



Insights & Connections

ISSUE #2

~ NO HEART IS TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL TO BE WHOLE ~

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LIFE IS A JOURNEY - Peregrination and its wandering essence

The word *journey* originally meant "the distance travelled in one day". A journey becomes a pilgrimage, day by day, that the distance travelled is less important than the experience gained. "When you are on your journey, and the end keeps getting further and further away, then you realize that the real end is the journey", said Joseph Campbell. One of the slogans of AA and Al-Anon calls us to live our lives "one day at a time"; live life "just for today". How and when did the "bigger, better, faster, quick-fix life" of the West become a badge of honour worn by anyone wanting to skip all the wanderings, get to the end of the journey and miss all the rambling circuits of loops and twists, zigzags and meanderings, pauses and gazes, slow downs and jumps in mud puddles...? Could "Don't just sit there, do something!" become "Don't just do something, sit there!"?

TRAUMA TALK

Talking mental health with the Founder of Whole Hearts Matter
Out-of-Trauma Coach Dominika Kosowska, BA, MA

PM: With respect to early childhood traumas, you emphasize Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they form a template for how we live in adulthood. How do addictions, bullying, damaging medical interventions, codependence, coping mechanisms et al tie into this?

There are 10 recognized ACEs: substance abuse; parental separation/divorce; mental illness; battered parent; criminal behaviour; psychological abuse; physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional neglect; and, physical neglect. And to these I would add medical trauma.

ACEs also represent a score: the higher a person's score, the more prone they are to developing mental and physical health problems. When children are exposed to ACEs, they have chronically elevated levels of cortisol and adrenaline, and the body needs to rest from these. When we hear the term "survival mode", that is when the person is seeking unhealthy coping strategies for dealing with overwhelming or constant states of fear: that is the trauma response.

Thankfully, in recent years, research has been done on how positive childhood experiences (PCEs) can negate ACEs. Supports need to be available first and foremost for parents so that they understand their children's brain development and how their needs change as they grow. Whole Hearts Matter provides these tools and skills for parents to help them form deeper, conscious and heartfelt connections with their children.

cont. from Issue#1

PM: Many people know what PTSD stands for, but few seem to know what it actually entails, and it's not just something that afflicts war veterans. What does this term actually encompass? Following on this, what is PTG?

DK: Let's start with PTG (Post-Traumatic Growth): this is the ability to accept situations beyond one's control, and it is crucial to adapting to life's events. In simpler terms, it is "turning lemons into lemonade". I'm speaking of the inner strength, courage and resiliency to process what has happened to us to embark on a journey of recovery, and come out on the other side with skills and tools to help us navigate future life challenges. The more quickly one can come to living with reality and accepting one's situation, the more likely one will be to move on with life and experience growth.

People think that PTSD only happens to war veterans, but it represents a wide range of symptoms that really can be debilitating to anyone. People think PTSD is as simple as not being able to move on from a traumatic event, but it is more complicated than that. Some symptoms of PTSD include unwanted memories, negative self-image, emotional distress, sense of threat, hypervigilance, intrusive thoughts, memory problems, anger, guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, excessive blame, flashbacks, nightmares, sleeping problems, self-destructive behaviours—such as habitual involvement in abusive relationships, and a wide range of physical health challenges, to name a few.

Interview by Paul Miazga

"THERE ARE A THOUSAND CASES OF PERSISTENCE OVERCOMING EVERY OBSTACLE: NOTHING IS DIFFICULT WHEN THE MIND DECIDES TO ENDURE." - SENECA, ON ANGER

(cont. from Issue #1):

An attachment wound means that our inner world was not understood/recognized/accepted by the parent. This emotional attunement, someone 'getting' us - seeing us, is a universal core need for all of us, and is especially **necessary** to little ones. As humans, we are designed to connect with another human and feel safe in their presence. In fact, this inborn requirement to be understood and accepted by another is the driving force fuelling our choices and impacting our relationships. People don't just want to be loved - **we need it** to survive and to thrive! Yet, there are so many different ways we didn't have that need met, and just as many ways that an attachment injury (often from early childhood) surfaces in our adult relationships.

