stream of gifts if we are open to allowing them to flow through us, and then flow back out of us to enrich the lives of those around us.

I think I'll finish this segment with a couple more poems that I didn't have an opportunity to read the last time.

This is called:

In His Image
(Bridges)

The left brain plods along
with its rigidly accurate logic
except for its premise
which always begins with "if."

The right brain will,
perhaps must,
make that leap of faith
from which it absorbs the courage to risk
absurdity,

creativity.

This segment may be repetitive for those of you who have listened to these shows before. For those of you who are new, maybe it's something you haven't thought about. So, you can plug it into your mental data base and play with it. For those of you who have heard some of this before, you can view it as a kind of ritual.

Repetition is an interesting tool — verbal repetition, repetition of words. Churches do this a lot, for example, "Hail Mary, full of grace." That's a ritual. It is a vehicle or a tool for connecting with — I'm going to call it an Energy, a Power — something that is way beyond what our minds will

ever be able to understand or conceptualize. Consider this just a ritual if you've heard this before.

Let's talk about words. The title of this show is "Dancing with Words, Dancing with Wisdom" Anything I speak — consider it just a dance. You don't need to agree with it. You don't need to accept it. You can just notice your own responses to the words I speak. Maybe they will make sense. Maybe they won't make sense. Maybe they will bring up an experience in your own life that you had forgotten about. But suddenly, there's a connection between the words I speak and your own experience.

Let's start with the concept of "First Access," which was a concept developed by John Grinder and Carmen Bostic St. Clair. Our neurology, our physical bodies, are limited as to what they can actually physically access. There are sounds that dogs can hear that human beings cannot hear. There are certain light waves that are available, according to science, but which our eyes cannot see.

This experience or this sensory data by which we are surrounded, and which we ourselves are, is already restricted by what our neurology, our bodies, can access. On top of that, we impose a linguistic structure. A lot of this comes from John Grinder, Carmen Bostic St. Clair, and Alfred Korzybski.

The linguistic structure is where we are always playing. I know that your words feel really true and correct and right to you, just as my words feel really true and correct and right to me.

But, in a sense, we are playing with illusions that our minds have created. Words have been created by human beings. If you go back to the story in the book of Genesis — this is a very nice analogy — where humans were living in the Garden of Eden until they ate of the Tree of Knowledge. The Tree of Knowledge is the human creation of words. At which point the humans were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. They were separated and divided, separated certainly from — I'm going to use the word "Source," — their Source, their Energy, their connection with something much bigger than themselves. They were thrown out on their own. Then, ever since that mythological story, humans have been trying to get back to the Garden of Eden.

Well, how do you do it? Words are part of the problem. Also — if we understand them correctly — they can be a vehicle or a tool that will point the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Another story from the Old Testament, which fits in here, too, mythologically, is the story of humans trying to build the Tower of Babel to reach God. It just didn't work. They didn't get there, it was totally destroyed, and they were scattered throughout the Earth.

Maybe the wisdom is more about connecting. It's doing the inner work, the inner journey. (I've talked about that on previous programs.) There are all sorts of tools and techniques, and these are conceptual tools and techniques. But eventually, you are dropping the words or using them

in appropriate circumstances to balance a dysfunctional dynamic that's going on. As Ram Dass would say, it's "Be here now."

I can remember the first time I really saw a flower and really experienced it. Oh, my gosh! It was as if I was totally connected with that flower, totally part of it, because I was moving out of my head and into the direct experience of that beautiful, beautiful, opening flower.

Given the fact that there's a sense in which words are illusions, but they're also tools, they're also pointers, we can do a lot with them. But one thing they almost always do is separate, divide and categorize. If we take them seriously, then we become separated, divided and categorized.

