

Issue 45 | March/April 2009

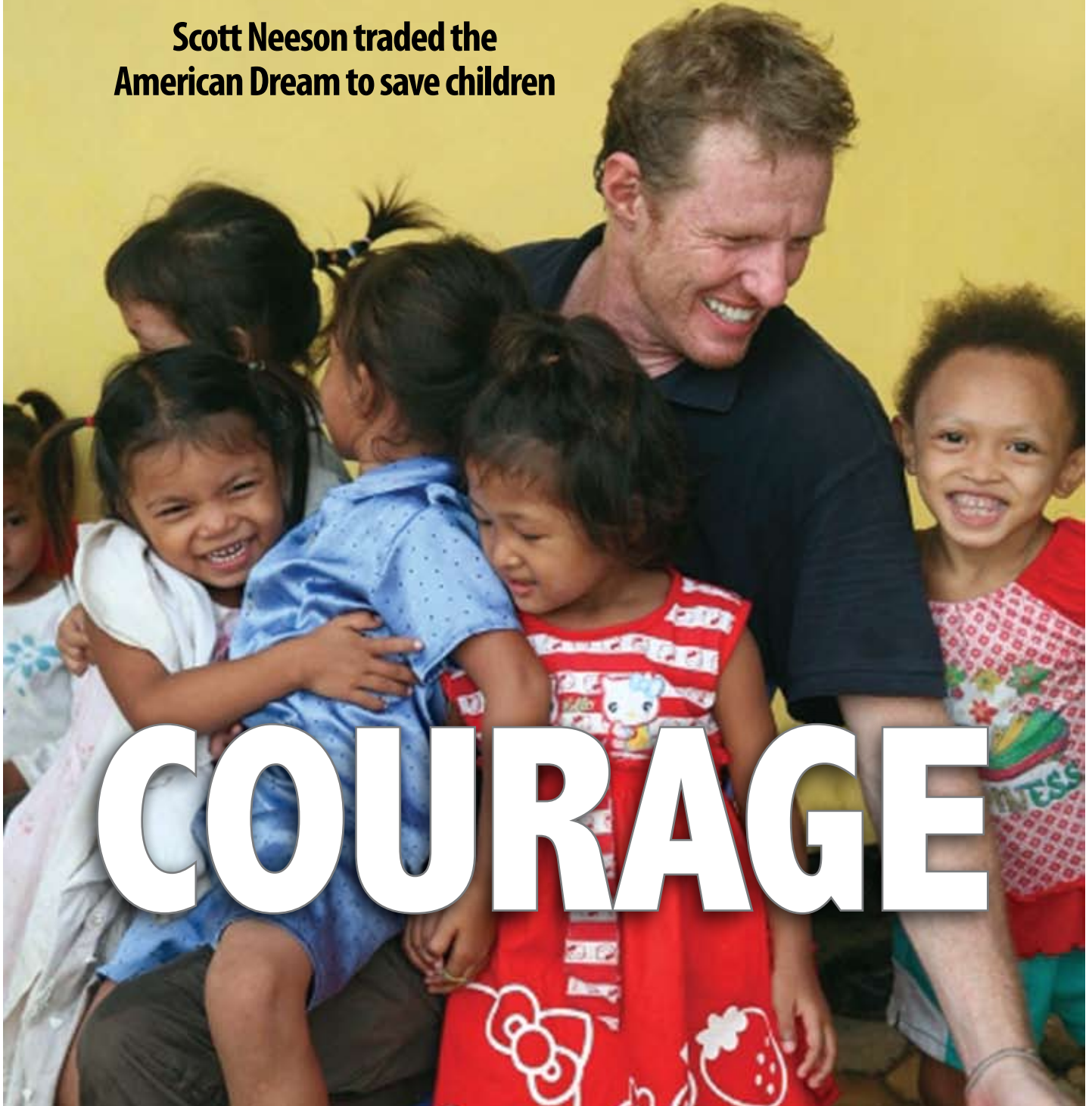
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**Scott Neeson traded the
American Dream to save children**



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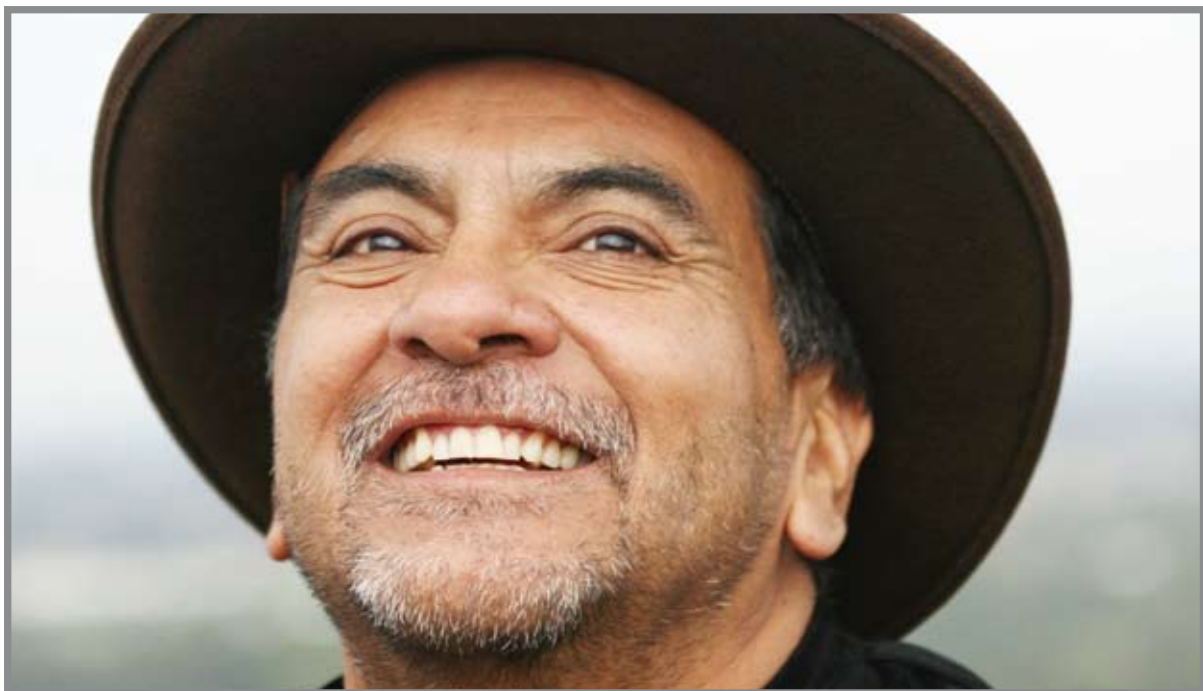
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From the Publisher

Within the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali in the Portion on Practice there is a section on observances, which are called niyamas. One of these niyamas is tapas, which is defined as purification through burning.

For me, this is a very interesting concept. This concept was introduced and discussed at great length in a yoga studies program in which I participate. One of the ideas of the concept that I began to grasp was how much courage it takes to allow tapas into one's life.

For instance, the physical practice of hatha yoga is not so much the movement as it is sitting in the pose. It's about finding the space to be comfortable in an uncomfortable position or situation. In comparison, for a long time I believed tapas was simply about the physical burn I felt in the movement or holding of poses, which helped detoxify the body through sweat.

Many times a vigorous yoga practice will confront and push me right to the edge physically. Sitting in a pose while the mind screams to let go and come out. It takes courage to go out to that edge.

But I have since learned there is more than a physical practice to tapas. I've also discovered that burning through emotional blocks and barriers are even more difficult. It can be unbearable to sit in a situation and not respond when the mind howls for reaction. It can be so easy to sidestep anything that takes us out of our comfort zones. With the purification power of tapas we can tap into the courage needed to expand or burn down the walls of our comfort zones.

May we each find the courage that lights the flame of tapas to guide us through those dark nights of the soul manufactured by our egos.

— **Namaste' Clyde**

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Publisher **CLYDE CHAFER**

Editor **TC BROWN**

Assistant Editor **EVA STARR**

Proofreader **KATIE KRANCEVIC**

Advertising Manager **CLYDE CHAFER | 440.223.1392**

Sale Representative | Columbus **MAGGIE HARDIN | 614.325.9816**

Layout **BILL WAHL | 440.552.8622 & HANK WILSON**

Feature Writers **JANET BENNETT**

GEORGE CATLIN

ELIZABETH HAYS

JANEE KUTA-LLIANO

EVA STARR

WAH!