(cont. in Issue #3)

by Dominika Kosowska

A strange message arrives:

Before you run off and report this to the bank, let me just explain myself.

After I spent a year in Grandma's house, I noticed things were going missing: That pink scarf.

Her favorite cacti; a range of books.

Most importantly, some top-end antique jewelry.

So I took what jewelry was left and smuggled it out, wrapped it in her old turban, gleaning that it must have been a family member stealing her things.

This doesn't count as a theft or crime - I'm sure of it.

I've hidden the last eight pieces of jewelry in the clock, etched with Grandma's initials, at my place - but you can also find one per sentence.

What are the eight items of jewelry?

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Dominika, Whole Hearts Matter!

HEART WORK

Children are people too

Keeping Up with the Joneses

I have friends who put their children in multiple activities (e.g. skating, cross-country skiing, gymnastics, piano and dance). They're busy at least four nights per week and it makes me think not, "Wow! Great for the children!" but "That must be exhausting!" and "When does the family spend time together except in the car?" The push to have children involved in as many activities as the next family, filling up most weekday evenings (and many weekends) has gotten out of hand. We have replaced simple bonding time (playing games, reading or cooking together) with all sorts of activities that force parents into a chaotic, stress-filled flurry: race home from work; pick up the children; eat supper on the run; jump in the vehicle and drive to the rink/gym/dance studio; return home to brush teeth and go to bed; then, rinse and repeat. Keeping children (and ourselves) constantly busy is the opposite of healthy; it's destructive.

Increasingly, the focus seems to be on ensuring our children are so busy they can't become bored.

Is this busy-ness really about them and their needs or about us projecting on them our own fears of missing out?

Recently, I pulled my son out of dance despite the instructor's pleas to keep him in. His sister still goes and loves it, but he wasn't enjoying it, even with his best friend in the troupe. "Maybe I'll go back next year" he said.

I asked him what he'd like to do instead: music lessons? Gymnastics or martial arts? He said noncommittally, "I'll think about it." We have to resist the urge to keep up with the Joneses when it comes to involving our children in extracurricular activities. It's not like they can't or won't take up something later on, but we cannot push them to be in this, that or the other thing just because their friends are. This is a recipe for disaster. Children who don't spend regular quality time with their parents—learning trust and speaking openly about what's on their mind and how they're feeling—will turn to their peers as a source of comfort and confidence instead. Teens don't naturally become alienated from their parents because they are teens; they do so because their parents missed opportunities to connect with them meaningfully much earlier in life. How can you create bonding time with your children? Build flexibility into your relationship with them. Go for a walk or play in a local park. Talk and share about your day. Cook supper or do some baking together, but ask what food they would like to make or what might spice it up. Read a book, but stop to ask questions about the story you're reading and how they understand it. At all times, remember the KISS principle. **These are our children; their only job is to be children.** And we only have one lifetime in which to get our relationship with them right.

by Paul Miazga

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THE 3 Ls OF HOLDING SPACE: Love, Leadership and Liberation

What is Holding Space? When a person supports someone else (or themselves) in a way that is compassionate and non-directive. It is to show up for another without trying to judge, to fix, to shame or blame, or to control the outcome.

When we merely witness and accept what is happening, there is so much space for love, transformation, peace, and good outcomes.

We offer a kind, compassionate, non-judgmental presence, and trust that the other person will have, find, or create their own best answers. It's true that we will never "walk a mile in someone else's shoes," and living these principles gives us permission to stop trying to do that. It's exhausting trying to forecast what someone else must be feeling, or to guess at someone's needs, or to make incorrect assumptions all the time. It's a recipe for drama and misunderstandings! Carrying expectations that only turn into disappointments is a sure way to lose excitement for life.

How does the practice of Holding Space help eliminate these things? When we focus on clear communication and honouring our own needs we: say exactly what we mean, ask clarifying questions when we don't understand something, honour boundaries (in ourselves and with others), seek to meet our needs in healthy ways, and we have brave discussions with people who have earned our trust.

