

Don't know the author ... we've heard it before ... and here it is again in great prose with a poignancy and directness both gentle and startling. Enjoy!

THE AWAKENING

A time comes in your life when you finally get it...

When in the midst of all your fears and insanity you stop dead in your tracks and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out — ENOUGH! Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on. And, like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears and through a mantle of wet lashes you begin to look at the world through new eyes. This is your awakening. You realize it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change or for happiness, safety and security to come galloping over the next horizon. You come to terms with the fact he is not Prince Charming and you are not Cinderella and in the real world there aren't always fairytale endings (or beginnings for that matter) and any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with you, and in the process a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.

You awaken to the fact you are not perfect and not everyone will always love, appreciate or approve of who or what you are ... and that's OK. (They are entitled to their own views and opinions.) And you learn the importance of loving and championing yourself, and in the process a sense of newfound confidence is born of self-approval.

You stop bitching and blaming other people for the things they did to you (or didn't do for you) and you learn the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected. You learn people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say, and not everyone will always be there for you, and it's not always about you. So, you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself, and in the process a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers, and you begin to accept people as they are, and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties, and in the process a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness. You realize much of the way you view yourself, and the world around you, is as a result of all the messages and opinions ingrained into your psyche. And you begin to sift through all you've been fed about how you should behave, how you should look, and how much you should weigh, what you should wear, and where you should shop, and what you should drive, how and where you should live, and what you

should do for a living, who you should sleep with, who you should marry, and what you should expect of a marriage, the importance of having and raising children, or what you owe your parents.

You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. And you begin reassessing and redefining who you are, what you really stand for. You learn the difference between wanting and needing, and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with; and in the process you learn to go with your instincts. You learn it is truly in giving that we receive. And there is power and glory in creating and contributing and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix. You learn principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a by-gone era, but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life. You learn you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world, and you can't teach a pig to sing. You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility, and the importance of setting boundaries, and learning to say "NO." You learn the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and martyrs get burned at the stake. Then you learn about love, romantic love and familial love. How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving and when to walk away. You learn not to project your needs or your feelings onto a relationship. You learn you will not be, more beautiful, more intelligent, more lovable or important because of the man on your arm, or the child that bears your name. You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be. You stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes. You learn just as people grow and change so it is with love ... and you learn you don't have the right to demand love on your terms ... just to make you happy.

And you learn alone does not mean lonely ... And you look in the mirror and come to terms with the fact you will never be a size 5 or a perfect 10, and you stop trying to compete with the image inside your head and agonizing over how you "stack up."

You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring your needs. You learn feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK ... and it is your right to want things and to ask for the things you want; and sometimes it is necessary to make demands.

You come to the realization you deserve to be treated with love, kindness, sensitivity and respect and you won't settle for less. And you allow only the hands of a lover who cherishes you to glorify you with his touch ... and in the process you internalize the meaning of self-respect.

And you learn your body really is your temple. And you begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin eating a balanced diet, drinking more water and taking more time to exercise. You learn fatigue diminishes the spirit and can create doubt and fear. So you take more time to rest. And just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul. So you take more time to laugh and to play.

You learn, for the most part, in life you get what you believe you deserve ... and much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy. You learn anything worth achieving is worth working for; and wishing for something to happen is different from working towards making it happen. More importantly, you learn in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline and perseverance. You also learn no one can do it all alone and it's OK to risk asking for help.

You learn the only thing you must truly fear is the great robber baron of all time. FEAR itself. You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know whatever happens you can handle it, and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live life on your terms. And you learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom. You learn life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve and sometimes-bad things happen to unsuspecting, good people. On these occasions you learn not to personalize things. You learn [Your] God isn't punishing you or failing to answer your prayers. It's just life happening.

And you learn to deal with evil in its most primal state — the ego. You learn negative feelings such as anger, envy and resentment must be understood and redirected or they will suffocate the life out of you, and poison the universe surrounding you. You learn to admit when you are wrong and to building bridges instead of walls.

You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted, things millions of people upon the earth can only dream about; a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, a long hot shower.

Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself, and to make yourself a promise to never betray yourself, and to never ever settle for less than your heart's desire. And you hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind. And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting, and to stay open to every wonderful possibility. Finally, with courage in your heart and with [Your] God by your side you take a stand, you take a deep breath and you begin to design the life you want to live as best as you can.