



Resilience and Gratitude

By Kathy Marshall Emerson, Executive Director
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This week one of my young adult family members several states away underwent emergency brain surgery. What might have been traumatic and exceedingly stressful, was actually a precious family time filled with gratitude, compassion and love. We are closer and stronger. The process of realizing our capacity for natural resilience was, and is, alive and well. How does this happen?

Resilience and gratitude are closely aligned. Sydney Banks, in *The Missing Link* (pp. 130-131), discusses the process of finding wisdom, "...elevate your consciousness. Seek a *grateful feeling* for what you already have in life. *Gratitude* and *satisfaction* have wonderful effects on our souls. They open our minds, clearing the way for *wisdom* and contentment to enter. Once you become *grateful*, the prison bars of your mind will fall away. Peace of mind and contentment will be yours."

For our family this emergency situation was ripe with questions—unknown hospital, neurosurgeon, medical outcomes, travel plans and more. The list was long but these concerns paled in comparison to the gratitude for every gift along the way. As we eased up and let life unfold, we could trust the process, and stay in a clear and calm place. This secure state of mind was rooted in a natural realization of deep gratitude for all that had been, is and will be. These "gratitudes" ranged from appreciating the surprising ability of various family members and the patient herself to be strong at just the right moment, the steadfastness of family, and witnessing the *spontaneous* arrival of an unusually calm, humane and skilled neurosurgeon who absolutely knew he could do the procedure well. There are still many unknowns, but the experiences of gratitude cracked the door open...and therein lies common sense, wisdom for the journey ahead.

Somewhere in the spiritual middle ground between real challenge and pure happiness, there is the human ability to see the reality and yet hold a vision of hope. Gratitude and compassion characterize that middle ground.

As many readers know the busy mind could have derailed anyone of us. I like the broad understanding of this human habit of making mental tornados. Jane Goodall, in *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* (p. 79) writes, "One of the tasks I found most difficult during my Theosophy classes was the suppression of circling thought, the first step on the road to experience true awareness. There was a time when I had practiced often; then in the press of life, I had lost the art. But on this day I felt the old mystery steal over me—the cessation of noise from within. It was like getting back into a beautiful dream It is all but impossible to describe the new awareness that comes when words are abandoned."

Banks is most practical when he advises us to put our attention on what we are grateful for. From there it is a short distance home. I recall hearing him speak years ago, "Be grateful for what you have. Notice a good feeling. The understanding will come later."

In my years teaching the Principles articulated by Sydney Banks, I find this simple lesson is very helpful especially for individuals who are learning the Principles for the first time. I also find this is a good reminder for experienced learners who have temporarily gotten stuck. My recent family experience clearly revealed the *power* of gratitude to point everyone in the direction of natural resilience. As one member expressed gratitude, another joined in, and it spread like wildfire in our texts, phone calls, e-mails, and conversations.

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