



THE GRACE IN BEING HUMAN

The Beginning Of What Felt Like The End

It has been 5 years since my life and all of the hopes and dreams I had imagined were blown apart.

A diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis and simultaneous relationship and a close friendship (for different reasons) breakdown. 5 years and I still have not recovered from the traumatic experiences that rolled out. A whole sense of life and hopes gone at the same time. It felt too much. I have been trying to recover since. I have been carrying grief. I just wanted my life back, my partner back, my friend back, my hopes back, all that lit my world, that gave rise to a sense of belonging, joy, potential and dreams. I have carried a sense of having lost so much... just gone... just like that, all at once. Gone with it were large parts of who I felt I once was, I felt a great hole in my heart.

I have never asked much from life, I have never expected much but if I'm honest it wasn't coming from a place of wisdom in a healthy way. It was more on the lines then of 'I never felt important enough or good enough to have returned any of what I felt I offered in life from a young age'. I had the underlying belief that it just doesn't work out for me. I wasn't enough and something else would forever be more important. There is a saying: 'Be careful what you tell yourself, you are listening' and it will give rise to your reality from your own mind. It is something I have been working diligently to remedy these last few years. I came to recognise that what I 'offered' was actually flawed. I never believed myself good enough or worthy enough to be loved in a reciprocal consistent way (all of the above from a life of learned experience). I believe that this core sense contributed, in part, to a sense of loss and failure at such a pivotal and vulnerable time in life.

It is important to note that I was also at the time honouring internally the deep loss of a person whom I hold dear (no breakdown in relating, rather a deep life shift) whom had been a consistent place of stability to which I could turn to for support. I have deep gratitude as this is where I learned healthy attachment, that there can be stability, that my life experiences didn't define me, that people are fallible but I can still trust some of them and at any time I can find safety inside no matter what. This person has been a beacon of light and wisdom throughout, even here and now.

2015 much grief but the beginning of what felt like the end was also the beginning of this artistic and reflective path.

Heart Learning

Throughout my short life I've have found myself in many hard times (mostly not of my own making but occasionally in adulthood of course) looking to the people around me to just pick me up and love me harder for a moment, because that is what I have needed as a human, but life didn't work out so. Early attachment is important to understand for future connections and overall wellbeing. I learned eventually (after much turmoil and resistance) to pick my self up and hold my own (and have for the majority of the time) we can't always have the things we wish for and sometimes things are also not what we really need.

I have had some fundamental core beliefs to challenge and transform. We have to challenge our unhelpful core beliefs as they create undercurrents of feeling that drive us and most of the time we are unaware of this. In moments of stress our tendency is to revert to these undercurrents rather than responding from our wiser more grown selves. We benefit most from discovering and acknowledging all that clouds and hides, obscures or keeps our heart hidden in fear of potential hurt. These beliefs and undercurrents may be a way of initially helping to keep us from experiencing hurt but in the long run they can end up keeping us from love, bonding, loving healthily, connecting intimately, communicating effectively and finding comfort with another/ each other. Holding back protecting ourselves out of fear leads to breakdowns in communication, further fear, imagined scenarios or rehashing of the old stories we once told ourselves and stress is mostly the result. All of this can and will likely give rise to strong self attachment (ie attachment to 'my' 'I' based truth, 'my' 'I' reality, 'my' 'I' based habits, 'my' 'I' based needs and that can end up being valued above all else ie. 'all that is not me, mine, my or I'. Leaving little room inside for patience or forbearance of anything that challenges all that is the 'me' 'I' 'my' identity). This can result in feelings of loneliness, feeling misunderstood, not fitting in, awkwardness, avoidance and isolation. These feelings then can go on and feed into a cycle of habitual escapism and keep us from opening up our hearts. Armouring instead. If we remain so attached to 'ourselves' and 'my' 'I' based thoughts and beliefs or take them so seriously as if they are solid facts or absolutes then we are likely to find that there is a struggle to truly open our hearts. We may find ourselves remaining close only to what feels safe, risk averse (and may even try hide this from ourselves, very well) and as a consequence we may never grow beyond our walls. We may even shift those walls around to tell ourselves we have changed but it's just the same walls reordered. The problems will likely show up time and again. If caught in this habit unawares the tendency will be to project our 'self' based stories and beliefs outward and it will be a struggle to hear anything else but our own thoughts and feelings, it will inhibit our ability to know and grow with trust beyond our 'safety' walls, it will inhibit sense of belonging beyond the things we identify with 'me' and 'mine' and interrupt stable consistent healthy relating. Really seeing, catching, understanding and adapting our habits can help and support change. Each person has their personal journey in life and that's ok we each find the light in differing ways and at different stages. Science and heart teachings show us that as we grow we benefit most from opening ourselves up, by de-armouring our hearts, by not holding 'our sense of truth' in moments as absolute and fixed. By taking small calculated risks and widening our experience with others embracing the diversity of difference in our interconnectedness, we have opportunity to grow.