There is a lot of work to each of these steps. There is work to "unlearn" limiting beliefs, programming, and biases. We need to become aware of our triggers and find tools to engage with them in the moment; and in time help them dissolve so we are not as reactive as we used to be. We create solid, sustainable, and supportive friendships.

We discover what are the healthiest ways of being for each aspect of our unique chemistry, health, desires, etc., and then do the hard work to commit to these steps. This last bit can include everything from the food we eat, the media we consume (online, television, gaming, movies, podcasts), our sleep routine, the energy of our homes and work environments, and the quality of our relationships. It seems like a lot because it is! Holding Space well includes all aspects of our lives. But it can definitely be learned, and with small steps over time a lot can change and shift. It's a dual-path that happens simultaneously; if we hold space for ourselves in small ways (i.e. being kind witnesses to ourselves encouraging best outcomes), then we can offer the same thing to others in small ways – and small things can have big ripples!

To bring more love, compassion, kindness and understanding to how you treat yourself or someone else is to catch yourself when you're having a critical thought, and think, "How else can I say this?" (Whether to yourself or someone else.) Can you frame it positively? Or ask a question? Or take away any blame or judgement and stick to the facts? These are some tips to how you can start to hold space for yourself and others more effectively. Can you think of anything else you can do, that you could start today?

by Emily Gillies

David Freeman
Custom-built guitars, mandolins, repairs.
Luthier supplies.
Build your own guitar.



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Remembering Prayer

Prayer intrigues me and I can remember this going back into childhood. Over Christmas 2021, the first prompt came when I unwrapped a beautiful present from my aunty, "The Woman's Book Of Prayer" - 365 Blessings, Poems and Meditations. My curiosity beckoned again two months later when my beau found a japa mala bead necklace to gift me on Valentines Day. He was listening when I talked about my 'loose connection' to prayer and my desire to explore it's function in my life.

For some time now I have enjoyed watching TEDTalk videos or reading articles that are about well-being, advancements in medicine, the mind or emotions, even neuroscience. I like personal stories of how someone overcame an illness and the latest research. I have been interested in health sciences since my 20s when I completed a diagnostic imaging program at SAIT. Also, I have a diagnosis that is labeled as a serious mental illness.

I took a logic and science-based approach first to examine prayer. Are the benefits researched? What is the etymology of the word? When I was learning to meditate, I also asked this question. Am I doing this right? Naturally, as I thought about these questions, I had even more questions that were now about my own faith. What are my ways of devotion and how have I prayed, or given thanks? Also to whom do I pray? ...

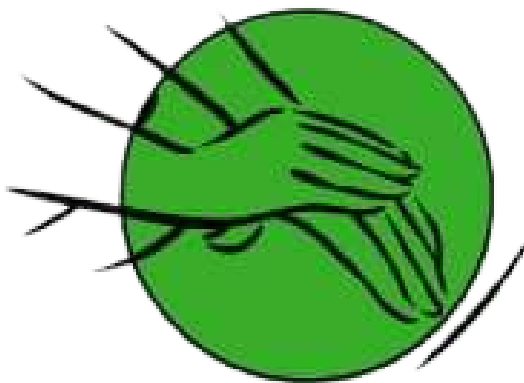


by Richelle Simon

THOUGHT EXPANDER

Dear Readers,

At a time when outside opinions are increasingly being silenced or excluded from the mainstream media, there is a greater need than ever to ensure the public has a forum in which to share thoughts, debate opposing points of view and therefore better understand those from all sides of the political realm. **Insights & Connections** values free speech and the exchange of ideas, even if some readers may find the views expressed herein challenging if only because of who is speaking. In interviews with two separate, equally courageous and highly newsworthy figures, **Insights & Connections** considers topics such as: the deficiencies of the current Canadian political system; the roots of voter apathy; human rights; and, how the federal government is using the media to silence political dissent and cover up abuses that contravene international law, including the Geneva Convention. The point of these interviews is to give voice to people whose opinions and viewpoints matter. Simply put, all opinions and viewpoints matter. When we dismiss or disregard others' words—however challenging they may be—we are, *ispo facto*, placing limits on our own speech and right to speak freely. **Insights & Connections** presents for online subscribers only the complete, unabridged texts of interviews taken in January 2023 with Saskatchewan political activist Mark Friesen and Calgary-based Pastor Artur Pawlowski. The views they express are entirely their own and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of this publication.



