

Stress Bytes Newsletter

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"WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.
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Breaking Your Heart... OPEN!!

I want to write about heartbreak and how to embrace the lessons that come with loss. I do not want to glorify or romanticize heartbreak. It hurts....., deeply, but we can heal from it and grow to be wiser, more self-loving and stronger afterwards.

Why is it "Better to have love and lost than to never have loved at all?" Well, for one thing, it turns up issues for further growth and healing; among them self-love and fears of abandonment or being alone. For another thing, it stretches our heart, both for ourselves and for others. Heartbreak breaks your heart open!

As with anything in life, what remains with us after an upsetting event has everything to do with our attitude; how we choose to respond to or make meaning out of that event. Our relationships, even the ones that end, can serve as mirrors to help us see ourselves more clearly and accurately, accept what "is," and open us up to a wider capacity for love or compassion. Instead of

focusing on what we've lost, we might celebrate what we've gained. Or we can choose to shut down and never risk our hearts again.

When a cherished relationship ends, you can find support for nearly any negative attitude you want to take, including self-righteous anger, self-pity, blaming or labeling the other person as bad, incapable of love and commitment, or unworthy. When you talk to friends about heartbreak you may hear them say, "You're better off without them. She/he's not worthy of your tears. You should be glad! They didn't deserve you anyway. What a jerk/bitch! The best thing to do is get back on the horse and start dating." Though well-intentioned (your friends *hate* it when you're hurting) it does not serve to heal your basic hurt and help you grow through the experience. Taking up permanent residence in one of these negative attitudes, though they may be stopping places along the way of grieving the loss, only hurts you.

If loss causes you to decide to close your heart permanently, you will miss out on all future joy and possibilities. Remember only you can open the door to your heart, not someone else, because it is locked *from the inside*. The way to present and future love is not by protecting yourself from possible hurt and keeping others at a distance, but by knowing what to do and how to grieve when hurt, disappointment, and loss come into your life.

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"Kathleen, I have a confession. I've been cold and indifferent with another woman."

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The way to stay open to love and not be devastated by loss is to first and foremost be your own primary source of love. In other words, practice loving yourself. If you don't love and value yourself enough, chances are no one else will either and you will go into relationships with a level of neediness that the other person cannot ever fill. If you haven't stocked up on self-love before, during and after, when someone takes their love away you're going to be left feeling empty, bitter and resentful because not only is their love gone, but there's nothing inside to buffer that loss.

What does self-love look like in practice? It doing for yourself the things you'd hoped a lover would do...being kind, being patient, being nurturing, spending time with yourself doing enjoyable things. Also, you can practice being a loving person to others. Just because one person didn't accept your love, doesn't diminish your capacity to give love.

Finally, if the pain is too great, or you're getting stuck somewhere in the grief process, give me a call.

SMILING MEDITATION

TODAY DURING MY USUAL WALK AROUND THE MALL, I NOTICED A NUMBER OF SENIOR CITIZENS SITTING ON THE BENCHES, AS IF WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO RETRIEVE THEM AFTER SHOPPING. PERHAPS FOR SOME, WHO MAY LIVE ALONE, THEY CAME TO THE MALL JUST TO BE AMONG PEOPLE AND NOT JUST SIT AT HOME, COLD, LONELY OR WAITING FOR DEATH TO RETRIEVE THEM.