It is helpful for us to learn about the non-solidity of our thoughts and feelings, that there are other truths too. All equally non-solid, transient and subjective but also there in this opening, de-armouring of heart.

‘There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.’

*"Thoughts lead to images, lead to a story, lead to emotions.
Life is a movie in your head."* ~ Byron Katie

Life is suffering, being so attached to our sense of ‘self’ and the stories we tell ourselves then rejecting what doesn’t fit our narrative is one part of the root of that.



“Seeing how the whole situation is created by ourselves, how things like praise and criticism are just words and yet one can make us happy and the other miserable. It is so silly to allow ourselves to be upset when we don’t get what we want, to be angry when someone criticizes us, or happy when someone praises us. It’s so silly to discriminate, deciding one thing is good and another bad. We see this, and see how all this is the mind projecting and believing its own projections.” ~ Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Love is important, belonging *is* a human need. Feelings are transient however, as are our thoughts, not based in solid absolute truth like we can tend to believe. I reflect how can someone else find the equanimity of love and care with us if we do not have a sense of love enough to open from our solid belief in the absoluteness of ‘our own’ sense making, and attachment to ‘our’ truth (no matter the relationship, friend, family, lover). Fear and ‘self’ protection can only keep us from love, connection and belonging.

A Quote by Suzinn Weiss

“When we drop fear, we can draw nearer to people, we can draw nearer to the earth, we can draw nearer to all the heavenly creatures that surround us.”

MS has brought up feelings of lostness and hopelessness, for example, feelings and wonderings of who would truly wish to spend time with a person or build any kind of reciprocal relating with all the fears that Multiple Sclerosis brings. Who wants to embrace that which to an outsider may appear challenging and restrictive? Facing potential changes in connection, appearance and presence? Not knowing how to be or what to say? The circumstances can also attract people whom want to control or create co-dependancy and that isn’t healthy for anyone either. I feel caution inside, something healthy consistent and balanced is best for wellbeing in life. Something that supports both interdependent relating and has space for independent time, space and growth. For good wellbeing, for health there needs to be stability. There is much liberation, learnings, change, freedom and lots of creativity involved with MS... but I feel invisible as a human being in this way. People’s projected perceptions of Multiple Sclerosis have and do affect this, among other things, but

also it is 'my' mindset too. I have held a core belief that I am burden and with or without intention this has been frequently been reflected back in many different forms of relationships. I now understand this reflects more the level of a persons capacity and awareness in those moments rather than any sense of value and worth I may be feeling (or creating). I came to believe through too many life experiences and messages that I wasn't worth it, not worth the choice, not worth the effort and not worth reciprocal love. That however is not true and this belief needed shifting, it is hard work detaching from our beliefs and the things we tell ourselves in our emotional states. They are strong protective (but eventually harmful) habits. Our beliefs are thoughts and feelings informed by a multitude of sources and clouded by a sense of 'my' 'me' and 'I'. If we examine long enough it is likely that we find is no absolute truth to these thoughts or feelings. We may instead find attachment to sense of self, and protection of that sense of self. There just may be a truth deeper than what we think and feel based on our subjective perceptions. Do we look inside often enough? If so how deeply do we really explore our sense of truth? Where are the facts that prove this absoluteness? Could there be a lot of assumption happening? If so why would that be? Then once more, so what is the truth? These stories we tell ourselves can serve to hold together our sense of self and to protect 'us' but it's not necessarily how things are. Life is uncertainty, not knowing is a thing. If we look the likelihood is that we will find that present thoughts and feelings will shift and change because they have no solidity or fixedness.

At this point in my life thing's that I used to believe were important aren't important anymore. I'm not bound by my older belief systems or needs. I have new systems but try very much to open up and be flexible as much possible. It is no easy feat at all though and sometimes I fall at the first hurdle.