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"THE POOR PERSON IS NOT SOMEONE WHO HAS TOOLITTLE, BUT SOMEONE WHO ALWAYS CRAVES MORE."

- SENECA

Interview with Pastor Artur Pawlowski

PM: You grew up during the Solidarity movement in Poland where shipyard workers, coal miners and others were involved in strikes against the Communist government. How did that shape you?

AP: I believe (Solidarity) built me up to be the person I am today, seeing the atrocities of the Communist government. My parents, grandparents and other adults were terrified, but the power of millions of people coming together over 1980 to 1989 galvanized people. It showed me people have the power to stand up against tyranny and, when pushed far enough, they get freedom back. We shape our own destiny, not the other way around.

PM: How do you describe what is going on in Canada today?

AP: In Canada we are always in a battle with something: autonomy, healthy eating habits and diets, our own thoughts. But as a pastor and a Christian, I was shocked (in 2021) when suddenly “My body, my choice” got turned on its head. Suddenly, we had complete compliance, (people) going along with this clear plan for tyranny.

I grew up in a city with a Nazi concentration camp and know what happened there. People don't know their history. As free people, we should not be willing to give up our rights without any resistance. Since the very beginning (of the restrictions and lockdowns), we are in living in tyranny. All of our international commitments to respect human rights have been ignored.

PM: In 2022, police in Alberta put you in solitary confinement as part of the 51 days you were jailed for exercising your rights to free speech and freedom of assembly. Solitary confinement is described by the UN as a form of torture. What happened to you while you were imprisoned?

AP: I was considered “high profile”, so the guards involved confiscated all of my personal notes, memoirs of my captivity and even letters to my lawyer. This is all illegal, but no one among the authorities cares. I was denied a Bible even though other inmates were allowed the Quran or other holy books. At various times, they took away my reading glasses.

Because I was considered the most dangerous inmate due to my special handling: no other inmates were allowed to have contact with me, so some thought I was in protective custody because I had hurt someone. They wanted to create the sense that I was a dangerous felon and the inmates would want to hurt me, but once they read in the papers who I really was, that changed. The guards intimidated me constantly.

They locked me not just in isolation at times but in a small metal cage that didn't allow for me to stand up, stretch my legs or even twist from right to left. You only see stuff like this in the movies, but I was put into this box on two different occasions. They also put me in a bare, concrete cell on many occasions after hours so no one would see: no water, no bed, no toilet. After this, the sheriffs took me away and they forced me into a matchbox outside in minus 30 degree weather.

I was shivering violently from the cold and hypothermia. My lawyers and family didn't know about any of this! It's straight from the playbook of the Soviet KGB. It was all to mess with my head.

I honestly didn't think I was going to make it out of this alive and the officials would get away with murder. To this day, I am still under house arrest and need permission to be out after 7pm.

The Crown didn't want me to be able to preach, to even come to my own church! When I finally got to speak to my lawyers, I said to them, “If they try to put restrictions on my freedom of speech, make me unable to protest, put me back in. I'm not going to be muzzled like some dog.” Right now, the Crown is seeking to put me away for 10-and-a-half years under The Defense Act for Terrorism—for having spoken to the truckers via my church service in Coutts, AB.

PM: Why stay in Canada? Why not leave?

AP: When I travelled last year to the United States, I was told to seek asylum, but my children are here. In that jail, I couldn't read, I was locked in that little cell by myself, nothing to do, they left me there to rot and die. They broke every imaginable law there is. The Crown Prosecutor in Coutts and those complicit with him are agents of the regime; there work has nothing to do with law and order.