In the last segment, I was doing some repetitive didactic-type teaching. It's a kind of teaching I really don't like a lot, but it has its uses in certain circumstances. It's fast, it's efficient, it generalizes, and it focuses attention. But in doing all those things, it sometimes misses the underlying energetic connection, which is what we're all really trying to get to, because we can then (consciously) superimpose our words and our worldviews on this sensory data that feels as if it's around us and sometimes part of us.

I mentioned before that words separate, divide and categorize — almost always. High/low, good/bad, right/wrong, black/white, red/blue, loud/soft. Those are separations and categorizations. They are very useful — to use our human abilities and our power to shift around the sensory data or organize it, categorize it, use it, or manipulate it. The words can be power tools, but we also need to use them with a great deal of care.

They do map our experiences in many different ways. They can temporarily transport us into imaginary and illusory worldviews. They can give meaning and purpose to our lives.

Let me remind you again about Alfred Korzybski's famous saying, "The map is not the territory." The words are not the experience. Talking about riding a skateboard is different from the actual experience of riding a skateboard. Talking about dancing is different from actually doing the dance. The transformation comes when you are willing to dance the dance of your own life and your own wisdom as fully as you possibly can.

What do we humans do with these words we've created? (We've created all kinds of conceptual systems and worldviews.) We *use* them to understand our experiences. We *use* them. Notice the word "use." These are vehicles or tools. They are not truths. We *use* them to communicate. We *use* them to understand relationships or distinctions.

You can think of the (Asian) Indian image of Indra's web. Words can help us connect with other aspects of life or other people or nature.

We *use* them, sometimes, to try to prove our own self-worth — because perhaps it's natural; perhaps because we've been taught that we are not good enough. We *are* good enough — or, at least, we can *use* our words to create that affirmation that “I am okay.”

Sometimes, unfortunately, we use words to manipulate and control other people. This shifts us into these "power over" or "power against" dynamics that I've talked about in some of the shows, which are really quite disruptive to human relationships. If you are in a "power under" position, if someone is verbally abusing you and calling you names, you will go through a lot of challenges with fear, terror, rage — perhaps guilt. These are all emotional challenges for you to work your way through.

St. John of the Cross talks about going through the "Dark Night of the Soul." This is what that experience is like, when you are in a "power under" position, where someone is telling you what's wrong with you or verbally abusing you in some way.

The "power against" comes from the rage which boils up after a while and says, "This is not my fault. It's *his* fault." Again, there's still a separation and a division.

Where we all need to get to is this "Power with" dynamic. If you use your hands, and if you are standing in your own power and your own connection with — I'm going to call it — a "Power greater than myself," which means you have an open mind and an open heart, and your hand is pointed directly up to the ceiling. If you are standing there, you will attract other people in with you. Then you have two people or more, two or more gathered together, hands in an upright position, which is the symbol of prayer in the Christian religion or Namaste in the Indian tradition.

It's so hard to find the words to express this, but I'm pulling some out, not as truths, but as fingers pointing at the moon.

These are Soul connections. These are bondings. It shifts us from this "power over" dynamic or "power against" dynamic into a "power with" dynamic — power with a “Power greater than ourselves,” power with other human beings, power with nature. It all happens within a very dynamic, co-creative, mutually respectful interaction. (I don't know how else to express this.)

I think we'll end this segment here, but I had previously promised you some group practices. We've gone through a lot of the individual practices that you can do on your own. That's inner work. That's learning about yourself, knowing yourself. Once you have a good handle on who you are, and you're on your own spiritual path, then you can start connecting with others who are (also) on a spiritual path.

Before we get to the group practices, let me finish up on some of the individual practices. I'm sure I haven't begun to mention all the individual practices that are available to each and every one of us when we choose to take a hero's journey or a heroine's journey — as Joseph

Campbell speaks of — of getting to know the depth of who we are. When we know the depth of who we are, then we can connect with anyone else with both passion and compassion.

