



A Personal View: The Fragile Art of Emotional Well-being

by Leah Lubin



It grieves me deeply that Jerry Garcia died away from home.

A father figure and musical guru, so many loved him that he shouldn't have gone alone. I recognize a decision-making force higher than mine had that call.

John Lennon, my personal teacher, and I grew up a few towns apart, he in Liverpool, and me in Middlesbrough. I felt I knew him. He and Yoko taught me that artists could teach the world about peace. "Give peace a chance" were the therapeutic words that helped heal a confused teenager.

His death in New York took place four months after my arrival in America. How could John Lennon, you know, John Lennon, go that way? What kind of human being could actually shoot John Lennon? I know; "a very disturbed human being," you're thinking at this point.

So, what do we do when we are made up of a conglomerate of emotional issues, some of them more serious than others? When we are regular functioning people, but still fight each day to keep going?

Well, this is what I currently believe. You make deals with yourself. You say, "I'll take you off the hook for some things if you perform and allow me to get things done."

For me, these deals currently work, but for you, you'll have to create and make your own.

I paint, and I have lived as a studio artist for over twenty years. I've written one novel, four poetry books, have a regular column, and make guest appearances in literary magazines. My goals include getting a great literary agent, with a chance to sell my books and write more.

Here's what I don't do. I don't type. For some reason, I can't stand the keys and writing that way. It's bothered me for years. I have now given in, and have made peace with the fact that I write everything by hand, which is quite a lot. I pay for typing, or use voice recognition. It's hard to get respect for this problem. People want you to change, to adapt. About a year ago, I promised myself that I wouldn't make myself type if I didn't want to.

The other important agreement I have with my emotional self is that I don't like to drive on the freeway. It's the speed, and the lane-changing at 65 miles per hour. After years of trying to adjust, trying to get used to it, I started to notice that after driving on the freeway I would end up with a pounding heart and short breath. I also noticed that every activity I did after that I wouldn't really enjoy, dreading the drive back home.

So, about three years ago, I did a very socially unexpected thing. I stopped driving on the freeways. Does that hold me back? Yes, of course it does. I don't visit as many galleries and museums as I should, and I have to rely on rides to get out of town and into San Francisco or San Jose.

But, in some crazy way, it works for me. By allowing myself not to drive on the freeways, I feel cared for and I believe the quality of my work, both in art and in writing, increases. Plus, my understanding and concern for people like me who function in their own way in our highly technical world has deepened.

Just one thing I want to make clear. I do believe that I fully function in my own way in this technical world. I have a web site, and my work looks extremely professional because of the level of help my work receives from people who can do "technical" very well, and love to work with the artist.

As far as the driving issue goes, I dream of having my own driver. A Driving Miss Daisy kind of thing, but younger. We would go to galleries and meetings, and it will be a good thing for both. I see my driver now. She enjoys driving, and has plenty of patience to wait for me. Now I just have to create her salary and we have it made.

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