

Lessons From the Acorn

By Marilyn Wise LICDC

Young, depressed and seeking truth in 1972, I read a new book called *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse. Now a classic, this allegorical tale follows a young Indian man on his journey toward self-discovery and meaning. Reading it taught me that there are many levels of consciousness and internal growth available to us. I have been compelled to seek and explore them ever since.

Like *Siddhartha*, I have experienced different lifestyles, relationships, religions, philosophies, spiritual practices and joys, as well as the pain and suffering that can result in greater surrender to personal truth.

Now at 62, I am still on the self-awareness journey, as well as facilitator and counselor in the healing process for others. I run a holistic counseling program, specializing in addiction and practice energy and body work such as reiki, massage and guided imagery. Despite many years helping others, another classic,

The Course in Miracles, resonates with me as it states that “We teach best what we most need to learn.” In paradox, as the book *Siddhartha* points out, no one attains salvation or enlightenment only through other people’s teachings or dogma. The end result is always an inside job.

This brings us to my friend the acorn, and what this simple seed has taught me through its quiet, elegant example. We all learned early on that the tiny acorn has everything coded inside of it to become one of the strongest, most magnificent trees in the forest: the mighty oak. This amazing truth now takes on an expanded meaning. At a workshop I attended in California I fell in love with a word discussed by the brilliant human potential author and speaker Jean Huston. *Entelechy* (pronounced en-tel-uh-kee) is a vital force or agent directing an organism toward self-fulfillment. It’s basically an internal plan that we all have within us.

What does the acorn (and we as humans) need in order to fully self-actualize? Pondering this, I have learned that all my quests to ascend into higher consciousness left out an important balancing component: roots.

When I rose into bliss without the grounding of roots I always crashed ... painfully. Roots must be strong and deep and point in all directions. Roots connect me with my family, friends, ancestors, culture, community and planet. Most important are the roots that draw from my direct experience of life and spirituality that is wholly personal and true. I need roots that are firm and grounded in who I am, my values and core beliefs. I want roots that do not waver or shift with each passing teacher, book, course or relationship; roots that are unique to my own purpose and callings, that are the foundation for how I build my life. Having roots makes it possible to stay balanced and stand my ground.

We also know that an acorn will not grow out in the desert or stuck inside a closet. It needs the right soil and the perfect balance of support and room to grow its roots deeper. How do I know I am in the best soil or environment? I shine and smile from the inside out. I grow.

Another essential component for the acorn’s growth is water, the gift of rain. It’s a metaphor for all the gifts of grace that fall into our lives: the epiphanies, inspirations, synchronicities and lessons that open me and keep me fresh. Those moments that cleanse away crusty cynicism and ring me like a bell. Sometimes grace falls like gentle rain. Some-

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times it pours down like a waterfall, and I am transformed.

A time that I experienced a gift like that was in Africa as I participated in the teaching and inspiring of AIDS orphans. The laughter and joy in those beautiful children’s faces and the love they extended to me was pure grace. They taught and inspired *me*. All I have to do is bring back their memory and I melt like snow in the sun.

After the acorn is held long enough in the womb of Mother Earth and watered by the sky, it develops its own yearning and propulsion toward the light. To me, the ultimate meaning of light is love. Living the light means accepting the discipline of choosing to live as love. It means to embody love rather than seek love outside of myself, and to choose love over taking offense and recrimination.

It is by far, my most challenging spiritual practice. I wrestle with it every day, yet it’s the only practice that brings me a sense of my own truest peace and fulfillment. When I can manage to choose in any given moment to love, forgive, understand and extend compassion – instead of resentment – something shifts inside me. I warm. I grow.

As the oak tree grows taller, it spreads out its branches and becomes a home and shelter for others. It sheds what it has outgrown, what has served and now needs to go back to the earth. It develops fresh layers but uses its age and wisdom as tougher, thicker skin to protect from outside forces. Its scars make it stronger. It grows more beautiful

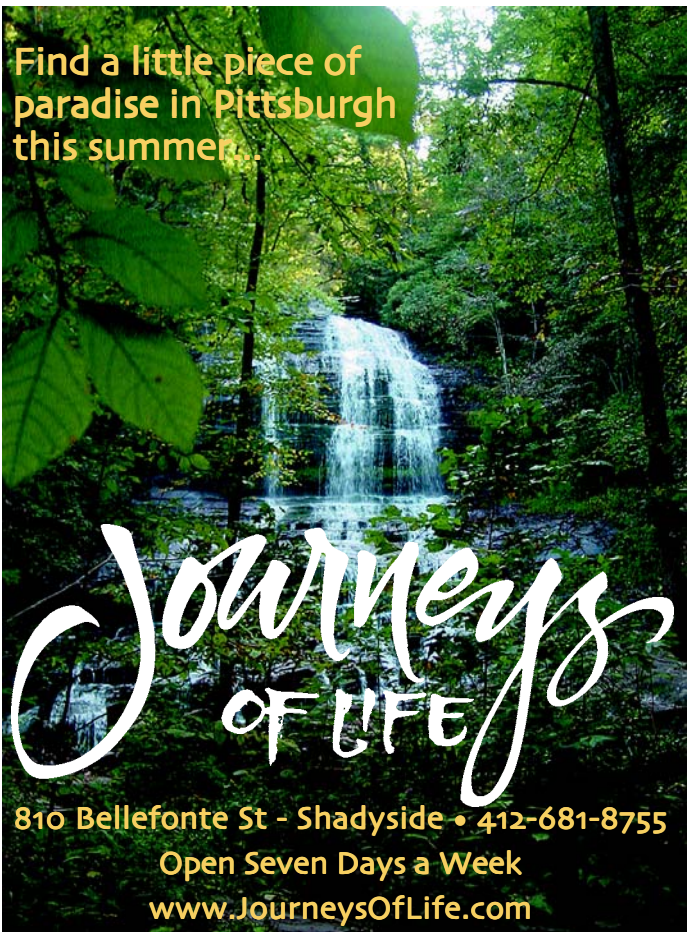
with age.

It dances with the wind and communes with the stars; it surrenders into deep and silent rest. It listens to its own internal plan or voice, because it stays quiet enough to do so. It serves with all that it is. It does not judge or withhold. To quote the writer Annie Dillard, "The tree bespeaks a generosity of spirit." It embodies love.

Siddhartha ultimately learned that his deepest peace lay in living by and listening to the river. I have always been comforted by the soothing melodies of rivers. I have learned that in order to hear my own internal river, and grow into my own *entelechy*, I must quell the distracting clamor inside as well as outside, and surrender to the stillness and love. Like the acorn, I will grow when I choose my thoughts, environment, relationships and work in accordance with what nourishes and supports the life force within me.

The famous poet Dylan Thomas eloquently states, "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower, drives my Green Age." We are all connected by this same *entelechy* that is hidden in the acorn, and encourages us to grow into the vast selves that are sleeping so softly within us.

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