Getting back to **individual practices**, one that has been used a lot in many religious traditions is **prayer or meditation**. It's allowing your mind to relax. It's sinking into a deep, grounded connection with — I'm going to use the words "a Power greater than ourselves," but you can use other words like "God," "Allah," "Universal Energy," "Cosmic Energy," "nature" or "Gaia."

Examples of this would be kneeling in church, gardening, snorkeling, hiking. These are all forms of prayer or meditation. Then, of course, there are more formal practices, too, like **yoga** or **Tai Chi**.

Another practice which I find is really fun, and it ties in with journaling, if you want to do this. It's **watching your own thoughts**.

Notice the correlation with the Buddhist concept of "**the Witness**." Who is this Witness? Who or what is doing the watching? We don't know. But we *can* watch the thoughts as they cycle through our minds. Some of them keep going around in circles and circles and circles and never take us anyplace. There are other thoughts that either release us or move us forward.

We can choose the thoughts that we want to use, and we can just watch our thoughts and not necessarily take them seriously. Think of it as watching a movie of your own thoughts.

Gratitude. This is a practice. You don't do it because you *ought* to do it. You focus on gratitude because it shifts the energy in your body.

You can look "out there" and you can see everything that's wrong, all the problems and everything you need to solve, and go along that line, if you choose. Or you can just be grateful for each and every moment of life you have been given. If you start looking for the good flowing into your life, as, for example, my surprise this morning over being gifted with \$100 from my host in Panama— that was a total surprise and it was so beautiful and such a wonderful gift, but I had been giving, too.

There's another story I want to tell about Panama last week. I feel really bad about this. As I was walking the streets in Panama City, there was a homeless woman sleeping on the sidewalk with a few belongings scattered around her, obviously destitute.

I looked at her with compassion, and I thought of pulling some balboas out of my pocket and just slipping them into one of her bags. I didn't do it, and I have regretted not doing that. I wish I had done that.

A parallel that comes to mind is the story of the Good Samaritan. I wasn't a Good Samaritan in Panama City. I could have been.

Another individual practice is **forgiveness**. Again, you don't forgive because somebody at the top of some church tells you that you're a sinner if you don't forgive, and you're bad and you're evil and all the other stuff. *You forgive because it changes your own energy and your own life.*

That does that mean that you condone wrong conduct. You do not condone murder. You do not condone adultery. But you understand the forces that created that kind of conduct. If you listen to last week's show with Greg Cruz, you'll understand some of those energies and forces that create this disruptive conduct in society — this violent conduct.

You forgive, but you don't allow yourself to be damaged by that kind of conduct. You are protecting yourself.

There are lots of ways you can do this. One is to **visualize a white shield around your body protecting you from negative energy**. Another is to **build that connection** through prayer or meditation or whatever other practice you decide to use **with this “Energy” or “Power”** which our minds will never understand, but which is just so much greater than any one of us alone.

Moving on to the **group transformational practices** that support co-creating with each and every person and living being on this planet, a living, breathing, dynamic, peaceful, powerful, prosperous planet. Let me stress that the inner work comes first for each and every one of us. The group practices are maintenance practices. Each and every one of us is responsible for supporting this dynamic flow of co-creativity. The co-creativity includes our words, not as truths, but as worldviews or perspectives on the sensory data experiences that we seem to experience.

Group transformational practices. **Appreciation** is certainly one. It is so easy. When you start looking for what is good in your life instead of what is wrong and evil and needs to be corrected, your energy shifts. You move into being able to allow others in your life to know how much you love them and appreciate the good things that they do, the ways in which they have supported you, the ways in which you have learned from them.

It comes back to this whole (Asian) Indian concept of **Namaste**. The Spirit in me recognizes and respects the Spirit in you. You can also talk about this as mutual respect. It also moves into the idea of **listening** to another person's words rather than believing that you are the only one who has the right words, and you're going to force your words onto somebody else.

Yes, you do speak your truth. There are certain types of words that work better than others. We've been through that briefly. Things like **stories, questions, poetry, words as art** rather than words as truth. Appreciation of the good things in life, you start focusing on that and you do have a choice as to where you're going to focus, and your whole life will change and your relationships will change.