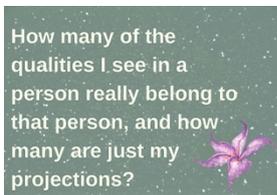
What hope was there all those years ago of sustaining or retaining any possible union of love in life with the belief systems I held? It takes maturation and time. I'm still learning, we all are. There is much to learn, to be with and not hide from. Much to develop loving kindness towards. All learning, all listening, all holding with kindness the emotions that rise and pass through.

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Fellowship, companionship and belonging *are* basic human needs. We seek this naturally. It is important to be open, flexible and embracing of differences in one another and to be open to all versions of truths because they all coexist. Quantum physics teaches us this as does Eastern understanding. Not being attached too much to our 'own version' of the truth opens us up and allows us to see a wider reality, more like a global view rather than just where we live if you like. This in turn can allow far more flexibility and forbearance in times of challenge by not dwelling too much in our own senses and meaning making of things. Here we may find a relaxedness and responsiveness rather than a reaction. If we open reflect and examine there can be understanding that this isn't how things really are but more like a reflection of what we may be feeling inside.

If we find ourselves in old thinking or relating patterns the likelihood is that we are either caught in an old belief system, old habit(s) or have some trapped trauma and are projecting this reality outwardly. Essentially not as open or present as we think we are or would like to

be. Somewhere perhaps not in our conscious awareness we are likely holding a bit more tightly to some sense of ‘our’ truth, a truth that isn’t truth at all and isn’t serving real growth or opening. It could be beneficial to us if we learn to catch it as it is happening, catch this thinking/ feeling in our mind or interactions and then work to calm it. Not always easy as it can grow legs and run. Calming takes time. It requires attentive and mindful awareness.

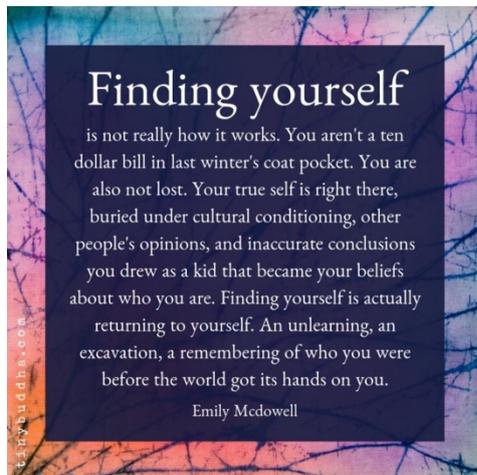


When we don't acknowledge all of who we are, those unacknowledged parts we then project onto others.

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Purpose Of Writing This

The purpose of this post is to share the root of this art project, sharing the deeper ‘why’, personal reflections and any growth from all those years ago in 2016 when I began with this focus. It also expands further and more deeply on my previous post ‘[In Search Of Meaning \(ii\)](#)’. This is about being human, exploring what this means and how it manifests for each of us in relative terms. Exploring what helps and hinders us. I talk about the stories I have told myself around life experiences and the beliefs I had formed and have had to work hard to shift. Equally with understanding around a need for opening up I have found there also needs



to be wisdom. This wisdom is reflecting on my own thoughts, feelings and actions then coming to understanding how they have helped to create the sense of reality that I experience today. At times in my life (and can still find myself doing so now) I have demonstrated little respect or value for my own human needs or personal boundaries (which are equally important to know, they may grow and shift with maturity but need acknowledged and respected in the moment) and the consequence has been tolerating unhelpful behaviours, giving too much allowance and space for things that haven't been helpful in the longer term. This equally meant that there have been times when I haven't respected or understood other people's

need for boundaries in moments also. In not recognising our personal boundaries there are many in life whom take advantage of this or of our kindness and patience. Some knowingly and others without awareness from their own needing. I consider this compassionately however as we all have our histories, habits, meanings and conditioning. Ultimately the responsibility lies with us though. Personally I have bought into those introjected messages that I discussed earlier about worth and perceptions of how I should and shouldn't feel or exist and this has hindered heart growth. Once I recognised this it has been my responsibility to grow from them. I must say though that equally and again with compassion, those introjected messages have come from others whom at the time were struggling with their own hurts, fears, insecurities and introjections from their life stories. From an ancestral cycle of belief systems, behaviours and habits.

