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The SCS *Beyond Mastery* Newsletter

Welcome ...

Here is your *Beyond Mastery Newsletter* for March 2009. This newsletter may be duplicated and distributed to those who share an interest in Energy Medicine, neurolinguistics—especially Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)—and spirituality.

This month the featured articles are “Do What You Love, and the Well-being Will Follow,” by Debra; “Change You Can Believe In,” by Joel; and “Anything But Obvious,” by Debra; and “The Power of Choice,” by Joel.

Do What You Love, and the Well-being Will Follow

I was a bit put off when I read the following statement in an online daily reminder: “But just because we’ve decided to ignore our passions doesn’t mean they no longer exist. Nothing can fill the emptiness that remains in a space vacated by a passion that we have tossed aside.” (The Daily Om, January 14, 2009)

One thought that popped into my mind is that my passions have changed. In the same way that I used to love to play with dolls, I used to love to fish. Now I love to ride my bike and go to Still Waters, a retreat in SW Michigan. I used to love working to convince people to open their minds. Now I love to be with people who have.

What I did resonate with in the article is that one must find what one truly is passionate about and live that passion. Some people love to garden. I do understand that because I had a green-thumb period of my life where I had houseplants that would thrive. I would even take sickly houseplants from friends who were pretty good gardeners themselves but were having a problem with one of their plants and nurture

them back to vibrancy. Other people love playing musical instruments or painting or dancing. The key is to notice what is happening in your body. What makes your energy flow and your spirit soar?

A few years ago Joel and I discovered that we thoroughly enjoy watching a reality show about real people who love to dance and want a chance to dance professionally. Watching “So You Think You Can Dance” has become one of our favorite things to share. We used to enjoy an improv show, “Whose Line Is It, Anyway?” People in my life tolerate at different levels my enjoyment of “Wheel of Fortune,” and my husband, John, even purchased a home version we play with our grandchildren. The main thing is to notice what brings you good feelings and to do more and more of them.

In the same way, notice what brings bad feelings, and do less and less of that. In a way, bad feelings can just be seen as feedback to help you find ways to have more good feelings. Some people can conjure up bad feelings about good-feeling things. When they are enjoying something, they are thinking, “This will be over soon.” You can learn to milk the moments of your life for more joy.

The writer of the Daily Om article said, “you don’t have to neglect your responsibilities to pursue your passions, and you don’t have to neglect your commitments to do what you love.” This is one of the seven keys to more joyful living.

In the program, *Power of Presence: Seeing the Divine in Everyday Life*, Joel and I invite you to learn to tell the stories of your life in new ways. It is a little bit like what Stephen Covey (*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*) refers to as *begin with the end in mind*. I always thought it was a good idea to have people write their own obituaries as a way of seeing what is important in your life while you still have time to do something

about what you want to do something about. In some ways, you can pay attention to that now, and just remember that while you don't have to neglect your responsibilities to pursue your passions, at the soul level pursuing your passions is the most direct way of honoring your responsibilities.

Many years ago I went to a talk given by Dr. Bernie Siegel, author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*. One of the profound things he said that evening was to look at your life to see whether what you were doing for a living was something you would not be doing if you knew you only had six months to live. I came home that night and told John I needed to quit my job. That was a job I was scheduled to start the next day! Fortunately, his sleepy response was, "You have to do what you have to do." And I did!

Spring is a great metaphor for new life, new beginnings, and new growth. Perhaps you are already in synch with your passion and are able to live every day aware of your passions and adding more and more well-being to your life. Perhaps you are aware that this is something you want more of. Wherever you are in the process, be aware that your life is precious and the passions are personal. Not everyone loves to jog. Not everyone loves to sing. Not everyone loves to write, but you have ways of tapping in to your own passions now. And as you do tap in to your passions, you are gifting everyone in your life.

Hmmm.... Perhaps when you do what you love, the well-being follows for others, too. How cool is that?

Changes You Can Believe In

President Barack Obama made good use of the slogan, "Change You Can Believe In," during his recent presidential campaign. A majority of us living in the States had become unhappy with the direction the country had been going, and a many were unhappy with the way national events were influencing their personal lives. Under such circumstances, people naturally desire change.

Moving away from painful circumstances is one of the two principal motivators in life. We eat and drink when we experience the discomfort of hunger and thirst. We heat our homes to escape the discomfort of a cold winter, and we air condition them in summer to escape the discomfort of heat and humidity. The other principal motivator is pleasure. Moving toward those things that we believe will bring us pleasure is the other principal motivator in life.