They want me to plead guilty to just one small charge and then I can go home to my family. I had become a symbol of resistance. I wouldn't agree to what the country was doing to its people. My reply to the Crown was, “Even if you ask me to pay one dollar, I refuse; I have not broken any law.” If they will not allow me to be a pastor, I will become a politician-pastor. Many parties have reached out to me and I have agreed to work with one because they have agreed to incorporate Solidarity into their messaging and to do everything in solidarity with the Charter (of Rights and Freedoms) and the Bill of Rights.

This is no longer a “conspiracy theory” (about government tyranny): people are being hurt and their rights abused. This is about personal choice and personal freedoms. The government wants to divide and conquer the people.

In my childhood, I saw people of all walks of life who came together to say, “Enough is enough!” I want to know, “Who gave the orders for me to be put in solitary confinement? Who benefited?” We need to change the people in charge of this country before it's too late.

by Paul Miazga

Interview with Mark Friesen

Mark Friesen - Member of the Buffalo Party of Saskatchewan; parliamentary candidate in Saskatoon-Grasswood for the People's Party of Canada

PM: How do traditional Canadian political parties deal with policy formation?

MF: That depends. If we're talking about the established parties, I find that the grassroots is ignored. The CPC (Conservative Party of Canada), for example, have no policy platform at the moment. It's (a) top-down (approach)—same with the Liberals. This ties into their association with the WEF (World Economic Forum). With the PPC, most policies are member-driven and member-created. As one example, their policy on veterans. There's a big difference between the establishment parties and what the PPC represents.

If you ask too many tough questions (as a candidate for political office), people don't want you; they won't listen. The Buffalo Party policy platform was brought up by members and voted on by them. All listed policies (on their website) come from the members, not special interest groups. The people of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba are pretty switched on, especially in the rural areas.

PM: What gets the establishment parties and their people elected?

MF: Ignorance, and I don't use this term as a pejorative. People generally don't like drastic change; they go with what they know. It's hard to break away from the establishment. These political parties truly appreciate and want people ignorant. It makes them easier to manipulate.

PM: What are your thoughts about accountability in politics? This has been a major theme for you wherever you've spoken.

MF: Politicians at the moment can't admit to their wrongdoing. When I was a kid, the media played a big role in holding politicians to account. The corruption we're seeing at every level is people abdicating their responsibility to the political process and society. People expect accountability but no one wants to actually do anything about this. It used to be that MPs, MLAs, city councillors and the like were truly responsible to their constituents—holding regular town hall meetings, tell people what's going on. Now, there's no responsibility to the voter. At each election, voters really have no idea what they're voting for. The politicians want them ignorant.

In 1992, the Mulroney government passed legislation—Agenda 2021—that committed Canada to sustainable development goals as part of the Rio Declaration—the first “earth” summit. There was no discussion of what it contained, citizens had no input into it, no say, and anyone who criticized or questioned it was labeled as a “right-wing conspiracy theorist”. If it had been brought to the people, no one would have voted for it.

I want to politicians to acknowledge their culpability (in tying Canada to this agenda). Right now, we're pressuring Conservative supporters to ask the right questions of their leaders and their party.

PM: What's happened to the political discourse in this country?

MF: Political debates are lost. I was the only one in Saskatoon-Meewasin asking for a debate. What about discussing ideas? Voter apathy is a big problem: one-third fewer people in the constituency voted in the by-election. Most people don't want Mark Friesen to burst their bubble. Instead, reality is going to burst their bubble.

PM: What about the role of media, especially alternative sources?

MF: True North and Rebel News aren't producing news; they're pushing a narrative. The media need to educate, and that's what I see as my role.

The media is pushing the global sustainability agenda and the WEF since 1971. (CPC leader Pierre) Poilievre is part of the establishment. Now the mainstream narrative is “Fuck Trudeau”; “Get him out of office at all costs!” We have this merging of global communism and fascism, and until we start exposing this for what it is, we'll be in a lot of trouble.

