

A Compassionate Retreat Inward **By Gail Kauranen Jones**

For her bi-weekly column
“Transitions: The Gifts of Change”

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“When you encounter difficulties and contradictions, do not try to break them, but bend with gentleness and time.”

--Saint Frances deSales

Sometimes, we feel slammed by life, when too many curveballs are tossed our way simultaneously--the anticipated job offer does not come through, a person we trusted betrays us, a family member encounters a health crisis or a colleague thwarts our best efforts to complete a project in a timely manner.

After stepping to the plate enough times to meet life’s challenges, we can feel defeated. During these moments, when there is no fight left in us to make a wrong right, it helps to step back and practice some exquisite acts of self-love and gentleness.

Two strategies I have used recently to counter these darker times are delegating and playing. Hiring those who are competent to support us helps relieve the pressure and brings new perspective to a trying situation. It is incredibly liberating to experience someone taking over where we leave off, learning from and valuing their expertise. The larger lesson is learning to comprehend that we do not have to do this journey alone. There are other kind, smart and wise souls who want to help. Let them.

Pursuing pleasure diverts our attention from the negative as well. Even if you do not have the time or money to take a vacation, simple jaunts like renting a bike and exploring the back roads and sanctuary of Plum Island Wildlife Refuge for an afternoon can renew the soul. Playing hooky can also ignite our creativity, giving us fresh ideas to pursue when we fully engage with work or others again.

By letting go of the search for something outside ourselves to comfort us—and going within to become centered and grounded again—we develop a quiet strength. Not all victories come from going to the line and doing battle.

Laying low and allowing life outside our limited view to simmer a bit enlarges us. We open our being to embrace a fuller vision, one that includes possibilities beyond our current circumstances.

In my own life, the more I have accepted the times when I cannot make things happen, even though I view myself as a highly responsible, take-charge person, I learn so much more about the beauty and gift of quiet. Not doing anything and pausing is as powerful sometimes as reaching for the stars.

I give myself permission to be in limbo, waiting compassionately for the inner guidance and outer signals that unveil a new path is unfolding.

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