Humans and other living things all move to avoid pain and to gain pleasure. Even plants, which are not known for their ability to move quickly or far, extend their roots in search of nutrients and their branches and leaves in search of an appropriate amount of sunlight. For most animals it is a matter of finding something to eat while avoiding being eaten. Only humans have made the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain an art form.

Because humans are complex, they can override their innate associations of pain and pleasure with new, learned responses. When we are born, our responses

are limited to the pain caused by the fears of falling and loud noises. Because physical discomfort is a new experience for infants, we soon learn that it feels better to be well-fed than to be hungry and to be clean, dry, and warm rather than wet and cold. And the learning extends from there.

Although people can and sometimes do learn to associate pleasure with pain, most human difficulties are caused by failure to recognize the differences between short-term and long-term. Very often, what gives us pleasure in the short-term causes pain in the long-term, and vice-versa. Since infancy, for example, we have learned to associate eating with pleasure because it reduces the pain of hunger. It takes an extra step in the learning process to recognize that too many short-term pleasures from eating causes the long-term pain of obesity and a wide variety of associated problems. Once a person has learned to use cigarettes as a way to achieve certain pleasures, it is difficult to resist those pleasures to avoid the associated long-term pains.

To be able to create changes you can believe in, you need to be able to identify both the pains and the pleasures you have associated with a particular activity, not only short-term pains and pleasures, but also long-term pains and pleasures. If you have been a smoker, for example, you may have originally associated smoking with the pleasures of "being mature" or "fitting in with a group." As you learned to smoke to have those feelings, smoking itself became an anchor for those pleasures. When you have quit smoking, you will still want those pleasures, so you will need to learn to associate them with other behaviors. Or you can simply claim those pleasures for yourself now without having to find a substitute avenue for achieving them.

Overeating may be a bit more complex, as that isn't something you can simply quit doing and declare yourself full. Changing the habit of overeating requires associating eating with pleasure while associating overeating with pain. That requires the ability to distinguish between the two. A couple of well-known weight-loss programs use the mantra, "Nothing tastes as good as thin feels." The problems with that belief is that it seems to give the choice between eating only those things you think taste bad or getting thinner, and thinner, and thinner.... If this belief is acted on long enough, the pain of anorexia is the logical long-term result.

If losing weight is the change you wish to believe in, the most important factor is learning to eat consciously with increased body awareness. That way, you can eat what you want, enjoy every bite, and stop eating when you are full. When you begin paying more *conscious* attention to how your body feels, you amplify your ability to stop eating when you are full. Because most of us have ancestors who struggled to find sufficient food for robust health, we may have the unconscious sense that we better eat what we can now because who knows when we'll have the chance to eat again. If you're like most people these days, one

glance in your refrigerator should be sufficient to persuade you that the primitive fear of starvation no longer applies.

When you want to create changes you can believe in, be sure to identify both the pains and the pleasures of whatever needs changing and the outcome you desire. Your increased conscious awareness will greatly amplify your conscious intent to achieve your desired objective.

Anything But Obvious

Sometimes the most simple and helpful can seem anything but obvious. That is what I thought when I was introduced to Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D., and his concept of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). For example, we all know some "feeling" words, if only such basics as happy, sad, glad, or mad. But, even the most emotionally intelligent among us may have missed some of the obvious.

According to NVC, even when a person says, "I feel X," if the word *feel* is followed with *that*, *like*, *as if*; or pronouns (he, she, it, they); or names (John Boy, Jim Bob); or nouns used as names for people or groups, what is being expressed is most likely an evaluation, moralistic judgment, interpretation, or diagnosis.

You can benefit greatly by learning to describe objectively what is happening, honestly expressing how you feel, recognizing your legitimate need and clearly, and requesting specific actions that can meet your needs. While the ideas in NVC are not new, your just taking a moment to remember these helpful tools can contribute to a sense of well-being within you, and bring more harmony to your relationships.

Those who are familiar with the examples used in SCS/NLP, will recognize what we call the "subtext" and "metamessage" of the communication. If my partner has been working a lot, or my boss has been demanding extra from me, or I have been noticing a diminished joy in my life, Rosenberg suggests that we can "reach beneath the surface and discover what is alive and vital within us." Some basic assumptions that help you include the awareness of how all human actions (even those behaviors we dislike) are strategies to meet one or more of the many needs we all have in common.

So rather than using violent language such as, "You care more about your job than you do about me," or "Your demands are unreasonable, and you don't pay me enough to expect this of me," or "Life sucks," you learn to develop a vocabulary of feelings and needs that will let you share the vital truth (that which cannot be argued with). This is getting off the drama triangle. "I am feeling insecure. I know you have been working a lot of late. Let's create an opportunity to share something fun." "I am overwhelmed right now. Let me see what I can simplify so this can be accomplished without adding more stress." "I am feeling flat. I will be a bit more aware of what that might mean I am needing more or less of in my life right now."