TC BROWN

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Contributors



Elizabeth Hays

It's not easy being green but it's not so hard to claim you are, especially if you are a business interested in attracting green-conscious consumers. First-time contributor Elizabeth Hays explores this so-called "green-washing" hypothesis in an informative piece that can be found in the Health & Nutrition pages. Elizabeth examines some of the marketing "sins" and offers some tips and Web links to help us consumers separate truth from fiction.



Janet Bennett

The world, and in particular Northeast Ohio, can be a gloomy place at times, especially in the middle of a bone-chilling, icy winter. In fact, it can look down right muddy, as noted by Janet Bennett. That's not such a bad thing when you sum up the courage to bring light to your surroundings, not unlike the lotus flower that blooms in the mud, Bennett says. She encourages readers to reach out to support each other and to help build a more robust spiritual community.



George Catlin

We're in the midst of change and trauma and it's easy to let fear take the controls of our consciousness. But George Catlin tells us to get ahold of courage to tame those fears, which will help get us into the flow of life. Part of that flow requires one to open their heart to those around them. "Allow Life" might be a great bumper-sticker reminder if it didn't need a back story, Catlin says, but it can be a mantra for us to contemplate and live.

Editor's Note

Tinsel Town Titan Trades Lavish Life to Serve Kids

For those paying attention, the theme of this issue, *Courage*, may seem like *deja vu*. All over again, as some might add. Indeed, it is a repeat theme from the January-February magazine.

For us, in this time of crashing economies, considerable uncertainty and stressful angst, courage was an appropriate avenue to explore more fully, and this month's contributors tackle it in some engaging ways.

A second reason for a redo was to tell the story of Scott Neeson, a Hollywood A-listed big shot who had everything in terms of the worldly goods so valued by the contemporary culture that surrounds us. In a stunning soul-searching realization, Neeson understood that all of that "stuff" meant nothing. He jettisoned everything, moved to a Third World country, and now dedicates his life to serving impoverished, unhealthy children.

Neeson humbly brushes aside any suggestion that he is a example of courage in action, but when you read his story, we think you will agree with us — it's courage that embodies his strength of character.

—TC Brown



Scott Neeson's Cambodian Children's Fund provides 400 children with food, housing and medical treatment.

Heeding An Inner Voice

Hollywood mogul swaps fantasy life, serves children living a nightmare

By TC Brown

Hour upon hour, tiny Panya spent her days combing through mountains of toxic, foul-smelling rubbish littered with broken glass, treasure hunting for recyclables to sell. The work and deadly surroundings eventually exacted a physical and emotional toll. Painful skin lesions erupted all over her body and the little girl spent a significant part of each day sobbing uncontrollably.

Tola, little more than a waif, was a chronic garbage collector planted on the mounds of trash every day by her drunken father. Rooting through discarded hazardous chemicals and broken syringes, Tola became a despondent human scavenger.

Wretched stories indeed, but there is a happy ending for these two little Cambodian girls, thanks to Scott Neeson and the organization he created, the Cambodian Children's Fund (CCF). See www.cambodianchildrensfund.org.

Panya, now a healthy youngster basking in the care of an older sister, is

inspired and delighted by her art. She has exchanged daily cascades of tears for laughter and singing. Tola now thrives and is at the top of her class. In January, she earned a black belt in karate. Both are permanently off of the massive, rotting Steung Meanchey garbage dump near Phnom Penh.

This story is as much about all of the impoverished youngsters who live on the Cambodian landfill as it is about Neeson. For in reality they are fused in a symbiotic relationship. Neeson and the children thrive, finding courage in one another, because of their connectedness.

In 2004, Neeson abandoned his American Dream life suffused with glitz, glamour and razzle-dazzle. He traded it for garbage – literally. In creating the CCF, Neeson left a domain that is the epitome of the fantasy life, choosing instead to cross the threshold into a world where multitudes live out a nightmare.

Neeson, the former president of 20th Century Fox International and a senior

executive vice president for Sony Pictures International, had everything that defines the jet-setting high life. The accoutrements included a five-bedroom Hollywood Hills mansion, a 36-foot yacht, a Porsche and an SUV, a closet full of Armani suits and an address book brimming with celebrated A-listed Hollywood stars and starlets.

But Neeson tossed his 26-year film career overboard and moved to Cambodia. He set up a shelter for 45 poverty-stricken children who were laboring to eke out a bare-bones existence in the living hell that is the Steung Meanchey garbage dump.

Now, the 49-year-old Neeson spends his days slogging through the stomach-churning stink of a slime-and-gunk filled Third World dump that stretches over 11-acres and is 100-feet deep in waste, debris and detritus.

The landfill is a mountainous jumble of smashed glass, degrading paper, discarded plastic, rotting food, hospital and human waste, jettisoned chemicals, pesticides and other toxins, body parts and fetuses. The rubbish spews waves of methane that ignites fires that burn for weeks, framing an apocalyptic tableau.

"The combination produces a smell that is unique to this particular circle of hell," Neeson says in a phone interview from Phnom Penh. "Once you get into it, the smell gets into you, to your clothes, your hair, your head.

"After an hour there, your throat will burn and you can be pleasantly surprised if you don't end up with a cough," he says. "Longer stays bring longer and sicker penalties. It's a wonder how the kids and the families even stand it. It gave me two bouts of pneumonia in the past six months."

But Neeson is driven because the needs of so many children are so great. He estimates that for every 100 kids he sees, 70 cope with perilous life situations and are in need of some form of immediate aid. The CCF now shelters and educates more than 400 kids.

A humble Neeson is quick to deflect any suggestion that it took courage for him to give up the opulent Tinsel Town lifestyle to serve others.

"I think it was almost fear more than courage," Neeson says. "I didn't want

You Can Help

Donations to the CCF can help expand its 21 programs to reach even more needy Cambodian children and families.

Donors can make a one-time contribution or be part of a unique sponsorship program that helps support a child for a year. See www.cambodianchildrensfund.org/donate.html

CCF cannot accept items like clothing, shoes or toys due to Cambodian Customs regulations and the costs to process and distribute the goods. Classroom materials are welcome, however, and a list of needs can be found at the link listed above.

The organization also considers bulk donations on a case-by-case basis and is currently reviewing needs for medications and first-aid products, multivitamins and children's books.

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to be 70-years old and look back and regret my life. I wanted to feel good about what contributions I could give."

Neeson likes to say he's had three lives. The first began light years away from the bright stage lights of Hollywood. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, his family moved to Australia when he was five years old. He was raised in a hot, dry, tough industrial town of Elizabeth, about an hour north of Adelaide, in southern Australia.

His father worked for the Australian Department of Defense and his mother cleaned. Presciently perhaps, in his first job Neeson delivered posters for a cinema company.

"When I started, I still had the words of one of my teachers in my ears, 'I

know boys and I know you'll never amount to anything,'" Neeson says.

Eventually, Neeson ended up in the U.S., landing in Brentwood to begin a career in the film business.

Neeson rose through the ranks, securing top-of-the-food-chain jobs with 20th Century Fox and later Sony Pictures. He oversaw the release of many blockbuster films including, "Star Wars," "Braveheart," "Titanic," "Independence Day" and "X-Men."

But the superficial nature of Hollywood's culture began to weigh heavily. A once muted inner voice that nagged Neeson about a more meaningful life grew louder and more insistent over time.

"It was wearing off. There became an awareness that material things are superficial and that what you own ends up owning you," Neeson says. "You are chasing everyone else's dreams. There are 100 people below you who want your job."

That badgering interior voice erupted into a scream in 2003 at a Mexican Yoga retreat led by Seane Corn, a prominent Yoga instructor Neeson had taken classes from in Los Angeles.

"Scott was always the typical Type A personality," Corn says. "He would do extra pushups between poses and leave sometimes before class ended.

"I knew he was very successful and had a high-powered Hollywood job," Corn says.

At a retreat in Maya Tulum, Mexico, Corn says she was "prattling on about love or forgiveness" when she looked up at Neeson and saw him crying.

"His body was shaking. He was clearly in distress," Corn says. "I've seen people do this a million times, but I did not expect to see Scott like this."

