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"Living With Purpose and Passion"

The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Summer 2010

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To view back issues of this newsletter, or to learn more about my work as a Counselor and Astrologer, visit my web site, DanKeusal.com, by clicking [here](#).

Dear Dan,



One ordinary Sunday afternoon a few years ago, I arrived at University Bookstore in Seattle to hear author Susanna Clarke speak about her extraordinary debut novel [Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell](#).

The novel seamlessly integrates a wide range of subjects: 19th century magicians, romance, the Napoleonic Wars, and the geography of northern England (to name just a few). When it came time for questions from the audience, I raised my hand and asked Ms. Clarke about the relationship between these diverse subjects and her process as a writer. "Well," she began, "I'm something of a magpie when it comes to writing--I take all the things I love, lay them out in front of me, and then look for the patterns that connect them."

I knew I was in the presence of a kindred spirit, because my process in putting together this newsletter, and in crafting a life, is much the same. This edition once again looks for patterns of connection among some things I love, including...a poem about a Sycamore tree, a song about the Japanese art of kintsugi, some serious humor from one of Lily Tomlin's writers, and a few lines about the parallels between drinking wine and making love.

This edition also marks the third anniversary of "Living With Purpose and Passion." I hope that as you read what follows (and when you browse the [archives](#) of past editions), you'll find words or music or images that resonate with your experience, that open up new perspectives, and that support you on your journey.

-Dan

3 Good Poems

In this edition of "3 Good Poems": the value of an extra glass of "wine"...the generosity and love shown to us by things...and the wisdom of recognizing the true source of illness, and of healing.

Click on the titles below to be taken to online versions of the poems; if for any reason the links don't work, just Google the titles yourself--you'll be glad you did.

1. ["The Good Nights"](#) (Joseph Mills)

2. "[The Patience Of Ordinary Things](#)" (Pat Schneider)
3. "[Healing](#)" (D.H. Lawrence)

Quotes for Inspiration and Action

"I always wanted to be somebody. Now I see I should have been more specific."
(Jane Wagner)

"Coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous."
(Albert Einstein)

"Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier."
(Dorothea Brande)

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that things are difficult."
(Seneca)

Reflections: "That's How The Light Gets In."

Peter Mayer's song "[Japanese Bowl](#)" illustrates a process that I deeply appreciate: it takes something ordinary and finds in it a metaphor that points toward another layer of meaning just below the surface. The song is about "kintsugi," the ancient Japanese art of using gold to repair cracks and chips in ordinary bowls:

*I'm like one of those Japanese Bowls
That were made long ago
I have some cracks in me
They have been filled with gold*

*That's what they used back then
When they had a bowl to mend
It did not hide the cracks
It made them shine*

People often come to therapy because their "cracks" have begun to show--an important relationship has begun to unravel, or they've become depressed, or they feel the stress at work is about to overtake them. Typically, they come looking for ways to hide their cracks, to make them go away, to solve the "problem." They do this because they believe that the cracks mean they are flawed, and that flaws are somehow embarrassing or even shameful.

Curious about the bowls that inspired Mayer's song, I did a Google search and found an article about [kintsugi](#) on the Smithsonian web site that suggests the opposite may be true:

"Tea-ceremony aesthetics often focused on the beauty in imperfection...Even in tea bowls that were not repaired, people came to look for the slight idiosyncrasies, even flaws, in the glaze, that made one bowl more interesting than another."

What if our cracks are not problems to be solved, but openings--

places where life can enter us, transform us, fill us with "gold," and make us even more beautiful? What if Leonard Cohen got it right in his song "[Anthem](#)":

*So ring the bells that still can ring
forget your perfect offering
there is a crack,
a crack in everything
that's how the light gets in.*

As we acknowledge our cracks, as we relax and let go of the quest to be perfect, as we embrace the life that is right in front of us, we open ourselves to the light, and to a kind of existence that Wendell Berry writes about in his poem "[The Sycamore](#)":

*"Over all the scars has come the seamless white
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
in the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate."*

Where are the cracks in your life? What kind of light is trying to get in through those cracks? How might you "shine" if you were to fill them with "gold" rather than trying to hide them? What does the strange perfection of your own journey look like? How might the "accidents" of your life be gathered into a sense of purpose?

Therapy at its best is about opening up to questions like these. It's about letting the everyday concerns of your life lead you to the deeper currents of the soul. It's about starting with anxiety, or depression, or uncertainty...and ending with a life that is richer, fuller, and more interesting...not *in spite of* a few cracks, but *because of* them.

Upcoming workshops by Dan Keusal

August 14, 2010: "Trusting Your Gifts--Work As Presence, Reverie, and Wholeness." A day-long workshop I'll be leading for the Association of Dental Hygiene Practitioners in Leavenworth, WA. Click [here](#) for details.

I offer lectures and workshops on a wide range of subjects, varying in length from brief talks appropriate for a breakfast or lunch meeting, to evening-long presentations, to day-long or weekend workshops.

You can view a list of the [organizations](#) that have invited me to speak, and list of my [recent workshops](#), by visiting my web site.

If you'd like me to come speak to your group, call me at (206) 523-1340, or [email](#) me.

Resources for a Richer Life

This edition's "Resources for a Richer Life" are woven into the rest of

the newsletter--they include songs, online articles, poems, books, and more. Look for the underlined hyperlinks (like this one, which will take you to [Parker Palmer's](#) reflections about finding his way through depression).

Counseling & Astrology Services

I offer professional counseling and astrology services for individuals and couples. Whether you come to me with a problem (like depression, stress, anxiety, relationship issues) or simply the sense that it's time for a change, I help you look at how that starting point is calling you to grow, and how you can respond with creativity, vitality, and hope.

To learn more, visit my web site by clicking [here](#).

To schedule an appointment,
or if you have questions,
call me at (206) 523-1340.

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That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an [email](#) or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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