One impressive story of nonviolent communication was about a woman, alone at work, who suddenly found herself with a knife at her throat, held by a man demanding that she take off all of her clothes. Having recently attended a workshop on NVC, she remembered a phrase to *not place your "but" in the face of an angry person*. Rather than saying "but" and refusing to do what she was told, she shifted to the core of the program and she began to use empathy, responding to the man with, "I can see that you are shaking. This must be very scary for you." Each time he demanded that she take her clothes off, her response was empathy. "I can understand that you want to feel powerful." After about 20 minutes that must have seemed like eternity, she switched to stating her own feelings and asking for an action she wanted. "I am very afraid, and I don't want to get hurt. Is there something I can do for you that would allow me to not be hurt?" The man hesitated just a moment, then responded with, "Well, then give me your purse!" She handed it to him, and he ran off.

When she reported her experience at another training session she attended, Rosenberg asked what more she might need to learn, and commented on how amazing her effective use of the skill was. Her response was, "Well, when my mother called to tell me I needed to quit my job because it was not safe there, rather than use NVC, I stuck my *but* in her face and said, "But I love my work! I want to be able to use this with people I care about most."

Wow... that is a goal we can all get behind. Check out the website, especially some of the videos. www.nvc.org

Another wonderful resource came from my friend Kay. This one is from a Rabbi in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. When you have time, visit Spirituality & Health (<http://www.spirituality-health.com/>). Click on the link for Articles. Then scroll down and choose any of the archived issues. Click on the link for "Roadside Assistance for the Spiritual Traveler: Intelligent Design or Scientific Materialism," by Rabbi Rami Shapiro, and enjoy some exposure to an individual who is obviously willing to make us think.

This is from the January/February 2007 issue:

Imagine that the universe is a rope and you and everyone you love and all things are knots in that rope. Each knot is unique, and all knots are the rope. When we die our knot unties, but the rope that is our essence remains unchanged: we become what we already are.

Life after death is the same as life before death: the rope knotting and unknitting. The extent to which you identify with a knot is the extent to which you grieve over its untying. (or in this case, perhaps the extent to which you had felt afraid) The extent to which you realize that the knot is the rope is the extent you can move through your grief (or fear) into a sense of fearless calm.

Well, I don't know about everyone, but for most of us, this is a very good time for developing more of a sense of fearless calm. I trust you will delve deeply enough into these inspiring resources, and enjoy everything SCS has to offer, too. The world will be a better place, won't it....

The Power of Choice

Although it often seems as though life is what happens while we are making other plans, life is much more likely to be a logical consequence of the choices we have made. To be sure, the logical consequences may not be obvious when we make the choice. In Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, five individuals are on a rope bridge when its collapse sends them to their death. As the story unfolds, we discover how each of them made the choices that led them to be on the bridge at that time.

While we may not always know the consequences of a given choice at a given time, our ability to make good decisions depends on our ability to recognize choices when we are making them. Although the characters in the Thornton Wilder play could not have known that the bridge would collapse, many movies make use of what is known as a "fool's plot." The defining characteristic of the fool's plot is that the author has one of the characters, usually the protagonist or one of his or her friends, do something stupid as a way of moving the plot forward.

In particular, the fool's plot is the staple of many horror movies. In one such movie, for example, a family is driving across the desert on the way to California. They stop to buy gas at a run-down service station in the middle of a wasteland. The guy who waits on them looks like a combination of Dracula, Wolf Man, and Dr. Frankenstein's helper, Igor. He tells them, "There's a road about a mile up the highway that isn't on the map, but it will cut hours off your trip to the coast." They choose to follow that advice. You probably know how it turns out: The desert is full of evil beings related to the guy at the service station, and one by one.... Well, you know the rest. In that case the choice was whether to believe the map or the crazed looking guy at the service station.

In my case, one of my "fool's choices" was buying a used but flashy red sports car instead of a new VW "Beetle." The price was the same. You probably already know how it turns out: The flashy red sports car spent more time in the shop than on the road and didn't last more than a year. Beetles of that vintage lasted on average 20 years, and every now and then you can still find one that's alive and well. That is, of course, not the only time I went for the "fool's plot." I suspect that when you look back from your current vantage point, you can see times you have made similar "fool's plot" choices.