Corn and Neeson trekked the beach for 2 1/2-hours afterward. Neeson told her he hated his life and his job. He felt there was no purpose or meaning to anything he did. He told her he thought he needed to quit.

"I took this very, very seriously. It was a massive revelation," Corn says. "But I thought he would go back to LA, write a big fat check to some organization and then get caught up in the Hollywood process all over again."

But Neeson didn't choose the

A Light in a World of Misery

Cambodia maintains the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of child prostitution and domestic violence in the world, making life a living hell for many of the country's children.

The CCF is one of Cambodia's success stories. The organization has grown from one facility to five, serving more than 400 children who are fed, housed, treated for medical issues and educated. The school program is recognized as one of the best in the country, and lessons include vocational training.

Many of the children suffer from significant health problems when they first arrive at CCF, especially those who worked the Steung Meanchey garbage dump. Lice, scabies and intestinal worms infect many of the kids, and others suffer from serious diseases like hepatitis A and B, tuberculosis and HIV.

CCF provides 24-hour access to in-house health care, examinations by specialists and hospitalization if needed.

The CCF also takes its works out into the community, including the delivery of food and fresh water to families every day, an essential service in conditions where 80 percent of illnesses are water related.

The CCF strives to promote self sufficiency in order to splinter the generational cycles of poverty and abuse. Students are encouraged to foster independent thought, explore self-expression and grow as humanitarians to better understand and find solutions for the problems that plague Cambodia.

conventional route. Instead, he took a five-week backpacking trip to Southeast Asia and, unbeknownst to him at the time, unearthed his life's purpose in Phnom Penh.

Nervous Breakthrough

Neeson, emotionally moved by the scores of children begging in the street in Cambodia's capital, began doling out cash. He put up money to sponsor a family whose daughter begged, getting them an apartment and putting her in school.

Soon after, he discovered that the very next day those parents pulled the child from school and gambled away Neeson's cash. A riverside cafe owner pulled him aside and explained the facts of life on the streets of Phnom Penh – begging was a scam perpetrated by adults who pocketed the take.

The next day the cafe owner took Neeson to the enormous Steung Meanchey garbage dump near the

capital, a steaming gumbo of waste and rubbish so toxic that rats refuse to take up residence. A putrid, rotten-egg smell assaulted Neeson's nostrils more than a mile from the landfill. The Cambodian government estimates that 1,200 families live on the dump either permanently or in transit. Neeson saw hundreds of children scrambling over and crawling through the mounds of decaying garbage.

"My goodness, it was like getting hit in the back of the head," Neeson says. "It was the most appalling thing I had ever seen and it was shattering to me to see how people lived there."

That very day Neeson arranged for three children to move away from the landfill. He found them a place to stay and he got them enrolled in school.

"It was so easy to do," Neeson says. "I never realized how easy it was to change these kids' lives. That's when I started thinking."

Neeson's keen business sense kicked into gear and he calculated that \$60 a month could provide decent shelter for a child.

"I went back to Hollywood and couldn't get it out of my mind," Neeson says. "I saw things for what they were. I was always told that true happiness would come when you own this luxurious house, but I realized it's not about consumer stuff."

Over the next year, Neeson traveled back to Cambodia for a week each month. Then, he sold his possessions, packed his bags and moved to Phnom Penh to establish the CCF. He opened a single shelter for a handful of children in critical need.

Tinsel Town rumors flew and some thought he had gone off the deep end, says Corn, Neeson's Yoga teacher.

"Many thought it was a nervous breakdown," Corn says. "But he had a nervous breakthrough."

Neeson's organization expanded over the next four years and it now houses about 365 kids, while another 65 attend classes.

The children are schooled in local language and English. Classes include reading, writing, social studies and math. Cultural lessons teach the kids traditional Khmer music, drama and dance. They receive vocational training covering computer skills, cosmetology, hair-dressing, graphic design and even restaurant management.

The kids learn to design clothes and in sewing classes they turn out handbags made from material recovered from the dump.

In 2006, CCF opened the Star Bakery to train the children how to bake nutritionally-enhanced bread, maintain sanitary facilities and manage the business. They turn out 175 loaves per day, with the majority going to families who live on the dump.

The CCF also runs community-based programs, opening up avenues to education and providing health care in partnership with Hope worldwide. They deliver food and safe drinking water to the community daily.

"We help supply nets to keep out the mosquitoes and tarpaulins to keep out the rain," Neeson says. "We have childcare, maternal assistance, social

workers and even the musical instruments our kids need to help them keep in touch with – and keep alive – their own culture.”

Rising from the Rubble

The CCF relies on private donors for the lion’s share of its financial support. The organization’s annual budget stands at about \$1.2 million.

The CCF has enough money on hand for about a year, Neeson says, but the state of the world’s economy is worrisome. Ironically, the economic climate has even impacted garbage scavengers who once earned \$2 a day for recyclables but are now lucky to get 40 cents.

“We think that there will be tough financial times ahead,” he says. “How we’ll fare we don’t know, but we can’t afford to fail.”

Recently, Joseph Mussomeli, a former U.S. ambassador to Cambodia, explained to ABC News the extent of the difficulties plaguing the country.

“This country is so broken,” Mussomeli said. “It has been 30-to-40 years of a nightmare – genocide, civil war, foreign invasions, rampant corruption. Anyone who has had any education has been annihilated.”

Neeson sees his work as critical to helping lift the Cambodian community “out of the rubble.” Others, including Mussomeli, agree, recognizing Neeson’s program as one of the country’s few bright spots.

In 2007, Neeson won the first ever “Q Prize,” an international award created by Quincy Jones and the Harvard School of Public Health for extraordinary leadership in advocacy for children. Last year, the Ambassadors for Children gave Neeson the Peace Award for his service to the abused and abandoned children of Cambodia.

CCF has aided countless needy children like Lyda, a teenage girl whose parents abandoned her at the dump when she was five. Lyda worked 13-hour days on the piles of garbage, scratching out a meager existence.

It was rougher on her than most. She suffered from a severe spine curvature known as scoliosis. Neeson took her to Los Angeles and with the aid of media mogul and Viacom chief Sumner Redstone, got one of the world’s top orthopedic surgeons to successfully operate. Lyda’s spine is now straight and she is able to walk normally.

Neeson hasn’t a clue about how long he will continue. He wants to do everything he can to ensure that as many children as possible are educated, self sufficient and become productive, socially-conscious citizens

who care about their neighbors.

“People who think about community and who are willing and able to help build it and reshape their own country,” Neeson explains. “When that day will come, I just don’t know.”

In February, Corn, Neeson’s LA yogi, led 20 people to Cambodia to work for two weeks at CCF. Each first had to raise \$20,000 to cover expenses and provide additional aid to the organization.

Corn raves about Neeson and his work, calling him a living example of someone who opened their heart to truth and then let truth take the lead.

“He had no experience or skill in this, but he had passion in his heart,” Corn says. “He stepped into the unknown with so much incredible faith. He was more committed to following that passion than his fears.

“That requires so much courage and faith,” Corn says. “Scott demonstrates both, dramatically.”

Daily trips to the Steung Meanchey garbage dump was not the path Neeson would have predicted during his heyday film industry days. He acknowledges he had an exceptional lifestyle in Hollywood. But that was then.

“I had a good life. I had the boat – and I just loved being out in that – and the big house and the dogs and the good times,” Neeson says. “Of course I loved it all, but regrets? No. None.”



FIND STRENGTH TO BLOOM IN THE MUD

By Janet Bennett

I was standing at my window recently, soaking up the sunshine even though it was bitterly cold outside – even colder than normal for a Cleveland-area winter day.

I realized that the sunshine drew me to the window so that I could get a “hit” of positive energy. I felt depleted and was allowing some “poor-me-living-in-this-cold-climate-why-aren’t-I-somewhere-warm thoughts” to invade my mind and depress my spirit.

But, as I stood looking out the window, I was struck by the beauty displayed before me. The sunshine crystallized the dusting of snow. The ice on the lacy stems of the ever-green in front of the window created little prisms of beautiful color and light.

I started smiling and then laughing at myself. “Good one God,” I thought. “This is spectacular and I wouldn’t be seeing it in Florida now would I?”

And that reminded me of something that had been playing in my mind this whole winter season. There is a lot to appreciate right here, so why am I so eager to “get away from it all?” I live in northeast Ohio and winter is a beautiful part of that experience.