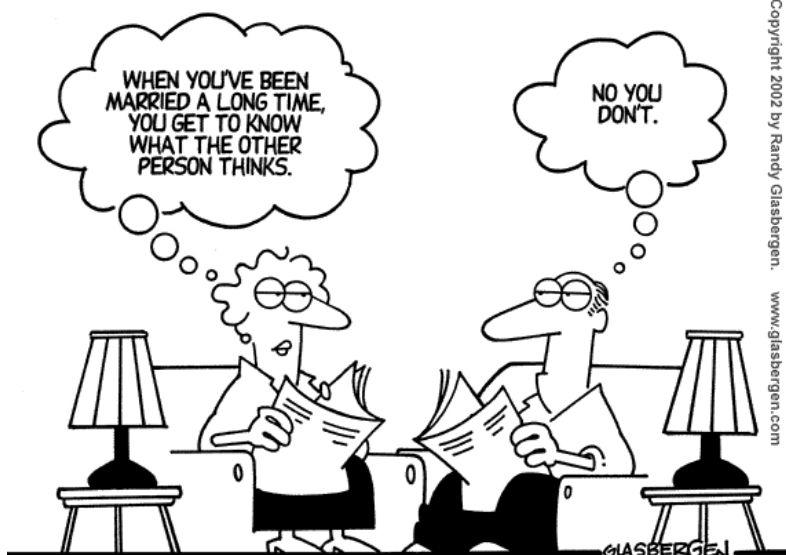
TWO TIDY, WHITE HAired, ELDERLY WOMEN SLUMPED ON THE BENCHES, CLUTCHING THEIR PURSES TO THEIR CHEST. EACH HAD A DULL LOOK IN THEIR EYES, AS IF THE SPARKLING FIRE OF YOUTH, LOVE AND HOPE HAD LONG AGO DIED. WHEN THEIR EYES MET MINE, I SIMPLE SMILED AND THEIR FACES CAME BACK TO LIFE!

WHO WERE THESE WOMEN? WHO DID THEY LOVE? WHAT DID THEY GIVE TO LIFE? HOW VALUABLE IS A SINGLE LIFE! WILL THEY LEAVE THIS WORLD WITH THEIR STORIES UNTOLD?

I'VE DECIDED THIS WILL BE MY NEW MEDITATION AT THE MALL--LOOKING, SMILING, AND SEEING THE SPIRIT OF JOY COME ALIVE IN OTHERS.

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TO READ MORE OF ANNETTE'S MUSINGS GO TO [HTTP://ANNETTESMUSINGS.BLOGSPOT.COM/](http://ANNETTESMUSINGS.BLOGSPOT.COM/)



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THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture;
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

-Rumi, Sufi Poet

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The Stress Doctor is IN!!!

“EVERY INSTANCE OF HEARTBREAK CAN TEACH US POWERFUL LESSONS ABOUT CREATING THE KIND OF LOVE WE REALLY WANT.” - MARTHA BECK, O MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 2003

“NOTHING TAKES THE TASTE OUT OF PEANUT BUTTER QUITE LIKE UNREQUITED LOVE.” - CHARLIE BROWN

“SOME OF US THINK HOLDING ON MAKES US STRONG; BUT SOMETIMES IT IS LETTING GO.” - HERMANN HESSE

“EVER HAS IT BEEN THAT LOVE KNOWS NOT ITS OWN DEPTH UNTIL THE HOUR OF SEPARATION.” - KAHLIL GIBRAN

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**“I do so share my deepest emotions with you!
Hungry and tired are my deepest emotions.”**

ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- 15 years experience gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential.
- Specializing in Women’s Issues and Stress Management

Call **(618) 549-5935** to set up an appointment

Visit our website at www.GotStressGetHelp.com

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NEW DIMENSIONS RADIO ON WDBX-FM 91.1 FM

Through its worldwide radio broadcasts, books, and tapes, New Dimensions opens up the global conversation with new insights and new ways of thinking. New Dimensions listens in to what is emerging in the world and encourages that goodness on a wide scope of subjects such as social, political, scientific, ecological, and spiritual frontiers through deep dialogues. **Programs air on Thursdays at 9am and Sundays at 5pm.**

December 2005 Upcoming Topics

The week of Dec 5: An Enlightened Farmer in Kansas with Bryan Welch

The week of Dec 12: Two Opponents, One Flag with Deidre Combs

The week of Dec 19: Evolution of the Spirit with Craig Hamilton

The week of Dec 26: Just Say Yes: Improvising Your Life with Patricia Ryan Madison

If you miss these programs you can listen to them online for a week afterwards at www.NewDimensions.org