Politics has to be part of the solution, and that rankles many in the PPC. I'm pro-western civilization. We have unmatched freedoms, prosperity and a way of life based on Christian values. The problem with the system is that if we burn down the system, we'll have a dystopia birthed from it. We have a responsibility to root out corruption and hold to account the politicians. We have a throw-away society that's all about consumerism and immediate gratification; we want a quick fix rather than exercise the responsibility to fix the system and re-engage with the people. That's not going to happen overnight but through the democratic process; we have to find a political solution. There's no need for rebellion or revolution—this isn't 1776. Anyone espousing this is dreaming up a recipe for disaster. These people are quick-fixers.

PM: Is it going to take an economic collapse to wake people up?

MF: Right now, many people are deciding whether to heat or eat. Inflation is starting to become a major issue and the middle class is really suffering. (The global elites) want to destroy the middle class. Again, the politician's job is to educate—tell people what is causing inflation and what's really going on with the economy, help connect the dots. Once people start to struggle to pay their mortgage or make rent, then it hits them. Pain is part of the process of waking people up.

Another part of the solution or antidote to globalism is going local—hyper-local. Self-reliance. Local autonomy. Community. Sharing information. Like this. Rural folks see their way of life under attack, unlike people in the cities. Rural folk know how to communicate and spread messages.

The establishment controls the media, Hollywood, et cetera. All media conglomerates have signed the media compact and promote the SDGs (sustainable development goals) from the UN's Agenda 2030. Media concentration in Canada makes pushing the narrative easier and even more effective.

Despite all this, ultimately, humanity wins—we win—this battle. That doesn't mean we can sit around and watch. It takes energy, activity, getting involved in your community. There's a lot of naivete, ignorance and apathy out there, but the truth will eventually set us free.

by Paul Miazga

Remembering Prayer

Prayer intrigues me and I can remember this going back into childhood. Over Christmas 2021, the first prompt came when I unwrapped a beautiful present from my aunty, "The Woman's Book Of Prayer" - 365 Blessings, Poems and Meditations. My curiosity beckoned again two months later when my beau found a japa mala bead necklace to gift me on Valentines Day. He was listening when I talked about my 'loose connection' to prayer and my desire to explore it's function in my life.

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I took a logic and science based approach first to examine prayer. Are the benefits researched? What is the etymology of the word? When I was learning to meditate I also asked this question. Am I doing this right? Naturally, as I thought about these questions I had even more questions that were now about my own faith. What are my ways of devotion and how have I prayed, or gave thanks? Also to whom do I pray?

There are moments when I am fearful of another episode derailing me. Those who are familiar with manic psychosis will know that grandiose delusions accompanied with hallucinations can happen during a break and sometimes they are religious or spiritual in nature. An example of this kind of delusion is when a person believes they are the reincarnation of Jesus or Buddha. A person hallucinating is hearing sounds nobody else hears, believing they are whispers from a prophet or an angel for example. Clinically this is termed hyperreligiosity and it is defined as a psychiatric disturbance where an individual experiences intense ongoing spiritual or religious beliefs that interfere with daily functioning. I was 18 when my first episode came on.

It was my turn and I took a few inhales from the joint that was being passed around. This was not like the other times I smoked cannabis. I was quickly and intensely enveloped in pure elation and euphoria; a very different high than my relaxed peers were feeling.

The heightened mood persisted for two months and would engulf me, traumatize me, and enlighten me. My close friends all worried and tried to help when I was not myself and blurring the lines of reality. I refused to see a doctor and my parents fell on each side of that decision. My mood eventually would even out. I carried on with my plan in life and moved to Alberta for a medical imaging program that I was accepted into.

I was not raised in a religious way and we weren't an artistic family. These areas in life were not cultivated at home with my parents. Conversations about God and prayer were mainly ignored or dismissed quickly. This is common. I have noticed the reverence, gratitude and wonder I feel in nature has been present for as long as I can remember. Who taught me this I wonder?

