

RELISHING PEACE

Transitions: The Gifts of Change

By Gail Kauranen Jones

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“Peace is not something you wish for; it’s something you make, something you do, something you are, and something you give away.”

---Robert Fulghum

I think much differently this year about the messages of peace arriving on Christmas cards than I did in seasons past.

As a young child waiting for Santa, I thought peace was boring in comparison to the excitement of awaking to a roomful of presents. Back then, peace simply meant I was not fighting with or being teased by my older brother. Instead, I was listening with him for the reindeer that would soon be landing on our rooftop.

In teenage years, peace arrived when my high school sweetheart who I missed dearly returned home from college, temporarily ending the angst of a long-distance relationship.

Early adulthood brought moments of peace when I landed dream jobs, relieved to be paid well for work that allowed me to travel (something that wouldn’t bring me peace now as being nestled at home is my preference over living on-the-fly in hotel rooms and airports).

Later, I found peace after periods of time grieving the death of each of my parents, six years apart.

Now, as I embrace peace, and wish it for all others on our planet, a profound stillness overcomes me as I take in a new understanding of the concept. Peace is not dependent on an external situation changing—even though we are often relieved when our burdens are eased or our discomforts are altered in a positive way.

Rather, peace is intentional and it starts within each of us. We choose peace. We give it to ourselves and we give it to others. With every encounter, opportunity or situation we find ourselves in, the decision is ours as to how we respond.

Sometimes it takes practice (especially with teenagers or some of our Internet providers) to wait until we can calmly respond instead of react in the moment of anguish. However, choosing to pause twenty-four hours before uttering a nasty word has saved many a relationship.

Forgiving ourselves when we lash out unexpectedly can also be a form of peace, especially when, realizing we have acted out of haste, we find it within ourselves to offer an apology. Then, we can set an intention to respond differently next time we get triggered by another's actions or words.

Other times, simply removing ourselves briefly from a potential conflict can create a breathing space for a healthier, new outcome to evolve.

One powerful way of ensuring quick peace is letting go of any need to be right, and choosing instead to find a middle ground. Allow in another's perspective, and know that we grow by appreciating those who are different from us. Or, return to peace by opting to bless silently those who disagree with you.

For me, peace also comes by choosing to quiet myself, and the chatter in my mind, often by walking or working out. Tranquil settings inspire the calm I enjoy. Lately, I have brought my dog along to my jaunts on Crane's Beach. The friendliness of people who stop to pet him offsets the disgruntled store clerks dealing with harried holiday shoppers.

However, the most significant choice we make in every moment of our lives that affects our level of peace is whether we choose to act in the world from fear or love.

This holiday season, as you mingle among friends and family, set an intention to see the goodness or strengths in others, instead of focusing on flaws or weaknesses. Judgment is fear-based. Acceptance is love-based. You get to choose from which approach you want to live.

Be peace, instead of wishing it, and you will truly help change the world.

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