When I’m out walking my dog, Max, a big yellow Lab, I see the beauty and feel the peace of the season surround me. I share in his joy as he makes a snow angel in the fluffy stuff. I can’t help but to feel closer to spirit at a very deep level.

I’ve come to realize that it takes a mountain of courage to find the light in a relatively dark place. And I consider northeast Ohio a dark place, spiritually speaking. The prevailing values here are, for the most part, the old ones of competition, judging people by what they do and how much money they earn.

You won’t find people exchanging spiritual insights at very many cocktail parties. But underneath the surface there seems to be a growing spiritual awareness, probably at a very deep level. That sense of awareness would have to be deep to survive and grow in this darkness.

Beauty, Spring, Light

It reminds me of the lotus flower which grows in the mud. That beautiful lotus needs the mud to feed its roots and bring forth its awesome blossoms.

I am beginning to realize the bravery of the people who choose to live here and grow in the mud. People like those who read empowering books or who practice yoga, ecstatic dance or other movement classes to free their spirits. They choose to try to find their true purpose in life while many

around them think they are slightly crazy. Many of us may be a deep bed of courage without consciously grasping that realization.

Courage means feeling the fear and doing it anyway. I have certainly faced a lot of angst on my own path. Much of it involved making choices that family and friends didn’t understand or agree with. Some of them chose rejection as a means to try to make me do things their way. But my roots were too firmly planted in the mud and I couldn’t and wouldn’t be ensnared in the trap of someone else trying to decide for me who and what I should be.

While it is winter as I write this, you will be reading it in the spring. How fitting. Spring is a time when flowers pop up through the ground after hibernating all winter, bringing their wonder and joy along with them. Maybe it will be a time for us to emerge from the mud as well, with a stronger appreciation for ourselves. We can bloom with courage as we walk this path of spiritual growth in a relatively dark corner of the world.

With that in mind, I hope you will pat yourself on the back or give yourself a big hug of appreciation for the courage you show as you move along on your own journey.

Perhaps the springtime is also a good time for us to increase our efforts to find and support each other. Maybe we’ve lived under the mud long enough. Perhaps it’s time to blossom and have the courage to greet each other with a hearty “Namaste” as we meet, and not be embarrassed about what other people might think if they overhear.

Lotus-colored Glasses

While much of the country views 2009 through the lens of financial gloom and doom, let’s bring a little more light to our corner of the world. Let’s come together and find ways to support the blooming of us, the lotus flowers that we all are here in northeast Ohio.

We can start by supporting the organizations and businesses (like the ones listed in this magazine) that have persevered here in the dark, often struggling to survive. Why not consciously use our resources, including volunteer time, to build a stronger and more visible spiritual community in our own backyard? And because I try and “walk my talk,” I will do the same. I will volunteer some time to try to build a stronger connection among the lotus blossoms. Send me an email at equinoxgrp@aol.com if you’d like to be a part of the process. I will do what I can to make the appropriate connections. Hopefully, a more organized community of new leaders will emerge from the mud as well.

One thing I know, we need more free and accessible

gathering places for people to meet to support each other on our respective journeys. If you know of such places or can offer them yourself, please let me know. That is how a more visible and robust spiritual community will be created, by joining together out of courage to make it happen.

And because we were hearty and courageous enough to survive the winter, we can certainly bloom in the spring and look forward to dancing together in the summer!

Namaste until we meet again.

Janet Bennett lives in Mentor, Ohio, and is the author of the recently published book, "Travels with Max: How My Dog Unleashed My Life," which is available at Borders in Mentor; Joseph-Beth Booksellers at Legacy Village or through Amazon.com. She also has an interactive website at www.travelswithmax.com. Please share your thoughts or suggestions with Janet at equinoxgrp@aol.com or (440) 974-7330.




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Find The Courage To Allow Life

By George Catlin

Since the dawn of time humanity has always sensed that there is a way forward, a next step either in one's own consciousness or in the ways things are done outwardly. We've made great progress in both domains and now face a step as large or larger than any we have taken in the past.

Today it is obvious that many of our systems don't work. Unbridled free-market capitalism has run its course, helping create the desperate divide between the rich and poor that we presently experience. Industrialization has so polluted our rivers and air that life itself is threatened. Competition has escalated to the state where violence throughout the world is the norm.

We have to change and we know what we need to do. It is only a matter of our willingness and ability to do that which must be done.

We have to learn to share. We have to abandon personal gain as our primary orientation to life. We have to embrace one another as brothers and sisters united in a common effort to live dignified, glorious lives. But we are frightened.

The fear is that any new ways will not be as good as the old ways. We are afraid to trust anyone. And we sense that going forward now involves real risks – risks to our very identity, to who we think we are.

Courage becomes the necessary factor that can help us meet our fears halfway. We have to see those fears clearly – allowing them space to be just what they are. And if we are brave enough to do this, those fears will change because that is how consciousness works.

As soon as any aspect of being is brought fully into awareness and given room to be exactly what it is, it changes. This is a basic fact of creation: We are a

change-oriented reality, and only repression and fear can block that movement. When we cling to our fears, usually in repressed form, we block the inherent movement of life itself. We become obstacles to the Tao, the flow of creation.

So how do we get out of the way? We see what is as it really is – without blame or judgment. We just see it and allow it, whatever it may be, to rejoin the continual transformation process of life.

“Allow Life” could be a useful motto or bumper sticker if it did not require so much background explanation. Allow Life to live and be as it really is – always changing. Accepting and embracing that takes courage, especially for a species accustomed to hanging on to what worked in the past. We have to develop new trust in the present moment. But we lack the courage to let life lead us forward.

Ultimately we have to surrender. Ultimately we have to realize that God/Spirit/Life is a vast intelligent love into which we are invited to disappear. That step takes more courage than most of us have today. One day we will find that courage, and on that day a new world will be born.

George Catlin, Ph.D., is the author of two books on the spiritual path and the approach to humanity of the Masters of Wisdom “The Way to Happiness” and “The Long Journey Home”. He believes we will soon see great, enlightened “elder brothers” who will inspire humanity to literally remake the world on the basis of sharing, justice and right human relations. For more information see www.TheTeachings.org and www.ShareInternational.org.

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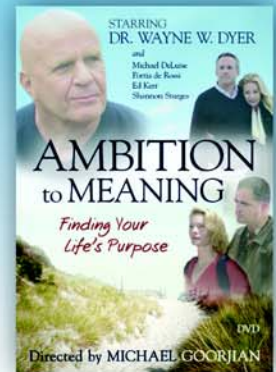
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Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

By Eva Starr

When you get up in the morning and brush your teeth, who do you see in the mirror? Better yet, how do you view that person in the mirror? Locked in the reflection staring back at you are the keys to unlock your soul.

It takes courage to really look at the person staring back at you and then go deep within to uncover the mysteries. It takes even more courage to look deep into the eyes of the soul and repeat back to yourself, "I love you. I really love you and I accept you for who you are."

In the life work that I do, the prime fear of many clients is to look in a mirror and say, "I love myself exactly as I am." You'd be amazed at how extremely challenging this is for some people. Go ahead, try it yourself now, I'll wait. Grab a decent-sized hand mirror, something that you can see your *entire* face in. No cheating.

Now, sit down with mirror in hand, look straight into your eyes and say to yourself, "I love and accept you exactly as you are."

In the beginning, most people can't do this for more than a few seconds. Some can't do it at all. I encourage you at first to work up to two minutes, then five and then ten minutes a day. If you think this is easy, then count your lucky stars because you are indeed ahead of the game in the arena of self-love.

Why does it take so much courage to look in that mirror? The answer lies within your soul, not mine. We all have skeletons in our closets. Some of those closets haven't been opened for decades, and we're scared as hell to open that door for fear of what might come tumbling out.

It can be frightening to look inside of ourselves, and it can even be more of a challenge to love what we see. But that is the key to mastery – self-love. It's no secret that loving the self opens the door to a myriad of opportunities in our lives.

Ignore The Critics

It takes courage to be the person in the mirror who

doesn't really care about what others think. Terri Cole Whitaker summed it up when he wrote: "What you think of me is none of my business." Boy, if we could make that our motto and live it, truly live it, what a world of difference it would make.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that whatever course you decide upon, you are likely to always find someone to tell you that you are wrong. Difficulties always seem to arise, which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. "To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage," Emerson said.

