

The Valley of Quiet

Prologue: Recently, after an eighteen-month absence instigated when my daughter blocked me from contacting her in any way, she contacted me, or should I say a small percentage of her contacted me. Her communication, all via email, was guarded and offensive. Finally, and firing from a range from which she could not miss, she fired both barrels of the emotional shotgun she was holding. The email she fired off tore into and through me and left me terribly wounded but still alive. She critiqued everything about me: relationships, my writing, how I live alone, how I didn't evacuate for the forest fire and her critique was negative and presumptuous until finally, with arrogance and naivety that belied her 39 years, she stated that I lacked any positive knowledge of life and everything I did, including my writing, choice of friends, and that I lived alone were either bad choices or that I was such a terrible person no one wanted anything to do with me.

The day I got the email blast was not a good day, and neither was the next day, so I kept to myself, slept, drank herbal tea, took a puff or two, drank a glass of wine or two in the evening, and on the third day I decided to walk into the valley of quiet.

As I walk into the valley of quiet, I listen for the quiet.

I hear several construction workers driving past in their old, loud trucks on their way to work, the roar of a Harley Davidson, and the not-so-distant sound of gunshots from the nearby lake which could all distract me, but I am listening for the quiet. It's there. I hear it during the lulls of noise and concentrate on that. I tell myself, "Don't let the noise take hold of your attention and lead you. Keep listening for the quiet."

I don't let the ringing phone make me wonder who it is or what they want; I listen to it without becoming attached.

I hear the soft crackling of logs burning in the woodstove and the even fainter ticking of the clock on the mantle. I am not distracted from listening for the quiet.

The small herd of six deer coming for their morning feed does interrupt me, so I go outside to feed them, but they are so peaceful and calm that they're not really an interruption.

I have now descended to the floor of the valley of quiet, and as I walk, I notice I no longer need to listen for the quiet because I have entered into it. Ah, the absolute and total pleasure I find in the valley of quiet.

Now, as I look back on my daughter's disparaging email and how it affected me, I smile from deep within the valley of quiet. The wounds from the double-barreled emotional blasts are self-healing here, and I notice the loud conversation we were having has ceased. The need to defend

myself from her emotional assault dissipates, and the quiet becomes louder and more comforting. The judgments she imposed on me and the conditions she demanded for my relationship with her to continue fall off like water from a plastic raincoat.

Some people, especially family, seem able to plug into an invisible port on me. It's like plugging a speaker into the television to hear the sound better but without a remote control. Here, in the valley of quiet, I am free from the demands of others. No one tells me what to do or how to do anything.

Walking through the valley of quiet, I remember to unplug the cords others have plugged in. As I do, the sound inside me begins to match the quiet outside, and I stop walking. I have reached my destination.

I open my eyes, and I feel good. The weight of trying to figure out what, if anything, I should do next is gone. There is no need to continue a one-sided conversation, so I decide it's best to stay in the valley of quiet and enjoy feeling better.

The End.

Written by Peter Skeels © April 4th, 2024