Image from www.tinybuddha.com

Contemplating Relative Cause And Effect

There's the lesson often taught about scrunching a piece of paper, the more the paper is scrunched this cannot be undone, no matter how much you do your best to flatten and remove the marks, it can't be fully removed, an impression remains. I wish someone had taught me this as a young child then I may have come to understand this life of cause and effect. Scrunches happen and we all go on and create scrunches on other people's paper. Once there is a mark for some people it is hard for them to let go and when trust is questioned it is so very very hard to regain it, the marks remain no matter what one does. It takes willingness, effort and investment to find ways to adapt and grow and learn to rebuild trust but most people don't know how to, are afraid to or perhaps can't or they chose not to. We are all different in these circumstances and that is just how it is. No matter how we grow and change and these marks no longer affect *us* they still exist in time and space between people, whether it be friends, family, partners, strangers. It's hard to take things back once they have happened. To heal is a journey and sometimes it is just too late and out with our control but we owe it to ourselves to *heal our hearts*. To learn how to be aware in our actions as each action has its consequences. Also sometimes things happen to us and there is nothing required as a response other than just to allow the space for healing. The ebb and flow of this relative human life.

In The Still Moments Four Years On

Reflecting on an [earlier post](#) from 2016.

In the still moments I find I am still sitting with the same grief, it having never left. Having to hold a sense of abiding (sometimes with a messiness or uncomfortableness) with whatever arises and whatever subsides. Yet in the stillness the grief is still there, it still speaks. Consistently felt. Non shifting.

But what is it that has been lost? I have a fulfilling life and future potential (uncertain of course but potential none the less), surrounded by good people, a sense of purpose, places where I can be of help, support and benefit to others, a support network, inner resourcefulness, resilience, creativity, and so on. All rich in their experience and I'm fortunate this life to know these.

My close friend returned. It both feels and is practically different and there is understanding between us, we are still there for each other, just differently. There is a little bit sense of loss here but not overly there is equally healing.

So what is it that has been lost? Why still in the quietness is there the deep rooted feeling of grief? The question needs asked again and again and again until this part of my heart is heard by me.

Holding the loss inside sitting with it, looking at it, feeling it all these years and still the feeling is so. Unchanged. What is it trying to say? What is the story of this heart? It is all just stories at the end of the day. Just stories. Everything changes (and everything has, lots and well) and nothing is ever as it feels or seems, it is transient, non-solid, impermanent...but somehow there is a static sense of heldness. I feel a thin golden thread connecting my felt sense to something of a deep significance inside. But what? Maybe something has been packed away and got lost. Perhaps part of my heart and identity died that year and I haven't

properly given space to it, perhaps the inner instinct to hold in the pain and shock of it all was a breath in that has never yet been breathed back out. Perhaps there is still a reverberation of shock. Disbelief, unrealness... maybe.

Clearly something is needing honoured in this heart about all of that. Something suppressed in my being that is needing to speak. What is feeling lost?

Two things come to mind:

Grief is love with nowhere to go ~ Jamie Anderson

and

In French, you don't really say "I miss you." You say "tu me manques" which means, "you are missing from me"

Perhaps 'what has been lost?' isn't the question at all. Perhaps the question is what do I feel is missing? I think the answer is my freedom to flow with deeply felt love and affection. Expressing and allowing the love that lives in my heart to flow freely and joyfully without constriction, suffocation or holding in fear of loss time and again.

I think there is a sense of suppression and packing it behind daily life to get on, it's valid and exists, the heart voice needs to be free. There is so much love bursting at the seams within this heart but it doesn't flow, it can't flow as it no longer has a place to go. So it sits stagnant or held tight in a small ball. Frozen energy. Perhaps I need to just allow it to be free and open rather than stuffing it down so tightly that it stifles. Open hearted and congruent. Perhaps this part (among a couple of others) is needing watered with tender, loving kindness and care. Having room to live, breathe and express itself. It doesn't need returned, not at all just freedom to exist, non-silenced, constrained or compartmentalised. It may be about allowing it, abiding with it, being the best friend I can be to it and whatever arises. Maybe that is ok.