As Emerson so wisely pointed out, to follow your own path and be true to that person in the mirror takes courage. I have gone against the grain nearly my whole life. Some might say it has cost me; I say it depends on how much freedom you want. Do you want the freedom to follow your heart? Do you want the freedom to chase your dreams and live your passion?

Well, if you do, you're going to have to stand up to the world. You're going to have to stand up to that person in the mirror and really love that individual. You are the one who goes home with yourself at the end of the day and you are the person who gets up in the morning to peer into that mirror.

As many of you are aware, I relocated to San Diego a year ago. The naysayers were thunderous and fierce. They had a plethora of reasons why moving 3,000 miles across the country was a ludicrous idea, to put it mildly. But I'm not living *their* dream, I'm living *mine*. How about you?

Ask yourself right now, what is *your* dream and are you living it?

Open Doors

Sure, it takes courage, but you just need to go back and look into that mirror and tell yourself once again how much you truly love who you are. Give yourself permission to love where you are right now. Then, and only then, will the Universe open its doors wide for you.

You don't need to know how you are going to accomplish your mission. The how is none of your business. The how has never been your business; it's up to God. You just need to get out of bed, gaze into the mirror, give yourself a big nod of approval and put one foot in front of the other. Like the headlights of a car that shine 250 feet ahead as it travels the roadway, your own journey in life will be illuminated ahead of you as you travel the highway of life.

Remember Whitaker's sentiment: "What you think of me is none of my business." It takes an awe-inspiring amount of courage for you to do what you do and not worry about what the critics say. It's appalling enough that the world is full of critics. But then you have your own inner critic, too, that monkey-mind that loves to start its own dissertations.

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STOP the madness. To thine own self be true. It's you in the mirror at the end of the day, not them.

Start today by loving that person in the mirror. Give yourself permission to follow your dreams. Then with all the courage you can muster, take that first step and then another one. One step at a time. Wayne Dyer says it best ~ "Don't die with your music still inside you. Listen to your intuitive inner voice and find what passion stirs your soul."

Now go back to that mirror, mirror on the wall.

Eva Starr's spiritual journey has taken her coast-to-coast studying the various schools of thought. Starr has recently relocated to San Diego, CA. Visit reachforthemoon.net and evastarr.com for up-dates, and to be added to her mailing list. Contact Eva Starr at evastarr24@yahoo.com (440) 930-8865 for speaking engagements.

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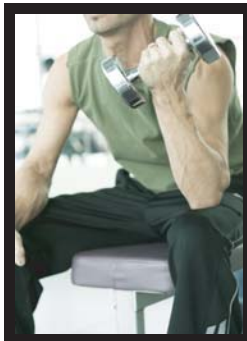
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In The World or Of The World? You're Not Alone – Seek Help

By **Janee Kuta-Iliano**

How many of us know that certain behaviors are not good, but we do them anyway? I imagine most can relate to this idea and yet we wonder why we keep going through these self-defeating cycles over and over. So what can be done? What would it look like if we found the courage to live our lives according to our spirit or higher self?

My work helps others to become more aware of food choices through the process of internal cleansing and detoxification. Although we call it a cleanse, it really is an opportunity for us to get back in tune with our bodies and begin to see how food affects us. The process allows us to see our emotional connection to food and often can reveal how we are in constant reaction to the day-to-day issues we all face.

Many people who participate in the program feel liberated from their food addictions and become acutely aware of why they eat. We often eat not because we are hungry, but because of emotional reactions.

One might think that this awareness would be enough to end bad habits. With insight into why we eat, you would assume that we would be able to stop poor food choices. Unfortunately, it doesn't always happen that way. Why do we go back to those same old patterns even after such an enlightening experience?

I, too, have battled with this issue. I know better than to grab unhealthy foods or stay in unhealthy relationships. I know when I am making poor choices but still can't seem to stop myself from doing it. For years I have been "in the know," but I have not always practiced this knowledge. Recently, I found another missing piece of the puzzle.

Over the past 12 months, I enjoyed a much different way of living. It was kind of a spontaneous experience and a much welcomed change of pace. I moved deeper into my faith and I feel it has loosed many destructive strongholds.

Living for Stuff

Until this time, I spent my life living in my flesh, giving in to earthly desires and cravings. My mind continually told me I deserved this, that or the other, when my heart was screaming "No!" The flesh wants it all right here and now. Instant gratification. We can fall victim to its calls and end up living very loose lives with very few boundaries.

When we live in the flesh or in the physical body, we tend to identify ourselves by our emotions. We become what we feel and because we are human, we know that our feel-

ings can change on a dime. If things are going well we feel good, but when things are bad, we get hard on ourselves and spiral into thinking that everything is a mess. Unfortunately, when the going gets tough, the tough get going and relentlessly chase after the next best thing.

For me, it has been a very unstable way to live. No matter how much awareness a person has, the flesh can overpower all understanding. When we are living in the flesh we rely on ourselves to do everything instead of asking for help from a higher power.

I can only speak from my experience, but when I started asking for help, when I began truly cutting off the desires of the flesh and began seeking ways to walk in the spirit, I received the help and willpower to do "the right thing." Maybe it doesn't feel so good at the time we decide to do the right thing, but after the fact it is so gratifying.

When we are struggling with any issue, can we find the courage to ask for help? Do we rely solely on ourselves for support or do we call on others to help carry our burdens?

Gratitude Equals Strength

One of the best pieces of advice I recently received is to be thankful when hard times arrive. No matter how devastating the problem, we can still be thankful for what we have instead of letting our thoughts control and defeat us. Be thankful for what the experience will teach you. God knows the desires of our heart. He knows what we need even before we do. Instead of constantly asking for something to go away, ask for strength to endure and stay positive no matter the outcome.

As I continue to give thanks and work on living in the spirit versus the flesh, I find I can handle anything. These past few months have been quite challenging for my family, with one issue after another. With all the madness, it is easy to reach for comfort foods or curl up and let the problems win.

It is in the darkest of times that we are asked to be faithful and trust in our ability to flow through obstacles with help from above. No mountain is too high when we live in the spirit. As we overcome one challenge after another, we gain momentum and strength to endure whatever comes our way.

Focus on what is good in your life instead of looking at what is wrong. We all struggle. It is part of the human experience. Don't be jealous of those who are in a period of rest.

Do not envy those who appear to have it easy. Those emotions along with hatred are sheer murder to our hearts.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience. Have the courage to put this knowledge to work. When we operate from the spirit instead of the flesh, we bear fruit in all situations. Staying calm in the midst of chaos is empowering and helpful for others. Our flesh should not tear us down and hold us back any longer. Embrace the courage to turn away from destructive behaviors.

With time, it becomes easier to turn away from evil. We all know what we need to do to be healthy and whole, but we cannot hold that truth by ourselves. We need the help of others and from God to help keep us out of harm's way. Run into others instead of running into isolation. Pride should not be an obstacle in asking for help. We are not superheroes; we can't be everything by ourselves. Only God can do that.

Janee Kuta-Iliano is the owner of ALiVE ONE, a health coaching business that focuses on teaching others the benefits of internal cleansing and purification of the body. She is a holistic health educator, offering Internal Cleansing & Detoxification Programs, Juice Plus+ Nutritional Products and instruction on Raw & Living Foods. Visit her website at www.aliveone.net. For more information contact Janee at (440) 478-9802 or janee@aliveone.net

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It's Not Easy Being Green

How to See Through the Greenwash to Make More Conscious Choices

By Elizabeth Hays

All Natural! Organic! Environmentally Friendly! Safe! Green!

“Green” is the new black. It is cool to be “green” now, to make more conscious choices about our actions, our use of resources and our purchases. Living a “green” lifestyle is even considered smart. It turns out the “tree-hugging hippies” were on to something. We all want to live a conscious life, and we want to contribute to increased consciousness by devoting our energies to the greater good.

But what if the greater good can be interpreted in many ways? For the corporation intent on meeting stakeholder financial expectations, it could mean doing whatever it takes to increase the bottom line for the stakeholder. To the consumer intent on living with awareness, it means considering the social, environmental and economic impact of every purchase we make. When the two intentions come into conflict, what is the consumer to do?

Living consciously is not for the faint of heart. Courage is needed to question an established manufacturer on the sustainability of the old way of doing things. It may also be needed to engage business in a conversation about doing the right thing for the well-being of people and the planet, and not just the bottom line.

