

A friend sent me this poem. I thought I'd share. Most of you have read about my occasional "epishowers" (epiphanies while in the shower), but this, this...I should be so lucky...

The Awakening

By Sonny Carroll

There comes a time in your life when you finally get it ...

When in the midst of all your fears and insanity you stop dead in your tracks and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out "ENOUGH! Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on." And, like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears and through a mantle of wet lashes you begin to look at the world from a new perspective.
This is your awakening.

You realize that it is time to stop hoping and waiting for something, or someone, to change, or for happiness, safety and security to come galloping over the next horizon. You come to terms with the fact that there aren't always fairytale endings (or beginnings for that matter) and that any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with you. Then a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.

So you begin making your way through the "reality of today" rather than holding out for the "promise of tomorrow." You realize that much of who you are, and the way you navigate through life is, in great part, a result of all the social conditioning you've received over the course of a lifetime.

And you begin to sift through all the nonsense you were taught about:
– how you should look and how much you should weigh,
– what you should wear and where you should shop,
– where you should live or what type of car your should drive,
– who you should sleep with and how you should behave,
– who you should marry and why you should stay,
– the importance of bearing children or what you owe your family,

Slowly you begin to open up to new worlds and different points of view. And you begin re-assessing and re-defining who you are and what you really believe in. And you begin to discard the doctrines you have outgrown, or should never have practiced to begin with.

You accept the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will love, appreciate or approve of who or what you are... and that's OK... they are entitled to their own views and opinions. And, you come to terms with the fact that you will never be a size 5 or a "perfect 10″.... Or a perfect human

being for that matter… and you stop trying to compete with the image inside your head or agonizing over how you compare. And, you take a long look at yourself in the mirror and you make a promise to give yourself the same unconditional love and support you give so freely to others.
Then a sense of confidence is born of self-approval.

And, you stop maneuvering through life merely as a “consumer” hungry for your next fix, a new dress, another pair of shoes or looks of approval and admiration from family, friends or even strangers who pass by. Then you discover that “it is truly in giving that we receive, and that the joy and abundance you seek grows out of the giving. And you recognize the importance of “creating” & “contributing” rather than “obtaining” & “accumulating.”

And you give thanks for the simple things you’ve been blessed with, things that millions of people upon the earth can only dream about – a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, the freedom of choice and the opportunity to pursue your own dreams.

And you begin to love and to care for yourself. You stop engaging in self-destructive behaviors, including participating in dysfunctional relationships. You begin eating a balanced diet, drinking more water and exercising. And because you’ve learned that fatigue drains the spirit and creates doubt and fear, you give yourself permission to rest. And just as food is fuel for the body, laughter is fuel for the spirit and so you make it a point to create time for play.

Then you learn about love and relationships – how to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving and when to walk away. And you allow only the hands of a lover who truly loves and respects you to glorify you with his touch. You learn that people don’t always say what they mean or mean what they say, intentionally or unintentionally, and that not everyone will always come through and interestingly enough, it’s not always about you. So, you stop lashing out and pointing fingers or looking to place blame for the things that were done to you or weren’t done for you. And you learn to keep your Ego in check and to acknowledge and redirect the destructive emotions it spawns; anger, jealousy and resentment.

You learn how to say I was wrong and to forgive people for their own human frailties. You learn to build bridges instead of walls and about the healing power of love as it is expressed through a kind word, a warm smile or a friendly gesture. And, at the same time, you eliminate any relationships that are hurtful or fail to uplift and edify you. You stop working so hard at smoothing things over and setting your needs aside. You learn that feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK and that it is your right to want or expect certain things. And you learn the importance of communicating your needs with confidence and grace. You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that eventually martyrs are burned at the stake. Then you learn to distinguish between guilt, and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to Say NO. You learn that you don’t know all the answers, it’s not your job to save the world and that sometimes you just need to Let Go.

Moreover, you learn to look at people as they really are and not as you would want them to be and you are careful not to project your neediness or insecurities onto a relationship. You learn that you will not be more beautiful, more intelligent, more lovable or important because of the man on your arm or the child that bears your name. You learn that just as people grow and change, so it is with love and

relationships and that that not everyone can always love you the way you would want them to. So you stop appraising your worth by the measure of love you are given. And suddenly you realize that it's wrong to demand that someone live their life or sacrifice their dreams just to serve your needs, ease your insecurities, or meet "your" standards and expectations. You learn that the only love worth giving and receiving is the love that is given freely without conditions or limitations. And you learn what it means to love. So you stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes. You learn that "alone" does not mean "lonely" and you begin to discover the joy of spending time "with yourself" and "on yourself." Then you discover the greatest and most fulfilling love you will ever know. Self Love. And so it comes to pass that, through understanding, your heart heals; and now all new things are possible.

Moving along, you begin to avoid Toxic people and conversations. And you stop wasting time and energy rehashing your situation with family and friends. You learn that talk doesn't change things and that unrequited wishes can only serve to keep you trapped in the past. So you stop lamenting over what could or should have been and you make a decision to leave the past behind. Then you begin to invest your time and energy to affect positive change. You take a personal inventory of all your strengths and weaknesses and the areas you need to improve in order to move ahead, you set your goals and map out a plan of action to see things through.

You learn that life isn't always fair and you don't always get what you think you deserve and you stop personalizing every loss or disappointment. You learn to accept that sometimes bad things happen to good people and that these things are not an act of God… but merely a random act of fate.
And you stop looking for guarantees, because you've learned that the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected and that whatever happens, you'll learn to deal with it. And you learn that the only thing you must truly fear is the great robber baron of all time – FEAR itself. So you learn to step right into and through your fears, be
cause to give into fear is to give away the right to live life on your terms. You learn that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophesy and you learn to go after what you want and not to squander your life living under a cloud of indecision or feelings of impending doom.

Then, YOU LEARN ABOUT MONEY… the personal power and independence it brings and the options it creates. And you recognize the necessity to create your own personal wealth. Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself and you make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never ever settle for less than your heart's desire. And a sense of power is born of self-reliance. And you live with honor and integrity because you know that these principles are not the outdated ideals of a by-gone era but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build your life. And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting and to stay open to every wonderful opportunity and exciting possibility. Then you hang a wind chime outside your window to remind yourself what beauty there is in Simplicity.

Finally, with courage in your heart and with God by your side you take a stand, you FAKE a deep breath and you begin to design the life you want to live as best as you can.

A word about the Power of Prayer:
In some of my darkest, most painful and frightening hours, I have prayed, not for the answers to my prayers or for material things, but for my "God" to help me find the strength, confidence and courage to persevere; to face each day and to do what I must do.
Remember this:-

> You are an expression of the almighty.
> The spirit of God resides within you and moves through you.
> Open your heart, speak to that spirit and it will heal and empower you.
> My “God” has never failed me.

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