Life is hard enough, it is important not to suppress our feelings but instead to create a steadiness around them so that we can tend to these tender places that we find within us. Living congruently and respectfully. It is all okay. It is what it is. It doesn't need to affect anyone else but I can see it might be far healthier for it to live and breathe in its own way so that again then there can be a sense of balance inside. Congruence, opening, breathing, de-armouring, authenticity. Allowing love to exist just as it is in its rawness and honesty. Kindness and care for its existence and its story. I am learning that it is ok to exist, to just be with that authenticity and stop adapting. It may not fit with others, but that is ok. Respect. All truths and stories co-exist neither more right than the other, just energy that is.

It is not good for our health or wellbeing to live a life shutting down emotions that we experience, we need the freedom to exist just as we are. If we are shutting down emotions we could benefit from being curious as to why.

"When you shut down emotion, you're also affecting your immune system, your nervous system. So the repression of emotion, which is a survival strategy, then becomes a source of physiological illness later on."

- Gabor Maté

May there be a way within this artwork to give this and all other stifled, suppressed, adapted moments in life the room they need to finally breathe, to exist with space and voice. May this heart breathe, may it play it's music, sing. Perhaps much has been held frozen inside and it's now time to thaw?

I know I can't get my life back as it was, all is impermanent and the nature of everything is change. I wouldn't have wanted it back in the same way that it was either rather something healthier and more mature. As Heraclitus once said:

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.

It is ok to be as we are. I'm just learning this. There is space. Just try not to be so attached to 'my' 'I' 'mine'. As this is most likely to keep us with and protecting our ego, our 'self' clinging and will continue to repeat all of our unhelpful conditioned habits of mind getting in the way of real growth. There can be other stories and other adventures free from these habits. It is possible. Anything is possible.

It is time to embrace all that is there, befriending it, allowing it and opening this heart up. Speaking up. There is a song to sing, like a bird atop a tree with freedom, allowing each note to gently carry its way in the wind.

Today

A Quote From Thich Nhat Hanh "Interbeing"

If we cut ourselves off from the reality of suffering, whether our own or that of others, we cannot have compassion."

This applies to each of us. Like the lotus we mature and bloom from our mud. What pains or challenges us and asks us to rise up is the mud. We cause harm by negating it or pushing it away. Let it settle for some clarity yes but try to remember our mind chatter is stories (merely stories) and they are interwoven with others in interconnected lives. We are not separate. Our story is part of a wider story and fabric of existence, it can't be the *only thing* that is true. All truths exist, all are subjective and given meaning only by all that we attach from what is inside us moment to moment. All are transient and in essence empty if we break them down. Again I refer back to the learnings of quantum physics.

Truly listening to each other, openly and really hearing could be the key. What a society we could be if we had space for all.

Whilst reflecting on all of this I recognise also that our human tendency can be to want to stay with all that feels like light, easiness and bliss and steer clear of anything that feels difficult or challenging or that challenges our sense of 'self' 'me' 'my' or 'mine'. However abiding with these hard moments, seeing them through not distancing ourselves from them out of discomfort or unease could with time bring a deep healing, maturation and growth. The suffering we experience can become the seeds of wisdom

A Simple Poem About Healing

I've learned a whole lot more about the light. By being open to the darkness, than by only enclosing myself in just light ~ By Jennifer Williamson

Life has taught some level of wisdom, to be more honest and clearer with intention and presence, to say things as upfront as clearly as possible and where possible leave less of a scrunch (this is hard though as people feel and react from their own being and this is out of our control so we can't always foresee, mistakes happen). I don't always manage it sadly but diligently give my best, again sometimes in attachment to 'my own' pain or discomfort I forget for a moment and revert and need to learn again.

