

OUR COMMUNITY JOURNAL

The Real Life of Life Coaching

ON BEING “AN ADVOCATE, AN ACTIVIST FOR THE EXPRESSION
OF LOVE IN ALL ITS FORMS . . .”

THE PAST YEAR OR SO has been one of the most difficult times in my life, with a particularly traumatic series of events occurring over the past several weeks. I’ve been shaken, and often it’s been difficult to find my peace, my ease.



We all share this experience of suffering, whether it be small irritations and disappointments or big-ass gut punches, so my details are less important than how I am being with these experiences and the insights emerging.

Years ago, I committed my life to being an advocate, an activist for the expression of Love in all its forms—not just the sweet sentimental kind of love but also the rich, deep, powerful, enduring, indestructible, unfiltered, creative, all-encompassing, and sometimes fierce ground out of which Life itself manifests.

I don’t think I fully appreciated what would be required to live into this commitment, authentically. Not just as an exercise in personal development to feel better in my life more often, but instead the complex, humbling, vulnerable, and often painful process of noticing and confronting ways in which I cling to my ego for dear life, move from my personality vs. deeper truths, and rely on spiritual bypassing as a way to distract from, reject, and speed through the painful moments of my life—all ways of being that interfere with Love’s genuine expression.

If we want to be a more patient person, we don’t become instantly more patient; we get more opportunities to practice patience. In that way we strengthen the skill of patience.

It’s the same with Love.

It is my deepest desire to cultivate the skill of Loving. To experience Love fully by removing the blocks to Love’s ever-presence and supporting others in doing the same. And my suffering is providing the ideal practice space to do just that—cultivate the skill, the art of Loving. For real. Right here. Right now.

As my heart aches in this moment, it’s an invitation to strengthen my compassion muscles—for myself and others; my patience muscles; my faith muscles; my mindfulness muscles; my forgiveness muscles; my generosity muscles. To

« *And I Did Have a Rainbow*
Wendy Csoka

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re-remember there is an Awareness that can hold all my suffering *and* all my joys. That I can rest in this Awareness, feel my breath here, Love and be Loved here regardless of what is going on or how skillful I am in any given moment.

My ego wants to maintain the illusion of a solid sense of self that needs defending, trying to keep me safe at all costs even at the risk of a life that is not whole, vibrant, inspired. I call bullshit.

This practice of Loving fully requires me to be with my pain and suffering. To tend to it. To ride the waves of discomfort and uncertainty without panicking. To open to it, get to know its texture, its stories, the ways it triggers more suffering. To meet it with compassion until space around it opens up and I can let the experience tenderize me, burp up and burn off my attachments to ways of being in the world that are no longer useful, allow insight and wisdom to emerge.

Sometimes I'm skillful, sometimes I'm not. But my commitment to strengthening my ability to Love deeper, unapologetically, courageously is unwavering. It's not a belief I have about myself or an identity as "one committed to the path." Instead, it's a truth validated by experience as I imperfectly live that choice, moment by moment, one day at a time.

The fruits of practice continue to be feeling this undercurrent of joy and well-being, even on my worst days. I walk this path not just for me, but for my elders, teachers, ancestors. In some way my commitment to Love, to not be defined by my pain and fears or the fears of others, even my *Joy* is a way I can honor their lives, struggles, impact, and sacrifices. Maybe it's even redemptive. At the very least it's my deepest expression of gratitude.

So I practice—some days with knees shaking, breath shallow, my chest heaving from anxiety. I slow down, I reach out to my wife and friends, I work out, I read, I sit, I serve, I cry, I talk to Grandma and Cheri and my therapist and teacher. I allow life to move through me, knowing it's all in constant motion and that I'm being held in a net I cannot fall out of, grateful for a peace and joy that surpasses all understanding.

With deep gratitude for the dharma, my beloved wife, my teachers, my friends and family.

Don't waste your suffering. Use it to get free.

—SHARON SHELTON

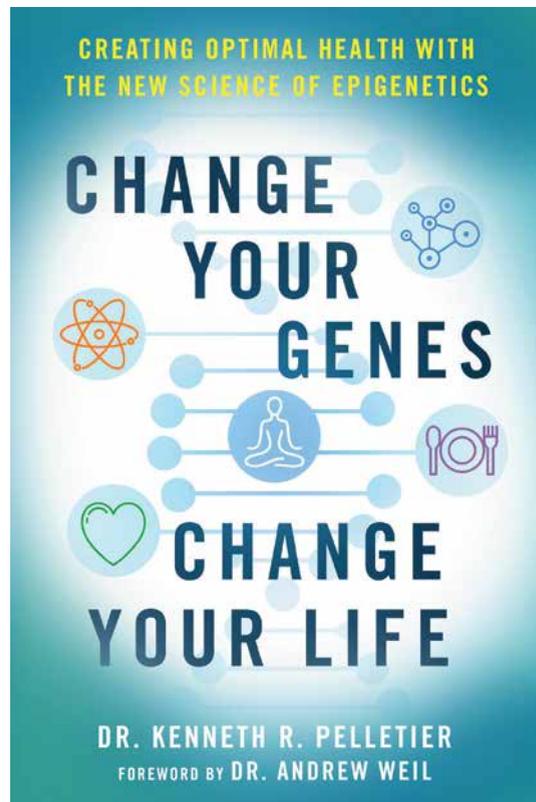
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