The question at this point is whether you can recognize such choices for what they are the next time they appear. Making good decisions at important choice points has a learning curve. You can't expect a toddler, for example, to know whether sticking a

metal utensil in an electrical outlet would be a good decision. When my sister was about 2 years old, she did exactly that. And our parents kept the knife that had two deep electrical burn marks well into my sister's and my adolescence. My sister and I needed no other reminder of where *not* to stick utensils. These days, people with toddlers go through the process of "child-proofing" their homes. Whether we grew up in a "child-proof" home or not, by the time we get to be adults, most of us have learned the fundamentals of electrical safety and can make appropriate choices about what to stick in electrical outlets.

In movies based on the "fool's plot," everything hinges on the first foolish decision. Once that decision has been made, even good decisions can have untoward consequences. The first bad decision precludes a good outcome, and the remaining options are choices between bad and worse. In some cases, that sequence is also true in life. Occasionally a new student at the dojo (karate school) I attend will ask our Sensei (teacher), "What do you do when a guy in the bar throws a beer in your face?" Sensei's response tends to be, "What would you be doing in a bar?" Going into the bar is the equivalent of taking the road across the desert instead of sticking to the highway.

Each choice you make influences subsequent choices. A long time ago, a group called The Lovin' Spoonful asked the musical question, "Did you ever have to make up your mind/Pick up on one and leave the other behind?" The singer asks whether you've been taken with one girl the moment you kiss her, only to be distracted by her older sister. The father of the girls tells him to go home and make up his mind. In such cases, it is easy to see how the choice would influence future choices.

In other cases, it may not be so obvious. Unless you are paying close attention, you may not even be fully aware that you have a choice and that you may need to live with the consequences. Because all of life is a learning curve, the most important lesson is learning to make good choices about the things that really matter. When you order a meal in a restaurant, for example, the choice you make usually ceases to influence you soon after the meal is over. What you choose to eat meal after meal, however, will have lasting influence.

Fortunately, you already know how to make good decisions about important things. You've made a lot of them over the years. You've undoubtedly also made some decisions you recognize as not so great. Bad decisions can, of course, have a lasting positive impact on you when you have learned from them. You may have gotten really, really drunk at some time and then decided—made a new choice—to avoid drinking to excess in the future.

The most important things are to increase your conscious awareness of the choices you are making every day and to bring the awareness of what you have learned from past decisions to present and future decisions. That's the best way to exercise your power of choice.

What's Coming Up?

For those with tight schedules and a desire to have this powerful tool kit, you can now earn certification as Practitioner or Master Practitioner of NLP in the most convenient way! This program is for you when you are highly motivated and committed to doing your reading and independent study. Register now for \$250 and receive your training manual. You can start now by joining us on the 4th Sunday of the month in March and most months in 2009 for ongoing study of NLP. The times are from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The next date is Sunday, 22 March. With the exception of May, the fourth Sunday of the month is reserved to ensure your ability to complete NLP certification in the most convenient way. NLP certification requires 10 days of training and the completion of a variety of "Home-fun" exercises. Begin the training now, and you'll be well on your way to certification by next spring.

Each day will focus on experiential learning for you because you will already be familiar with the NLP terminology before each training day through having read the appropriate materials in the NLP training manual. Your progress can be tracked easily either by your participating in the NLP forum or by your submitting simple written process reports, whichever you prefer. The focus for the training days will include:

- Anchoring
- Submodalities
- Timelines

- Metaprograms
- Metamodel
- Milton Model
- Hypnosis, Trance, and Altered States

For those who prefer to take their training in one-fell swoop, we are also scheduling an NLP intensive from 22 through 28 June. When you have the time to dedicate to it, an intensive approach is the fastest way to ensure learning. Earn your NLP Practitioner or Master Practitioner certification at the ideal time to be along the shore of Lake Michigan in St. Joseph, Michigan. Master Practitioner requires previous certification at the Practitioner level. Those in the Super Sundays group may use all or part of the intensive program to speed the completion of their certification.

As part of our *Perpetual Tuition*, if you are already trained in NLP or SCS Healing with Language, you can attend to improve and update your skills at just \$25 a day. Space for these special days will be limited, so be sure to reserve your place early. Call/write now: (269) 921-2217 or debra@scs-matters.com

The real question is where you want to go next.... When you sponsor an SCS workshop, you have the advantage of bringing the workshop to you instead of going to the workshop, and your commission for sponsoring the event will undoubtedly cover the cost of your tuition—and perhaps even more.

To learn more about sponsoring "The Power of Presence: Seeing the Divine in Everyday Life (7 Keys to Joyful Living)" or any of the workshops in the SCS list of offerings, call Debra at (269) 921-2217, or send her a quick email message: debra@scs-matters.com