A second practice is **accountability**. Buddhists would refer to this as "right action." I'm going to use the words "doing what you say you will do."

That supports mutual trust or community trust. When you say you're going to do something and you don't follow through with that promise, you are betraying the trust that another person has put in your hands.

I can think of a couple of examples. When a couple makes marital vows to one another, for example, and then the husband decides it would be really macho and ego-building to have an affair with another woman, the actual sexual relationship is not the betrayal of trust. The betrayal of trust happens when the sexual relationship interferes with the support promised to the marital partner.

Another example would be if someone says to you, "Would you be able to give me a short-term loan? I'll repay it in a very short period of time." You have the money, you give it to them, and then when you need it, suddenly they have disappeared from your life. That's a betrayal of trust. That's why doing what you say you're going to do is vital. This is another community or group transformational practice, and it's a maintenance practice.

Don Miguel Ruiz, for example, says "Be impeccable with your word." Do what you say you're going to do. If for some reason, life interferes and you can't do it, you say that. You say, "I cannot do this. I am so sorry, but I'm sick," or "my system isn't working" or whatever the problem is.

Third -- this is both an individual practice and it's also a group practice -- asking the right questions to get the answers we need. You're very much in the area of creativity or co-creativity when you are playing with asking the right questions to get the answers you need.

When your focus is out there, you're creating, first of all, separation between you and another person. But when your focus is out there on what somebody else is doing wrong and you're asking, "What's wrong with him? Why can't he close the front door? Why can't he pick his clothes up off the floor?" you are disempowering yourself.

Start asking right questions which would be "What can I do to get the door fixed? What can I do to get the clothes off the floor?" That puts the power back into your own hands.

There are lots of answers there. There are lots of creative answers that you can ask. Start playing with these words. Start dancing with these words. Just notice as you dance with them how your own energy shifts and how your relationships with other people shift.

Another one has to do with **conscious communication**. It's speaking in **first-person singular language**. Your worldview is yours. You own it. You can choose any worldview you want to live, but notice how it affects your own energy. So, you start thinking. You start using this kind of language. **I think, I feel, I need, I choose.**

Before the break, I was talking about the importance of speaking in first-person singular language. If everyone did this, each one of us would be standing in our own truth, our own worldview, our own words and our own perspective by simply **sharing information** with one another. This is what I think. This is what I feel. This is what I need. This is what I choose. This supports freedom of speech, individual creativity, personal action, accountability, empowerment, and it shifts you out of self-righteousness and judgment.

This is from the New Testament, Matthew 7:1-3. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." You're listening to other people's worldviews or expressing your own worldview. There's no right or wrong about any of these worldviews. It is simply an exchange of information which moves you into Teilhard de Chardin's Noosphere, your exchange of information.

There are so many of these group transformational practices out there.

Again, there's an overlap here between the individual practices and the group practices, but one is **meaningful storytelling**. Jesus taught in parables. Why? Because meaningful stories are concrete. They are non-judgmental. They allow us to connect with similar life experiences, find meaning and open our minds to new possibilities.

Reading poetry. Again, we can do this as a group. We can do it together. We can take turns reading pieces of poetry that have just somehow grabbed us individually. We can share this information with one another. Poetry moves us away from literal meanings and allows us to touch, even if only for a moment, a deeper connection with the mystery of our lives or the wisdom of our lives.

There are so many more of these. I'm just going back for a minute to right questions. Socrates used questions all the time.

Rituals, we mentioned earlier, Holy Communion, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, birthdays, anniversaries, Yom Kippur, the pilgrimage to Mecca. These are all ways of bringing our focus and attention back to doing things in community together.

The words "Catholic" and "church" mean "universal community." That's what we're focusing on, not necessarily the worldly church but something that lies even beyond and beneath the worldly church.