



Please Use the Handrails

By Angel True

Sometimes it becomes important to understand that what is right and real and true – is not what you'd like it to be. Resistance to new ideas, new ways of thinking, new ways of communicating, new ways of receiving can all be challenges that must simply be...overcome. Sometimes the universe just doesn't give you a lot of options about it.

Take, for example, a series of recent injuries and resulting lessons about life that I've endured in the last few months. In attempting to write about my experience I wanted to extract the lessons learned, consolidate them into a nice neat little package that could convey some deeper meaning and truth about life and relationships without, well, without being "about me." After several attempts to craft that "not about me" message I finally had to surrender to a simple fact.

It is about me and that's the only way to tell the story. So here it is in a simple and unedited revelation.

About 6 months ago I started having neck and shoulder pains that I believed were related to stiffness I'd had for 4 or 5 months before that. I'd been treating that stiffness with massage and yoga but it wasn't helping. Eventually the pain got so bad I knew it was time to work with a chiropractor. That helped at first and then the pain started to get worse again, much worse. I couldn't turn my head very much, it was hard to stand for long periods, sitting hurt too, sleeping on my back was agony and sleeping on my side wasn't much better. There was pretty much no position I was comfortable in and over the counter pain medication taken above the recommended dosage wasn't helping. Subsequently I developed a tooth infection that has resulted in more medication and significant dental work. At this point the pain was becoming almost unbearable. For about 2 months I went through my day in a daze of pain, shutting my body and mind down in order to cope with the pain. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the worst pain I'd ever felt I was at about an 8 for about two months and I'd been at a 6 for about three months before that. Most of the last 2 months of that pain is only a fuzzy memory for me – I had checked out physically and emotionally in order to survive, and eliminating the pain became the only thing that mattered beyond nominal survival for a time.

I later discovered that while my friends and family knew I was hurting they really had no idea just how bad – I'd been masking it. It was at this point that I finally found a friend and healer who was able to begin helping me. I had a bulging disc in my neck. The pain started to decrease – just a little bit. My friend was able to help me see the emotional burden I was carrying that created the physical injury – carrying judgment and responsibility for others. I was starting to see the light at the end of this month's long haze of pain.

Then I broke my foot. It really didn't surprise me anymore – I knew I was manifesting these injuries because of a lesson I needed to learn. Several friends just outright asked me "What is the universe attempting to tell you?" It was telling me to slow down. Of course I didn't listen. I was determined to remain self-sufficient and I believed it showed weakness and insecurity to accept help. I believed that by

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allowing others to see me hurting I was somehow not holding up to a standard of humanity I believed to be important. I was determined not to “need” anything or anyone – and I was angry because I did want help but didn’t know how to allow it. The pain got worse again – crutches don’t help a bulging disc.

Then, while trying to be independent, I fell down the stairs. I walked away without a scratch, which was amazing because I literally could have killed myself or seriously injured myself further. I was lucky. This time the universe got my attention.

I’d already been asking for help from friends but I hadn’t been receiving it – though it was offered. I knew I needed the support but in my stubbornness and self-sufficiency fear I wasn’t allowing what I was asking for. After I fell down the stairs everything changed. I realized that I had reached my limit – or more appropriately I realized I actually HAD a limit.

Within 2 weeks I had the same conversation with no less than five friends: “We want to help you, it’s important for us to be able to help you – but you have to let us.” Fortunately, I have very loving and gentle friends. While some of these conversations were fairly direct and to the point they were all delivered with care.

When I finally listened and started receiving – everything changed. I began to see who my truest friends were, how generous and gracious and excited they were to be able to help me out. My attitude shifted from pain and negativity (a product of more than just long term injury) to one of gratitude and appreciation. I found myself feeling more compassion for myself and those around me – even those I’d felt hurt from in the past. Ultimately, when I truly began to receive and accept what was offered and right in front of me – the pain went away.

The biggest lesson I learned from this process is that receiving is just as important as giving. These friends wanted to give to me because I had given to them and they had received from me in the past – it was the completion of the cycle between us. They needed it as much as I did. In the words of one friend “I’m not asking if you need help, I’m telling you when I’m available.” These friends were my handrails just as I had been their handrails at another time. They were there for my benefit just as much as for theirs.

When I started receiving I started giving more as well. The more I gave the more I received, the more I received the more I gave!

What I finally realized was that no matter how independent I thought I could or wanted to be, the relationship of give and receive between my friends was an integral part of living fully. We both needed it and wanted it and were ready to do it!

All I had to do to learn this lesson was endure 6 months of excruciating pain, break my foot and fall down the stairs. You can give and you can receive but you have to do both in order to be able to do either very well. What will it take for you to learn the same lesson?

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