

“People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is a confession of their own character”

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

If I think bad thoughts about you then those thoughts reside in my head and were produced by me. My world, and your world, looks the way it does by virtue of the lenses we wear. When my lenses are clouded with resentment, arrogance, or even desperation, then what and who I see through those lenses will be coated with the same cloudiness. In this twelfth month of the year, take out your softest cloth and polish your lenses. What would you see if you wiped off all negative judgment and simply looked carefully and with the utmost openness.

When I was little and my maternal grandmother, Celia, was alive, she used to see people who behaved badly, according to the opinions of others, and she would ask, “Do you think he *wants* to act like that?” She was a natural “empath” (like the character in Star Trek), and she saw what others would have harshly judged, with compassion and understanding. If one could help change the conditions under which someone behaves anti-socially, perhaps that person could find a better way.

Who or what in your life do you look upon with clouded and stressful lenses?

Do you spend your energy trying to get that situation/person to change so you can be happier?

Can you forgive that person or situation for being that way and steer yourself in a more productive direction?

Have you reflected on what projects belong to you and what belong to others or other circumstances beyond your control?

How do you want to see others? Situations that are difficult? Do you look for silver linings?

The Self-in-Relation: We are Each Other November 2014

“The need to move beyond the boundaries of ourselves as individuals and to bond with a group is so primordial and necessary to human beings that it remains the key determinant of whether we remain healthy or get ill, even whether we live or die. It is more vital to us than any diet or exercise program; it protects us against the worst toxins and the greatest adversity. The Bond we make with a group is the most fundamental need we have because it generates our most authentic state of being.” (page 83, *The Bond* by Lynne McTaggart).

In November in the United States we celebrate Thanksgiving, a time to relish the harvest, the abundance of love we feel for family, friends, neighbors and the earth. This is a holiday during which we feast on the abundance in our lives with gratitude and kindness.

Of course, Thanksgiving, like other holidays, may bring more difficult feelings of grief due to losses of people dear to us, of marriages, of friends, of jobs or opportunities, of our own health or the health of others close to home and around the world.

Reflect on the meaning of this Thanksgiving for you:

For what do you feel most thankful? For whom do you feel love, kinship and friendship? Who has made a positive or generous impact on you during this past year? For what personal blessings do you feel gratitude? And lastly, how would you like to use your personal gifts for the aid or advancement or encouragement of others? Think of several strengths you possess and how you might put those to use on behalf of others.

If you are experiencing resentments, anger, or feel the victim of circumstance or another person, reflect on how you might turn these around: If you resent another person is there a way you might take better care of yourself in the future? If you are angry, have you given voice to your thoughts on the matter in a responsible way? If you feel victimized, have you been too passive when you might activate yourself in seeking to be seen, heard or to make a difference?

We Can't Escape the Fall or Falling Down for that Matter: We All Fall Down October 2014

Quote from Naomi Newman's 'Snake Talk':

"Here on the fourth step you are meant to fall down, not once, not twice, not occasionally, but on every fourth step. The ground opens up, the wind blows, a branch hits you in the head, you trip on stones, you twist your ankle, your heart breaks, you've got to fold the laundry and they have closed the two left lanes. All of the forces gather together to stop you. And some people, when it happens, they fall down and they lie there for the rest of their lives. But some people learn to fall down/get up. Now that is one move: fall down/get up."

Reflection/Writing Response Questions:

- (1) Describe a situation/event/process that has bowled you over, blown off your hat, made you feel incapable, incompetent, unlucky, discombobulated, or supremely frustrated or grief stricken. Notice your narrative of your relationship to this event or series of happenings. Do you feel powerless? Unheard? Alone and isolated? Does this situation bring up feelings of self-hatred and do you think in self-condemning thoughts? On the other hand, do you blame others for this situation?

(2) When you look at your story does it leave you in a “stuck” place from which you see no openings or options? Do you resign yourself to bad luck or a bad turn of events? Or do you try to find the silver linings, the places where you learn something and with that information move forward in your life. Do you tend to give up easily? Or do difficult situations spur you on to greater resolve and motivation?

(3) How can you make yourself more accountable to “fall down/get up?” Could you speak up more? Could you reach out to others more? Might you accept better your status as a small human up against bigger forces than you? Would you be able to take a mistake/failure/rejection/hurt/disappointment less personally? Could you face your fears more courageously?