If we believe that we vote with our dollar, than every cent we spend sends a message about what is truly important to us. How do we make conscious purchases? It is difficult, unless you have unlimited time on your hands, to contact the customer service center for each product purchased.

Therefore, many purchases are made based solely on the claims on the package. Given that most companies are in business to make money, they use marketing claims on the package as a way to differentiate one brand as superior to another. So, is blind faith in the manufacturer's claim the best we can do for ourselves? How do we know the claim is substantiated?

Consider, for example, that the FDA has not published dedicated organic standards for cosmetics, which include skin care products like lotions, cleansers, shampoo as well as “make-up.” How do you know that the Mango Mane shampoo you just purchased because it was “made with organic mango” is a healthier choice for you and the planet than good old baby shampoo?

Until there are federally developed standards to support an organic certification for such products you can look for the USDA organic seal. Yes, this certification was developed by the USDA for agriculture and food products. And yes, there are questions about whether this certification represents a product and process as pristine as one might like it to be. Yet, given the alternative, it is a valid indicator for busy people who don't have a personal shopper at their disposal and who want to make a smart choice.

What about “All Natural”? The term natural is defined as “existing in or formed by nature”. When you pick up a bottle of “All Natural” skin moisturizer, it is fair to expect the ingredient list to be legible and to contain ingredients that can be found in nature. I've personally not ever found evidence of the PEG-8 Laurate flower or DMDM Hydantoin tree in nature. An all natural claim on products that contain synthetic preservatives and other synthetic functional ingredients cannot be supported.

Market Sins

This type of misleading marketing is ubiquitous in personal care products. This is a form of greenwashing and is prevalent in nearly every market today. Certain car makers are touting their SUVs as being environmentally friendly because this year's model offers a modest increase in gas mileage over last year's model. Even some cigarettes are being touted as green because the tobacco is farmed organically.

If the claim seems too good to be true, it likely is. In December 2007, the environmental marketing firm TerraChoice released a study called “The Six Sins of Greenwashing,” that found that more than 99% of 1,018 common consumer products randomly surveyed were guilty of greenwashing. <http://www.terrachoice.com/Home/Six%20Sins%20of%20Greenwashing>. Out of the 1,018 studied, only one was found not guilty of making a false or misleading green-marketing claim. According to the study, the six sins of greenwashing are:

• Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off: e.g. “Energy-efficient” electronics that contain hazardous materials. 998 products and 57% of all environmental claims committed this sin.

• Sin of No Proof: e.g. Shampoos claiming to be “certified organic,” but with no verifiable certification. 454 products and 26% of environmental claims committed this sin.

• Sin of Vagueness: e.g. Products claiming to be 100% natural when many naturally-occurring substances are hazardous, like arsenic and formaldehyde. Seen in 196 products or 11% of environmental claims.

• Sin of Irrelevance: e.g. Products claiming to be CFC-free, even though CFCs were banned 20 years ago. This Sin was seen in 78 products and 4 percent of environmental claims.

• Sin of Fibbing: e.g. Products falsely claiming to be certified by an internationally recognized environmental standard. Found in 10 products or less than 1% of environmental claims.

• Sin of Lesser of Two Evils: e.g. Organic cigarettes or “environmentally friendly” pesticides, This occurred in 17 products or 1% of environmental claims.

How do we navigate through the greenwash? First, identify it. When you find a claim that seems a bit over the top,

check it against the “sins” posted above. If it fits, courageously pick up the phone and contact the manufacturer for details and proof of the claim. Yes, you can.

This is how one person or one small group of people can change the world for the better. There are also a number of Websites devoted to tracking greenwashing transgressions in advertising such as:

www.greenwashingindex.com. Users post ads heralding the environmental qualities of a product and rate the ad 1 to 5. A rating of 1 is a little green lie; 5 is an outright falsehood.

Last year, Greenpeace launched another Website, www.stopgreenwash.org to “confront deceptive greenwashing

campaigns, engage companies in debate, and give consumers, activists and lawmakers the information and tools they need to . . . hold corporations accountable for the impacts their core business decisions and investments are having on our planet.”

In the event that your efforts to find substantiation for the claim are not satisfied, contact the Federal Trade Commission. Yes, you can. Ask that they look into the claim, and also ask when the updated Green Guides will be published.

In December 2007, the Federal Trade Commission began the process of revising the Green Guides, originally published in 1992. In lieu of updated and published guides, there

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are those companies who will continue to find "flexibility" in making claims that are simply untrue.

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With six year's experience in personal care products, Elizabeth Hays has developed an in-depth understanding of criteria for substantiating market claims in the U.S. and Canada. Her work has revealed the great opportunity we have, as conscious consumers, to help shape guidelines and policy for responsible marketing. Elizabeth has earned the Regulatory Affairs Certification, is a registered Yoga teacher and is currently studying Natural health at Clayton College of Natural Health.

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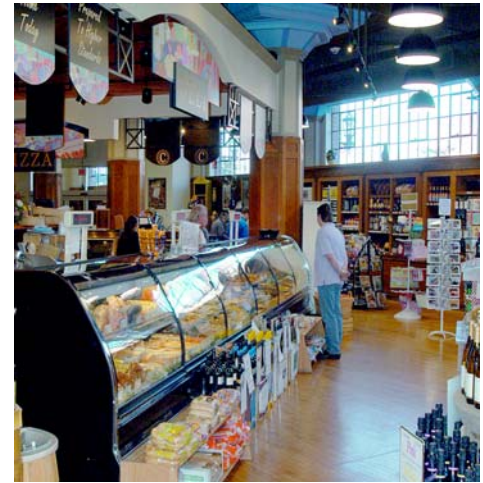
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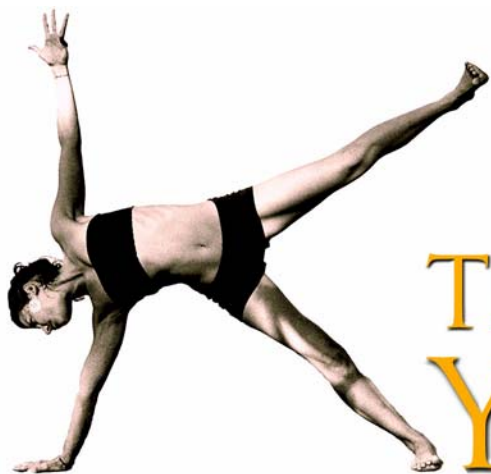
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Kaleidoscope of Courage

By Wah!

When someone has a near-death experience, they eventually rejoin the land of the living. Is it courage that brings them back? I don't think so. I believe it is grace. Healing, angels, destiny and unfinished business draw you back to your present incarnation.

A soldier decorated with a Purple Heart for his wounds and courage was asked about the specifics of that moment in time. He said simply that he did what seemed correct in the moment. He did what he felt he had to do. He did not claim courage. As a soldier, he fulfilled his duty.

Where is courage then?

It is, in the face of opposing information or circumstances, the moment you make a decision. When you have awareness of many possibilities and you choose one of strength. That decision defines courage.

How does it look in everyday life? For some, it is the moment you get out of bed on a cold morning and decide to practice yoga, piling on warm clothes and rubbing your hands on your legs to stay warm. For others, it is the moment you return from the war, when you come home and start over, whether or not you were decorated or your heroic service was celebrated. It is moving on, taking the next step without knowing if you have the strength or not, and doing it successfully.

Where is the courage in me? I wonder. It was desperation and partly courage that got me out of bed and into my meditation practice this morning. I feared my wandering mind more than I feared the cold. Yet my decision still stood. I decided to jump out of bed and embrace my Yoga practice. Simple, yet that decision showed courage.

If your odds of being successful are high, your courage may not be needed. You can move in the groove of what is already established in your life, and come out of it successfully.

When you have no idea about how you are going to get there, yet you step forward in faith, that's courage.

I have a friend who is walking across America in an effort called "Peace Walk." He felt called to walk through as

many towns as he could to talk about peace. This friend, Dermot Butterfly, received a blessing from his teacher, donned some clothing to remind himself of Mahatma Gandhi, and set off. See www.gandhipacewalk.org

What he is finding in his one-to-one conversations with people and in his confrontations with his own fear is a beautiful thing. His acceptance of local hospitality and human generosity has created a small ripple of peace on the planet.

