

Hello Darkness
UUF

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We're now well past the autumnal equinox, where the length of day and night are equal. The earth has clearly begun to give us notice that times are a-changin'. The sun is well on its way, passing the celestial equator—headed south for the winter. It's getting a head start on the snow birds.

The leaves are falling, signaling a time to let go of what has been full and lush, bringing our attention to what is left standing; providing a less nuanced view of the truth of what is. Animals are growing a winter coat in preparation for what they know is to come. Even the yearlings, with no prior experience of the dead of winter, know to bulk up, put food in store for what the lessening light foretells.

In about a month's time, the sun will have gone south as far as it is able and be forced to return north. But it will be a long, sluggish trip, the sun will be in no hurry. In the meantime, we will experience the longest of the dark days of winter...and bad weather to boot!

But we can rejoice in knowing that every ending is also a beginning. We begin life in the darkness of gestation in the womb. There we gather all our resources and focus exclusively on developing into what we are intended to become. Isn't it interesting that in the darkness of the womb, we do our most important development?

Yet, from this side of the womb, we often have negative associations with the dark. We associate the dark with unknowing—left in the dark. We associate the dark with a time of nothingness, a time of non-consciousness, as if time stops. And [then] there is the ultimate stoppage of time...the darkness of death.

Maybe it's because of the psychic association of darkness with death that we tend to fear the dark. Maybe it's because our favored sense, eyesight, is diminished, that we tend to fear the dark. But in either case, I suspect it's the overarching sense of not knowing, that prompts us to fear the dark.

I remember the times that I used to camp out in the woods, more often than my older body prefers. I was very aware of my fear of the dark---the flashlight needed to always be within easy reach. No ifs, ands or buts... The flashlight provided a sense of security. Even as a child I was afraid of the dark. My brothers—all older—used to invent ways to frighten me---they were shockingly inventive! And successful!

I can't remember the exact circumstances, but I have a vivid memory of gaining a particular awareness of my relationship to the dark. I was walking in the woods with one of my children---six, seven or eight years old, and I noticed that I felt different being there with my child—a child who would be of very little use in protecting me from the big bad something that I feared when in the exact same place, alone.

At that moment, I realized that my fear was being in the woods alone, much more than being in the woods in the dark. Maybe my parental instincts kicked in and my focus was less on myself than on my responsibility for my child. But none-the-less, I was startled by the awareness that my fear was mostly about being in the dark alone.

We enter the world alone. And when the body stops working—when the body stops working---isn't that an interesting way to think about death? That's the way I've learned to talk to very young children about death. They can understand that things sometimes just stop working. [Maybe they can even understand that we die alone.]

Alone, is a very powerful concept. Alone, bookends the two most significant things we do in life. We enter life—at least this life, in human form—alone; and we leave this embodied life alone. One could argue, all else is just detail; preparation for doing what only we can do, alone.

In a real sense, the darkness forces us to be with ourselves. It cuts us off from a primarily external experience of the world. It takes away the probability of finding life and vitality in the external. It inhibits us from seeking to live in the out-there, the future.

That can be scary. Our culture is so full of distractions, so full of things that need doing, that capture our attention, that ask us to react. There is very little reinforcement for down-time, quiet time, time to be self-reflective.

But like sleep, our bodies and minds require it. There is so much that goes on while we sleep that we just don't know much about. We know that the mind continues to work while we sleep. We know about dreams.

Science believes the brain does it's sorting and filing while we sleep---filing away experiences, putting information in the memory bank that most closely resembles what we already know or have experienced---but we're not really sure how all that works. But science does know that we can't go much beyond a week or two without sleep, or else we die.

Down time, sleep time, a time of darkness seems to go hand and hand with life. We need to pay more attention to the darkness in life, more attention to that part of life that superficially seems to be devoid of life.

Imagine standing outside in the dead of winter. Looking around, we see leafless trees that appear to be dead. We see the barrenness of snow covered grass and shrubs that too look lifeless. We are bundled up with gloves, scarfs and hooded coats, insulating us from the external. Under such circumstances, it's easy to not see life.

That's when we need to dig a little deeper as the song tells us. Can't tell what you'll find, maybe love will grant you peace of mind. Dig down deep inside yourself, you'll find what you need.

Perhaps a more trustworthy source, Carl Jung, tells us, "one does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious".

As autumn unfolds into the dark days of winter, we like the plants and animals naturally begin to turn inward. The season is ripe for us to slow down, turn our focus towards our inner knowing of what sustains us.

The Life Energy Fundamentals work that has been so valuable to me, for well over twenty years now, in part, was built around the changing seasons. The original program that I studied began in the fall, when it's easiest to go inward.

The very first thing we learned was how to ground our energy, how to ground ourselves. Grounding provides a sense of stability. Much like trees that sink their roots deep into the ground. Those with deep roots are better able to withstand strong winds without being blow over.

Grounding provides our energetic selves a sense of stability, safety and comfort. Being grounded provides the safety to explore with less fear of being blown away, or getting lost. It helps to provide the security to let go of the need to believe our thoughts. It facilitates being able to focus on what we find, without the need to judge it as good or bad. We become increasingly able to simply accept what we find, when we dig a little deeper.

With practice, one is able to focus on particular parts of the body, to explore and discover what's there. For example, at some point, one gains an appreciation of the knowledge we carry in our bellies. There is good reason for that familiar phrase we sometimes use to explain a decision we've made. "I just had a gut feeling" or "I trusted my gut".

These and other such colloquialisms remain in our vocabulary for good reason. "Lost in thought" means we've become disconnected from our bodies and no longer have a sense of where we are. Similarly, when you feel "off kilter" you should probably try to ground yourself so you can feel "solid as a rock".

I hope you've had the experience of being in conversation with someone and knowing what they said was "heartfelt". Yes you heard their words with your ears, but what really happened is they touched your heart. You had a heart to heart connection. And that means your heart was open, and not "cold as stone".

There is much knowing that resides inside our bodies. Notice, I did not say knowledge. Knowledge I believe lives in our heads. Knowing resides in the body. We can have a great deal of knowledge about our physical body and not know ourselves at all well.

Both knowing and accepting ourselves is a sign of maturity. Maturity is something we grow into. We need to till the soil, fertilize the ground of our being with effort, intentionality, patience, acceptance and love.

It's at that point, that we are able to transform the darkness into light; light that we can use to both illuminate and warm the world.

Let the season take us inward... and all of us, let's dig a little deeper.

Amen and ashe.