

There's a saying in addiction recovery circles that refers to sobriety and serenity: "The only way we can keep what we have is by freely giving it away." I've heard this saying spouted for years, and have never had any cause to disbelieve it, but believing it and *knowing* it's spiritual authenticity are two very different things. I am starting to slowly wake up to the experiential realization of the validity of service in the realm of the sacred.

Yes, I have read that my salvation from these limiting beliefs of mine, from the illusion of separation and disconnection, lies within. But the path to that insight is often overgrown by the thick jungle of ignorance, denial and judgement. One of the most powerful tools I have when facing this overwhelming delusion, is the persistent coordination of breath, movement and vibration (as sound) in the heart-centered practice that is LifeForce Yoga. More recently, I have explored the consciousness-expanding journeys of the practice that is shamanic yoga, where I can literally, for brief moments, fly above the mundane schemata I normally mistake for reality, and open myself up to receive teachings from my non-physical guides.

I am seeing a convergence of ideas and methods and, more subtly, energies I am drawn to; the integration of these two practices is thus quite natural, though I proceed slowly and with caution—and sometimes with inertia. I am finding, not without some dismay, can still slip back into the dark cloak of acedia, centered in self, in the illusion of separateness, despite all my goals and intentions and my work so far. Tapas fades, and when it does I look objectively at my life and all the blessings I have received and continue to receive, and I can't help the next thought which rapidly bubbles to the surface: *I should be happier than I am.*

What presumption! But it's automatic; it is so far a choiceless self-judgement, predisposing the idea that happiness is what I need for my next steps, whatever they may be. I have even recently had difficulty making my way to my own mat for my sadhana, and have slipped back into old patterns of insomnia and worry. I have, even in the past few weeks, had days like I used to—where I need to put absolutely everything I have into the simple act of getting out of bed, and even that might not be enough.

But it's different now, no matter how similar it feels. I have tasted peace of mind. I have experiential knowledge of joy. I hold various keys to happiness within me, and the knowledge of their uses. In the midst of the smattering of labels I've been diagnosed with: depression, anxiety, PTSD, addiction, alcoholism—I have tasted inner peace, however briefly, and possess the knowledge that I can access it again. The void within me can become the cornerstone to my own spiritual growth. I sometimes hear Amy's voice: "God loves your empty hands."

But it's precisely this experience which helps me understand my few clients, and how they are so horrible at calling, showing up on time, or showing up at all. There can be little real commitment when someone is wading through the [swamplands of the soul](#). I mean—wow—for any segment of the population to pick, these depressed, anxious

trauma-ridden people make for some shoddy clients! But I see the fear, and the doubt, and the denial and the panic, and all I can know is “just like me.”

I’ve made a few connections with Veteran’s Affairs Canada to work with soldiers who suffer from PTSD, but it is an uphill battle against overwhelming bureaucracy and regulations. I have made some inroads with people suffering from addiction, and travelled out of town to give workshops to alcoholics who suffer from depression and anxiety. It’s slow going, but I am putting what little I have learned out there, and I continue my own training and exploration. And it helps. If nothing else, it helps me tremendously.

So I work, with the glacial pace and patience it seems at times, on the sparse handful of people who pluck up tremendous courage in the face of dismal odds to try something new. And, in my basement home studio, or at someone else’s place, or in a park, I share in movement and breath and vibration for a brief time. And it helps. I see and feel the endless source of metta mirrored in those I am working with, and it grounds me in gratitude. And gratitude opens my heart to grace, which brings the gift of humility, and with humility I am able, if only for a moment, to see things as they really are—not as I would like them to be and not as I fear them to be—but as they are. And this is peace.