The 'elephant in the room' became so enormous in the years that followed. A combination of stigma, denial, lack of education amongst other things may be why my loved ones and I never mentioned those two months. It hurt that we were all on different wavelengths, suffering and not able to have a serious conversation about mental health. Surely, I was hyper-independent in many ways after this trauma too. There is a medical term for "lack of insight" that I came across recently. Anosognosia affects 40% of people with serious mental illnesses and those who have it lack the capacity to understand their illness. I was living with both spiritual and mental illnesses and couldn't see it. Between bouts of inactivity, there were times where I was up, more lively, passionate and driven. I met good people, made lasting friendships but strained relationships and friendships became a pattern. I started having panic attacks. I took a stress leave from my new job, and then another.

The manic psychotic episode that swept me up at 18 was also a spiritual experience. The heavy depression, confusion, disorientation and paranoia that fell on me afterwards made it nearly impossible to see it was significant and expansive. It has taken me over a decade to look deeper into madness and it's meaning. While I was gripped in the episode, I was also having God moments. There are commonalities between spiritual experiences and psychosis. Now I remember asking is a form of prayer when the questions are for spiritual advancement. I was ready, the prayers were answered, and I recieved the gifts of understanding and faith. I am moving towards wholeness and peace.

8 years later I was 26 and I will never forget when it dawned on me finally and thankfully. I had the initial appointment with a psychiatrist where he diagnosed me with bipolar disorder. The appointment lasted a full hour which surprised me. I will always be grateful for his humor and for his explanations, right down to the chemistry. I had an illness that warranted compassion and care. I took a mental health first aid course to learn more. Medication was effective. Therapy went well too. I met with my psychiatrist for follow-ups. I decided to be open with the diagnosis so I shared with my immediate family and close friends. Social media also connected me to like-minded people who were in the same boat. Learning about wellness and holistic healing modalities since my early 20s helped me thrive for as well.

The turning point comes with facing decisions and facing reality. Throughout the last few months of 2022 I noticed my sense of self was floundering, again. I was muddled again and changes in life were creating stress. I avoided sitting with myself. My spiritual wellbeing suffered. Symptoms of mental illness were breaking me. The internal conflicts became catalysts to my spiritual and identity crisis in December.

There was another missing piece I needed for healing and that was a solid creative outlet. I haven't ignored my creative sides over the years but I wasn't nurturing it much either. There were many scattered ideas like crochet and watercolour painting but the motivation was lost within a few weeks. For it's impeccable timing and for hilarity I will just call it magic that I have discovered a hobby I really love. It has actually stuck around for 6 months, so we're serious now. I have bursts of ideas and hopes for a continuous relationship with origami. I am so pleased that for once in my adult life I have creative pursuits and a prayerful offering.

This crisis is turning the page to a new chapter in my healing. I will lean in to the divine and embrace this uncomfortable moment. When I rationalized with the fears coming up, a clear and simple solution presented itself. I'll need help. I'll need hope. As I slowly emerge and find soft places to land, I will open my heart and pray often. This journey of remembering the function of prayer in my life has been an epiphany and the renewal of my faith.

by Richelle Simon

Mental Health Stigma

It was September 2020. I had just undergone a severe mental breakdown. I took an OD (overdose) and my psychiatrist in the community admitted me into the psych ward in Regina.

My assigned psychiatrist once I was inpatient decided to discharge me because I have a BPD (bipolar disorder) diagnosis. He did not bother to look at my medications, or getting to know me. The consult was less than 10 minutes.

I panicked at his decision. I said something about seeing my picture in the obituaries and I understand how that might seem manipulative but I was in crisis so it came out.

He marched back into my room and said, "I am the manager of this unit and you will never be admitted again. You have an illness, you deal with it."

My nurse who was discharging me said that me being banned from accessing public inpatient treatment was like "being banned from a bar". He compared me to an alcoholic for wanting to stay and get better.

When I said "I guess you'll never see me again" (I was referring to the ban), he took it as a suicide threat. All he said in response was, "that is your choice."

- Lisa from Regina