Personally there has been discovery that it is ok to be a strong person and forthright in expression if the motivation and intention is to seek a clarity and for a wider benefit (again people may not like that as they feel and react from their own stories. This is out with our control, personally I just try to have good motivation. We are not responsible for how others react within themselves but we are responsible for *our* intention and motivation). Time has also taught compassion and forgiveness for things in life that may never be recognised, honoured, understood or for all the apologies that will never be received. This still leaves it's mark but forgiveness all the same. There has been learning of forbearance, patience, grace and kindness these last years regardless what arose. Owning what behaviour I may have projected and equally not to wear behaviour that has arisen elsewhere. There has been learning that talking is important and more so in person. Online and text or email can feel as if it lacks personal nuance, body language and the general chemical responses we feel in the company of others and as a result mostly stay within the limits of our 'own' sense of life again missing the wider opportunities and picture. It is hard to read intent, emotion, humour, personal meaning and can often lead to misreading, not understanding and assumption. Learning has been not to assume, we can wonder and ask questions alternatively trying best never to assume anything because most likely our sense of things are mistaken and based in our subjective reality from which we then go on and make decisions without the clearest understanding. We can't possibly have wisdom if we don't enquire or examine further than our initial sense making. Learning has been that it's ok to disagree with someone or have a different perception yet still respect their view, as mentioned earlier all realities exist. Neither more accurate than the other. Again as mentioned earlier I continue to try and learn to be less attached to 'my' 'me' 'I' truths and to have room. That it is all transient, non-absolute or fixed and all meaning is subjective, a creation from of our own mind tendencies and our senses.

Learning also has been that wherever focus goes energy flows. Where one waters one's garden counts as this is where the garden of our lives will grow. Whatever we tend to, nourish and water will be what blooms. Whatever we give less attention to, avoid, neglect, or ignore or keep distance from in life will die and these are active personal choices. Consciously or not we are fully responsible for these choices. We are not at the mercy of something or someone else at this level. Learning has also been that compassion is *key* and it is *not* just thoughts, wishes or words it is *action* beyond intention. Equally there is appreciation that it is not always easy unless coming from a pure intention. A pure intention that is not navigated by 'un' or partially subconscious emotional undercurrents and these are very hard to identify. The accumulation of life habits that operate with such stealth in our decision making and interactions are hard to see. It takes deep awareness and time. Even harder in moments when the sense of 'my' 'I' 'me' based truths are being ruffled, giving rise

to feelings of uncomfortable irk, internal noise, instinct to reject and a heart call to run to protect dearly this sense of 'I'.

Learning has been that there are many stories, as previously mentioned, all exist and no-one knows anything really, only where they attach meaning in a moment. That this meaning is transient and it tends to try to connect with our stories of self and find a position that props this up.

Learning has been that meaning is subjective and only serves the 'me' 'my' 'I' 'mine' stories that are divisive in our connections... despite being in essence empty. I am continuing to learn as best I can to hold and sense other beings in their own stage of journey and do my best to have empathy and kindness. As I say not easy especially when it clashes with 'mine' 'my' 'I' feelings but we are all doing the best we can. Practicing moment to moment awareness would not go amiss, I speak personally, we are not our past and the future is unknown all we have is here and now (easily forgotten in the mind chatter that manifests).

Learning has been that it is not about seeking or only being with feelings that are all peace and bliss, that it is about being present and abiding what is until we are no longer reacting which will naturally give rise to that equanimity.

That it is about being clear about motivation and intention in our interconnectedness. About learning to react less and doing our best. It's not easy though as we have a lifetime of conditioning. Particularly in western societies our values are placed in different things like brain ability, thinking and academic intelligence, having a good career, making a family to pass these values on to, having money, status, sense of security or just plain succeeding in life. Being a success, whatever that may mean personally. When reflecting back through life I have recognised that I was not taught to value heart, how to develop compassion, how to relate with wisdom based loving kindness whilst equally questioning, analysing and discerning the validity of my thinking. I wasn't taught how to armour my heart to relate well and have an openness that allows for love, real love (not attachment) to exist and grow. I feel that now though. When not relating well we can find ourselves adrift, lost, not where we hoped to be, sometimes having a sense of failure somehow and/ or feeling confused because where we have actually placed value (watered our gardens) means that things get lost. Walls are built, lines are drawn, territory is marked and ideas of 'self' are defended. This isn't congruent with our essential essence and can estrange us from who and where we hoped to be in life. It needn't be this way. It needn't be estrangement. Open heartedness. Open hearted doesn't mean we neglect our boundaries it means we are aware of them and are aware that what we hold as 'our' truth may not actually be so and allows for the space to learn beyond the things we tell ourselves so that we can learn trust and to evolve closer to what we hope for with time. Boundaries are a form of protection but they can be flexible upon learning and building trust, they needn't be fixed.

In this moment I am like an onion layer by layer healing all of the scrunches in my life, scrunches given to me, ones I have caused and all of the scrunches that in turn came back to me in that cyclical way... in many ways with many people. To connect with the authenticity that is within. There is a need to look beyond personal meaning to develop awareness as to how this life has come to be as it is and to relax into it just being as it is, nether this nor that. Perhaps it's not a bad thing, perhaps it's a wake up call.