I believe that people who have near-death experiences may come back for love. They come back to love people, a simple mission really, and one shared with many teachers, healers, givers, mothers and friends.

A Mission

Simple, yes, but not necessarily so easy. Loving people takes courage. It takes more courage than you might have had to locate in a long time. It requires that I reprogram everything about myself.

It may be about creating a whole new program for your life. President Obama is creating a whole new program for the nation. We are doing it locally, personally, spiritually. It is not a coincidence that the president was elected on Nov 4, 2008, the day that Saturn began its opposition to Uranus. In short, the stars have dictated that we shed old, routine ways of doing things and usher in new, forward-thinking ideas.

New ideas require new ways of looking at things. Thinking outside the box is predicated on new circumstances. But being outside of the box can be scary. New solutions and ideas are normal when you are already living out of your traditional range of activities.

Losing your job, having your home foreclosed, or relocating to a new town are surefire ways to put you outside of your box. It takes courage to start again, and not to start in the same way that you did last time, but instead to build a new life pattern based on conscious decisions and honest reflection.

Do you know how to do it? Perhaps not. You would be

there by now if you knew how.

The choice for courage comes in every moment. It's the small stuff – when you decide to keep going, even though the payoff is nowhere in sight. When you reach for a feeling of empowerment and build future events based on that new found strength. When you go out of your way to lend a hand to someone who is trying hard to look like they don't need your help. When you heal and reconnect with your family and loved ones, regardless of past stormy relationships.

Stay in love, that takes courage. Rediscovering love in yourself from moment to moment. That takes courage. Courage slips away, but hold it in your heart. If you lose it, you'll find it again. Just reach for it.

Do you prefer your well-known patterns and established circles of friends? If they're working for you, then keep them and continue expanding. With courage you can try something that feels even better, looks freer, and seems more appropriate for the way you live now. Courage is found in the moment you decide to reach for it.

Wah! is a musician and spiritual seeker who travels the world singing and expanding sacred intention. Nutone Records released her new CD *Love Holding Love* in September 2008. www.wahmusic.com

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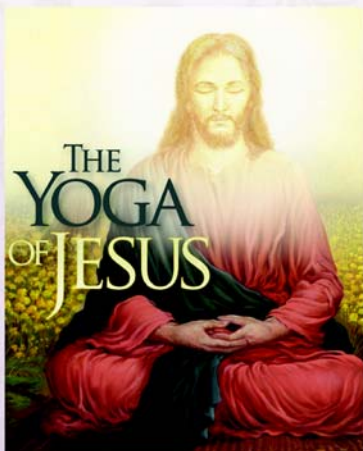
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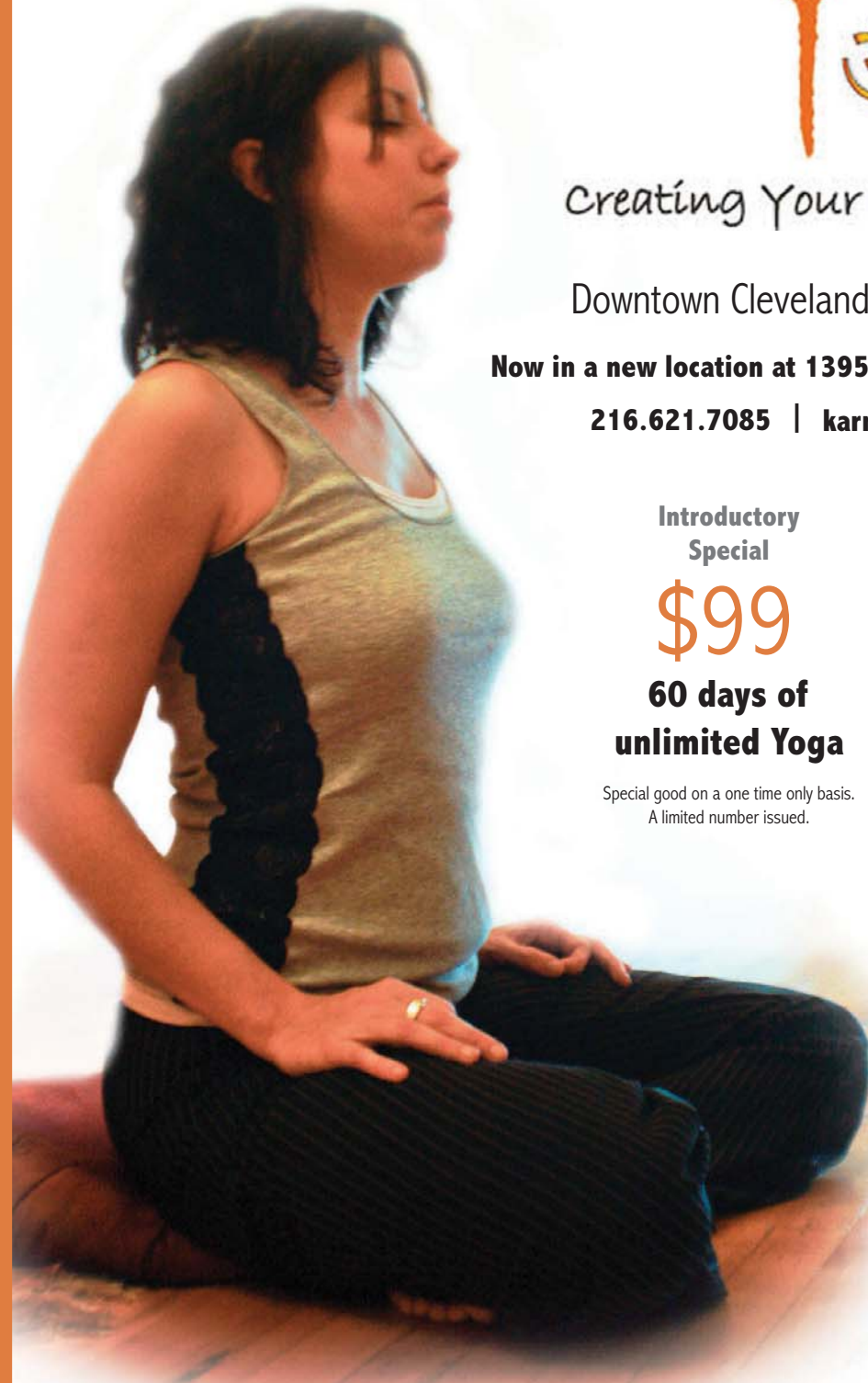
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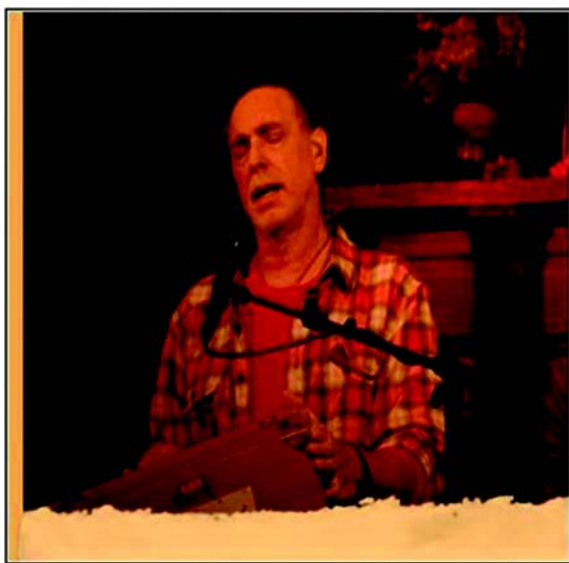
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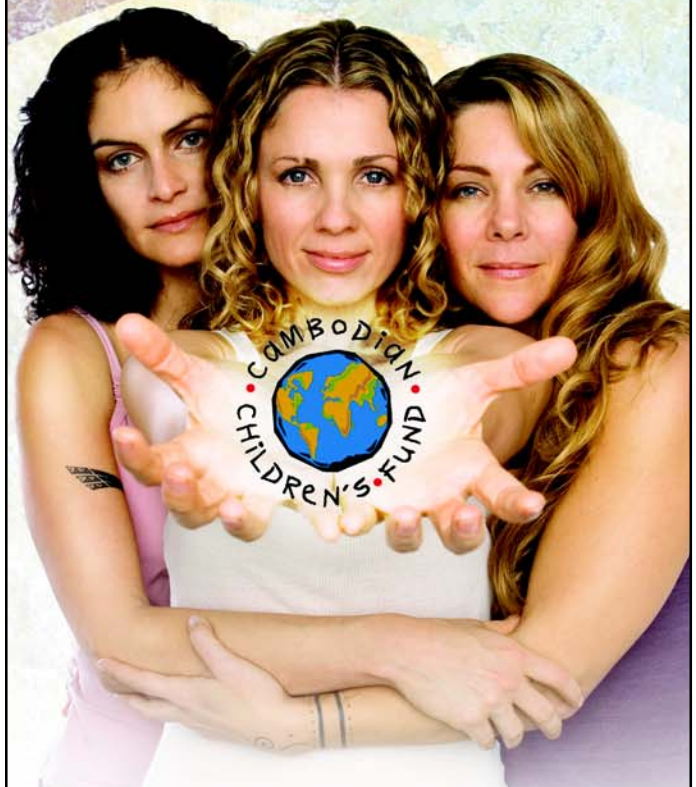
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PLANETARY PATHWAYS

