



Bouncing Back

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Bringing life into the world is one of the most blessed and most terrifying events we can experience. It doesn't really matter if we are parents, relatives, friends, or the creator of a new idea or vision that helps define and make the world what it is. It is all about tending to the spark of new life and creativity.

When we partake in a child dedication, such as this morning, we are owning part of the awesomeness of life and we are promising to assist with the nurture and growth of new life. When we birth an idea, we hope our idea will nurture and assist in the growth, continuation and flourishing of life too even as we know too that life, as so our dreams come to fullness, can be challenging, hard, and difficult. Brief, short and brutish is what one philosopher once called it. I don't know that I would go that far because although life is challenging I know it is a goal of many compassionate and caring people to be able to assist others so that no matter what befalls them they will be able to bounce up and bounce back. Resiliency is the term for that concept. It is a word being used more and more in the trauma and recovery world and it is a trait, a mindset, a description given to those who in spite of difficult, challenging, times find resources to enable them to bounce back.

This morning I am going to explore a couple of those resources and concepts by telling you about a kid's toy. I thought about this toy when thinking about bouncing back and when I realized that Christa and Linda's baby boy had the middle name of Joseph which is my eldest son's middle name. —Scott Joseph. Which brought me to thinking about my children. When Scott was born I was still a youngster myself, just barely 17, so I know that Scott and my other son Eric and I grew up together. Being so young one of the toys that delighted me/us a lot was the clown (not the creepy faced one that is popping up lately) but a cute, wide faced perky nosed, blue eyed, smiley face clown, that was painted on the maybe 3-foot-tall toy that was blown up, had sand on the bottom and wobbled and bent back and forth as it was batted around. Do you remember this toy? This is my image for resiliency- This blown up wobbling toy could withstand being pushed over, batted from side to side, slammed into, lain on, run over and it would bounce back to face more. I loved that toy, my boys did too, and it amazed me that it would withstand pummeling from the three of us. The only thing that would stop it is if the air valve let go and the air leaked out. It does not escape me that by using this metaphor, of the bobbing clown representing the human capacity for resilience, that that is what occurs to us when we have been pummeled and swatted around by life's more challenging moments. Like the bobbing weaving toy, we sometimes need to stop and breathe and get life renewing air into us. The ancient Hebrew people believed that in the breath of humans was found the divine spirit. Ruah is the Hebrew term for this divine breath, the sacred breath of God. You perhaps remember the early creation story. It was said that god gathered earth into one place and created humans out of that earth, interestingly enough called in Hebrew Adamah, and then the divine breathed life into that glob of clay breathed the spirit into him and her. Today I say that this is the breath of renewal or revival of resilience or return.

Brene Brown who is a TED talks lecturer and author of a couple of books, the one I like most being *Rising Strong*, teaches about how to rise again in spite of

tough, traumatic, difficult, tragic events. She writes that one of the most problematic aspects is that we fail to learn how to deal, honestly, openly, clearly with our feelings. In fact, she says we are feeling beings who also think and that we don't always act like that is the truth. She relates story after story about people who are struggling to bounce back by taking the approach of thinking/feeling honestly through all the circumstances that normally perplex us. She says we have to do this in ways that will lead us to the place where we will dig into the feelings we need to explore that too often we deflect, deny or numb ourselves against. Her opinion is that only by developing a deep curiosity about ourselves and how we work through the most challenging of times will be able to get over the numbing of our emotions, and that sense of powerlessness. Two feelings that most often accompany trouble and trials and two feelings that keep us from bouncing back.

Resiliency is like our bobble and wobble toy it is a state of being that reminds us that life is not always as we imagine or plan it to be, that we sometimes get batted about because bad things do happen. We don't deserve them, at least most of the time we don't, but they occur and resilience is possible if we stop to take in breaths of life giving air and life giving spirit and also we realize we never need to walk through tough times alone.

To increase our imagination and to offer you a way to periodically find the point in your mind where you can tap into your resiliency I want to offer you time to **explore this exercise.**

I don't meditate well it doesn't suit my personality but I do like images from nature to help me learn about myself and how to be transformed. These images help me to dig deeper into who I am and how I need to change, and where I can go to find strength.

A colleague of mine, Gail Collins Ranadive, offers this exercise to explore this concept; let's look at it for couple of minutes.

She invites us to choose/or to be chosen by an image from nature, this image reflects who, what, why, where and how you/we are in your life at this particular moment in time. This can become your image to guide you along a path of transformation. It is a way to bring the unconscious and the conscious into union. The goal is to achieve full realization of your **Self**. By identifying your image from the natural world, you can become attuned to it and how it manifests right now and sometimes how it should be, as a symbol of transcendence.

Let me share excerpts from her story. "Ten years ago" she writes, "the columbine became my spiritual flower because of its resemblance to the bird of peace, the dove that continues to call me into deeper paths than I imagined possible.

The dove has become a symbol of transcendence for me. so I have been paying attention to doves for a very long time. Thus it came as no great surprise that when I found myself sitting alone in a dormitory room on my fiftieth birthday beginning my second year of seminary, and feeling rejected by the people I loved most in the world because they could not grasp why I was following this path, it was the sound of doves outside my window in the streaked pink dawn that reassured me I was right with god and myself. For the dove sitting in a tree symbolizes the soul. But while its wings signify the freedom to become one's Godself its mourning sounds echo the grieving that accompanies the process."

Thus her spiritual flower connects to the dove which is her transcendent symbol reminding her that following pathways are hard and sometimes full of grief. But using those symbols she can connect nature to her spiritual life and become resilient. Her true self.

I would invite you now to take some time and think on your spiritual flower, see if it connects you to a transcendent symbol, meaning in this case, a symbol that

helps you to transform and modify yourself after or within a time of struggle so you can emerge with resilience.

I am going to give you three four minutes to reflect on this you may do it in your own mind or if you are a person who likes to talk with someone to help you sort through issues/ideas/ or to explore this with your mate or partner then go and do this too.

I hope this exploration in creative connection with nature as a source of strength, renewal and reflection has been helpful for you to learn about what you need to bounce back when life bops you about.

May it be so.