I have learned to find forgiveness for what I did not know when I did not know it and trust I will grow a lot more by learning how to be more thoughtful and open in life. Gently and gracefully becoming aware of inner motivations and their real impact, to think in terms of long term compassion not just moment to moment kindness. To understand and accept a wider picture and not to be driven by feelings or moods in the here and now (not easy in moments when for example we are ill and less resilient though, as I am in this very moment).

I have within these years learned to always respect others (by not and it's effect and consequence, mistake making) and currently equally learning to demonstrate value and respect my own being, far better than to date. To speak up even though there is a deep fear of loss, sudden disappearing or of cliff edge absencing disappearances without proper understanding and goodbyes. There has been learning that is important that we say goodbye to people because there is no guarantee we will ever have the opportunity speak or meet again, the connection could be the last in this lifetime, that much I have learned in the passing of my dear sister lately. We do not know when it's our time. Goodbyes are important so as to not feel regret later when it has been too late.

I have learned to honour my heart and feelings always even though they may not be correct or true but just to honour the arising, not to let past mistakes or perceptions define what comes next because it is just stories at the end of the day, subjective, transient, non-solid stories. Stories change every time we attach meaning to them from whatever perspective or chatter we have in our minds in a given moment and the stories can always be rewritten. If we chose for them to.

Learning has also been to be brave in the face of adversity, impermanence and uncertainty because I do not know. I do not know anything! Nothing at all. Even this blog is just a moment of arising meaning and words. I'm not right either because I don't know, this is all purely personal subjective learning.

I have learned to continue to hold my own regardless. There is need right now to find permission from within to allow my heart to speak, to sing it's song and release it's stories to open up and heal into the life that is in the here and now. To open up to that whilst recognising hidden anxieties or scrunches. To take safe measured chances if there is opportunity and established trust. That there needs to be stability and consistency for this to happen though. I have learned that this is all necessary in building and maintaining respect and trust for each other in the interconnectedness that is life. That we function best when we are relaxed, not assuming and jumping into protective mode (which I certainly could learn more from, I'm fallible). That we need to continue to learn to relax over and over again whilst equally honouring and recognising the stories of our being.

Knowing our stories (but not holding to them as 'truths') so that it helps us to shift. Finding and creating an equanimity between heart and life. Creating and holding space inside for acknowledging whatever is there, and not running away but rather abiding with it, growing through it. Even if it's hard or interfering with a wish for bliss. As mentioned earlier learning has been that there cannot be truly in any level of inner bliss if we are avoiding discomfort, it is just mind trickery and avoidance. Life, experience, thoughts, feelings, stories are all transient and ever changing and nothing is certain except a process of dying. Whatever that means to you

This Moment

Currently within at this moment I am feeling a wobble, I'm not as resilient as usual, I am exhausted, strung out and often feel confused as a result of a long period affected by illness (I will address this in a separate post). There's a sense of bracing myself and the memories of past times of having to do this are flooding. If I listen closely to instinct I am sensing a micro mirror in the here and now of that moment all those years ago when everything changed and disappeared in a moment of vulnerability.

A very wise man once taught me "no big deal, no expectations". Let go of expectation and try not to be reactive. If only I can remember this fundamentally, rather than just as and when, it would be of greater benefit. I have to create space somehow and trust everything will be ok regardless then let go.

Once this body I live in is well again and there is a feeling of bounce back and resilience I can choose this path of going inward, the inner work, to continue to notice then take the layers off the onion until I understand heart and my motivation more clearly. Understanding more of the undercurrents of emotion that are driving my actions so that I can kindly let them go and make space. From here growth and opening. The hope being that there is an understanding of the humanity in us all so I can be of benefit and in less of a harmful way. Hopefully also it will dissolve further the 'me' 'my' 'I' felt positions in life that are no longer necessary or serving purpose anymore.

One can only offer to others what one is able to give to oneself.