By Eva Starr

March: New Moon in Aries March 26th 12:06 pm/Full Moon in Virgo March 10th 10:38 pm

April: New Moon in Taurus April 24th 11:22 pm/Full Moon in Libra April 9th 10:56 am

ARIES

March – It's time for the Ram to break free from routine, not that you're one to stay in one place too long...the Ram is always on the run. Cupid's arrow is headed in your direction. Venus the planet of Love & Romance is in Aries...go ahead, take a chance, try something different in the areas of romance. Include the other areas of your life as well

April – You think you can do it all on your own, think again...it's time to enlist the help of a higher power...The Sun, Mercury and Venus are all in the sign of the Ram...Venus is Retrograde so expect a little come back around time from last month's romantic activities...as for the rest of your world...get out of the way and let Heaven help you

TAURUS

March – It's time for the Bull to rest up in that Bull Pen of his, spring is around the corner and the Bull will be busy...take advantage of this time to rest your mind, body and soul...get re-connected to planet Earth and nature...smell the flowers & bring some into that lovely home of yours...take a nap, you're entitled, you've paid your dues, now relax.

April – That rest did you good, now you're more powerful than you realize, get out of the Bull Pen and rock the world...you not only see red, spring brings with it a masterpiece of colors in its palette and the Bull is able to see them all...go out and strut your stuff, show the world what you're made of, you've got the creativity and magic touch, use it.

GEMINI

March – Which one of you is showing up this month? Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde, the twins can look ahead to a brighter future, the storm is behind you now, the skies have parted and sunshine is headed your way. Use that dualistic Twins energy to create your dream. New positive experiences are headed your way, it's a new dawn, get ready.

April – Pull the two of you together Twins, it's time to focus your energy on positive thoughts, you know what I'm talking about...you've been praying for it, and now the Celestial skyways are opening up for you. Keep the faith and follow your intuition, you are being guided on the path...it's only a matter of time, just in time for Spring

CANCER

March – You above all people Cancer can trust your intuition, this time it's right on...go with it and take action,

follow your gut, you know what to do, just keep asking for guidance. You've actually been given the blueprint, yippee, use that gift of yours and go with your heart, follow the stars, the Crab is headed in the right direction...keep listening

April – OK, Crab release those pincers of yours, you've prayed for help, now get the hell out of the way. The Universe knows what's it's doing, it's time for you to trust, and surrender your control, let the powers that be take over. The how is never up to you, just follow those headlights and you'll be guided to the yellow brick road, click those slippers.

LEO

March – OK Lion you don't need to be King of the Jungle to notice the synchronicities, the celestial heavens are giving you signs left and right, its time to pay attention...your inner guidance is leading you, look around you, smell the coffee. Valuable information is headed your way, be prepared to grab it as fast as you can, then return to the throne.

April – Put that roar out there in that Jungle of yours, it's time to call forth all of your animal kingdom friends and take a break...go have lunch, share a glass of wine, most importantly the Universe is giving you the "clear sailing ahead" sign...call up someone you haven't seen in a long time, it would do you good to reminisce...talk about old times.

VIRGO

March – Virgo you're the one to analyze everything to death, for once I'm inclined to agree with you, more information is needed, don't get your information second hand, consult someone with expertise in this area...this time you DO need a second opinion, so get one, trust what's been given to you, then use you're logic you'll know what to do.

April – It's time to look at your relationship with your mother and the mother figures in your life...whether she's on this earth plane or made her transition to another existence. If there's still forgiveness work to do then so it is...as you heal your feelings toward your mother and the other mother figures in your life, your desires will start to manifest.

LIBRA

March – Spring brings you one of your greatest challenges...make a decision, yes that's right something Libra finds a bit daunting to say the least, no more skirting the issue...it's time to weigh everything out with those scales of yours, use your intuition and just do it...trust that the Celestial planetary line-up has your back, you'll be fine.

April – OK, now that you’ve made some type of a move, let go of the guilt, you’re a perfect child of the Universe, it’s time to start loving and forgiving yourself for what you erroneously think is your fault. Libra look in the mirror...straight into the eyes of your soul and be gentle with yourself, we’re all learning here on Planet Earth, including you.

SCORPIO

March – Pull in that stinger of yours Scorpio, it’s time to raise the bar, set your standards sky high, quit wasting time plotting revenge...try to see the light in each individual you come across, it will move you quicker up that ladder of success. So aim high, move to your compassionate side, then it’s up, up and away straight toward the moon.

April – Did you take on more than you can handle? It’s time to enlist the troops, call forth an expert, there are still a few bricks missing in the foundation you’re trying to build. The Scorpion still has a few secrets up his/her sleeve though, share with discretion but by all means get somebody in there who know what they’re doing, it will seal the deal.

SAGITTARIUS

March – OK Centaur, it’s time to aim that bow and arrow toward the guiding light in the sky, someone wants to help you but first you need to help yourself. Start within before reaching without. Go into the silence, still your mind and allow the Universe to guide you toward whom that may be, than pick up the phone and make contact, the rest is easy.

April – Feel better, why’d you wait so long, the Heavens are watching over you and your loved ones, you’ve got to charge forward with the Sagittarian-bigger-than-life personality of yours and make things happen...it’s time for a fresh start, new beginnings and waves of prosperity are about to wash over you, it’s about time to start a gratitude journal.

CAPRICORN

March – Come on goat, you’re grander than you think, the rest of the world sees the Capricornian as a go-getter

and a hard worker who always has his/her eye on the brass ring...start recognizing some of that power with in you, it’s OK for you to pat yourself on the back, allow yourself to become a little more self-empowered and take the kudos.

April – All that empowerment paid off for the Goat, it’s time to cash in the chips, look inside that treasure chest of yours, and bring it on down. Just when you least expect it, the stars are shining and the man in the moon is smiling it’s moonlight glow upon you and it’s also raining April showers of Gold. Climb that mountain Goat.

AQUARIUS

March – Jupiter is still going strong in the sign of Aquarius, and the Heavens are asking you to dream bigger than you ever have before. Quit seeing yourself as small, get on that visualization cap and start seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, and speaking thoughts of success, and don’t forget to put those dreams in black in white on paper!


April – It’s pouring coins of silver and gold from the Heavens Aquarian... stay on the path, keep doing what keeps working, the planets are lined up and rolling out the red carpet. Get a bigger bucket to catch all the grand waves of opportunities that are about to wash over you, for every drop of April showers, there’s another drop in your gold bucket.

PISCES

March – The Sun and Mercury are in the sign of the fish, which means you’ve got an extra security blanket watching over you this month...relax take a deep breath, You, your loved ones and everything surrounding you are safe and protected. The Bank of the Universe has a huge safe deposit box with your name on it, swim free and easy.

April – It’s time for the fish to take a look at any left over mother issues that may still be swimming around in that pond of yours, it doesn’t matter whether she’s swimming in that big lake in the sky or floating around in a stream of her own down here. Do the healing work, the gift is for you. As you heal within your world will start to manifest without.

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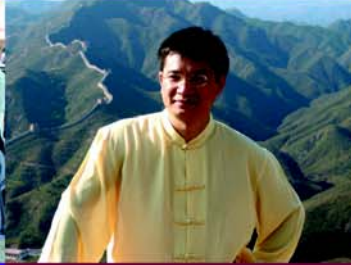
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