Continuing With This Art Work and Inner Journey

I'm sharing this today as I am starting from where I am at right now. No bells and whistles. Feeling a change in the wind of life once again. I need to find the permission to open up. I don't know where or how to begin but it is time. This post marks my intention to keep going even when it feels hard, to keep trying even if I am afraid because who actually knows? We are all so clear to state what we think we know but we know little. Who knows where all of this artwork and focus will lead, where life will lead for all of us. We are so certain of our thinking as absolute truth but it isn't so and if we continue to buy in to beliefs that are not actually true then it gets in the way of our own growth. This art project is about opening up heart to all that is bigger than 'me', it is about humanity and what brings each of us to be who we are, our stories. How we make meaning from our circumstances, how meaning is made from sensory and thought experience and how tightly we hold to these as 'our' reality.

Here is a link to an inspiring and wonderful artist [Christopher Remmers](https://www.facebook.com/615659948893720/posts/962839977509047/?vh=e) who is pondering the question "Why is authenticity important?" especially for creatives
<https://www.facebook.com/615659948893720/posts/962839977509047/?vh=e>

Everything reverts back to being genuine. Whenever there's a gap, the only way to be a warrior is to refer back to the genuineness, which is somewhat raw and so tender and painful. That is the saving grace or the safety precaution, so that the warrior never goes astray and never grows a thick skin

~ Chögyam Trungpa

'We know what we are, but know not what we may be.' ~ Hamlet

Well maybe and also maybe we do not. Maybe we only hear the stories we tell ourselves and maybe there is more to that, more underneath, more on a subtle undetected unconsciously driven level. More on a micro level, physically, emotionally, elemental, and energetically. This is the journey I wish to take, to look deeper at this entity I call 'me' more deeply. Am I a sum of all the stories that I have listened to about myself and have told myself? Or is there another truth about who 'I' am?

I hope to understand the entity that I call 'you' too with more patience, understanding and acceptance.

I have faith that alongside the artwork, I can unravel from my own life conditioning and habits to give rise to a more open heart. To understand differently beyond the things that I think 'I know' to discovering a different truth than 'my own'. Maybe, just maybe, in sharing this journey it can help another person too.

These senses of ours create a perception that feels absolute yet it is never ever so. We cling to

In the first stage of the journey you learned to replace harmful beliefs with helpful ones. It was such a relief to let go of negativity that it became a temptation to stay there – to make your home in those newly acquired positive thoughts.

But a positive self-image is still a mask. The next stage of your journey is becoming comfortable with the unknown. That which is beyond any story of yourself. It involves being clear and courageous enough to rest in bare awareness — without having to create another identity, without needing to tack yet another belief to the end of "I am."

Experience the expansion, the silence, the spaciousness and the mystery that comes from resting in the truth of unknowing. It isn't comfortable, at least not now, but it is powerful and inherently creative. It's what your soul longs for.

Use the sense of vertigo to leave behind the known, and let go of the need to tether your soul to anything solid or definable.

Let yourself go, over and over, until it is second nature to be weightless.

- Danna Faulds

includes your reflections too and wider. I am only one human and there are 7 billion+ of us. How do you make sense of being human? How does it impact you? In what ways do you make sense of this life experience and how tightly do you hold to your sense of that? What are your stories?

our thoughts and idea of self and what matters to our ego so hard that we can't see the wider picture.

Things are never as we think we know it. So much is unknown, uncertainty is life and through this journey I hope there is an opening up of heart. To allow whatever this openness gives rise to. Nothing is known everything is uncertain and anything is possible. Just as Shakespeare wrote above "we know not what we may be", can we find opportunity and comfort in that? **With Grace**

"The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions, and to all people, experiencing everything totally without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes into oneself" ~ Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

This is not where I am right now in the here and now but I hope and aim, with all of this artwork, enquiry and process to come to abide in this way.

My artwork is produced from much of the reflection that I share here with you in this blog, from a learning and opening process. The Being Human project

I share a poem:

Grace

~ by **Alison K Smith**

I folded in
Less like origami
More like an armadillo
Which I know really
Is more of a rolling
Into a ball
All armour and exposure

But I folded
I got caught in the creases
And the greasy smears
Of grubby fingers
A scrunched piece of self
Like a forgotten shopping list
In the bottom of a bag

A relic

Slowly the unfolding begins
With an archaeological patience
Smoothing and coaxing
Each fold and scrunch
Every blemish and tear

At times it is stark
At others it's reverent
Holy and sacred
To midwife your soul
To encounter the grace
In the creases and smears
The rips and the tears

The story of a life
Lived

The story of
Living

The story of
Love

