

## What is your wish for the New Year?

Lately time seems to be escaping all of us.

I realised that time is truly speeding up when I heard a 17 year old commenting on it recently. When I was 17, I remember time went very slow.

Now is the time to reflect on the year, look at the lessons that it has brought and let go of the emotions that have blocked you. It's a time for you to take a step back and breathe. Instead of rushing around chasing your tail, stop and reflect on what it is you seek because it is time for us to rise above our pettiness. You do have a choice in the reality you live in .

I would like to pass on to you some teachings that were shared with me which transformed the way I perceive things.

Over nine years ago I had an experience that finally started to merge the pieces of the puzzle together for me. At last, I was able to see the bigger picture. As I share this with you, please know that ultimately you have to go out and find what works for *you*. The greatest gift given to us is our free will.

My adventure began to transform for me at the start of the new millennium 2000. I didn't for one moment anticipate that it would be a rollercoaster ride on all levels of consciousness.

As fate would have it, I was invited to stay with a group of medicine women living in the outback of New Mexico, three hours out of El Paso. My world turned upside down as, one after another, things fell apart prior to arriving in New Mexico. It almost seemed as if all these things were happening to stop me from reaching these medicine women, but I was determined to go. I had nothing left to lose. It was as if I had no choice, regardless of what was thrown at me. I needed to understand this world.

I started my adventure in July 2000, first stop Amsterdam. I travelled to various parts of Europe as well as to Cyprus, the place of my birth. From there I flew to New York to visit family.

Staying at my uncle's house in New Jersey was a culture shock like no other. The only sanctuary I had was escaping to New York, a place where your senses go on overload from the sheer intensity, the overwhelming number of people, constant traffic jams, the concrete jungle that has no end.

As I wandered around the city I was transported into various movie scenes that I grew up watching. In little Italy I couldn't get away from the 'Lavern and Shirley Show' or 'Happy Days' song. Yes, showing my age!

It was very difficult living at my uncles' house with his family. He fascinated me. He is a good man who has spent his whole life working hard to create the all-American dream that he has had no time to enjoy it. Today he still works seven days a week running a diner. His day starts at 4am and finishes at 9pm. There is no time left over for himself or his family. He had no time to teach his children values for he spent all his time making money to provide them with all material things he missed out on growing up. Like most people he is unaware that the greatest gift you can give to a child is your time.

What amazed me about their house was the number of televisions they had. This was common in most American homes I visited and I found it bizarre. My uncle had one in each room, even the basement. This did not prevent my cousins from fighting over the T.V in the living room.

I found my cousins to be very angry young adults who believed that the world owed them. Enough was never enough for them. At the time I was almost grateful to them for creating a diversion from my own problems. It was like watching a full-on soap opera which, somehow, you are in, but have no clue how you got there.

I was meant to stay with my uncle and cousins for six weeks but in the end their intensity became too much for me to handle so four weeks into my stay I called Jo, the medicine woman who had invited me to spend time with her.

I asked if we could meet earlier. As fate would have it she was driving to El Paso to visit with a native Indian woman. She said she would be staying with her for a week and would love for me to meet her. Happy days! At last there was some light! The next day I was packed and gone.

Three days on a greyhound bus spent travelling from New York to El Paso was an education. It was a great way to see the country on a budget but it felt like Ground Hog Day. I really got to see things that challenged my mind. The experience was a book in and of itself.

When Jo picked me up from the bus stop, I felt like I was coming home. Space at last! I could breathe!

I have a strong connection to the Native American Indian but at the time, I did not understand why I had such a strong pull to meet them. The truth, as I see it now, is that this connection was the sole reason for my travelling to America.

We arrived at our destination to find the house full of family who had come over for dinner. There to welcome me was my first teacher, Linda – my first real experience in learning from somebody who was not in a place of ego. It was like I was being reunited with an old friend.

She had a beautiful home with cats, dogs, birds, ducks, fish. We spent hours sitting under the stars with our Indian blanket as I listened to her share her stories. In the traditions of the native Indian all teachings were done aurally, no pen and paper to write things and that is why their culture has withstood the test of time. You can imagine the challenge it brought to this left brain westerner, not to be able to take notes.

This is when my healing began. I went from one extreme to the other. I was on a see-saw and there was no getting off. It was strange to me that I was shown more love and unconditional acceptance by these people than by my own blood family in New York.

After a week had passed, Jo, her young children and I travelled back to where I would be spending six weeks living in and learning from the traditions of the Native Indian. We were at the edge of the desert so there was some green but you could see the desert forming and white sands on the horizon. We were surrounded by cactus. The property had a creek running through it with trees lining either side. It was a place to escape.

It was here that medicine women first told me that the earth is starting to spin faster on it's axis. They spoke of a time many years ago where the sun rose and set in the same direction. They told of how we are coming to the end of one cycle of the earth mother and the birth of another. They also said that for the first time in humanity's history we have a choice as to which reality we choose to exist in.

The most simple, powerful teaching they shared with me was how to look at things laterally. To see the whole forest and not just the tree. To take responsibility for my thoughts; to question and not just believe what I have been told.

I remember once when I had asked a question and been given an answer, I was then asked 'Why do you believe me? How do you know I am speaking the truth? Go find it for yourself.' I was baffled. But I began to search. The bookshelves, rich with text on religions, beliefs, philosophies, history and secret societies, became my haunt.

Once I had found an answer, my teacher then proceeded to ask me how I knew this particular author who had given me my answer was speaking the truth? Had I examined his agenda and taken it into account? It really got me thinking. Finally, it dawned on me that I had found the correct answer only when the same teachings (different versions) were shown to me through different authors. My teacher was trying to prepare me for life in the most elemental way.

We have been raised in a society where we are not allowed to question. After a while we become complacent and often stop thinking for ourselves believing what is fed to us.

We get fixated on our experience and, unable to see beyond the emotions our experiences generate in us, we lose sight of the lessons inherent in them.

What I have learned is that no one can give you your truth. It is something that lies within and only you can find it. It is about taking responsibility.

After six weeks I left the place where I felt so accepted and made my way back to El Paso where I spent some time with Linda. I think of her often and how blessed I was to be sent to her. Before leaving she told me I would be doing alternative medicine. I remember thinking, *how?* I was leaving the next day. She said to me that first I must learn to live in grace. Oddly

enough, from that day to this, I have known whenever I have not been walking in grace. It's a work in progress...

And sure enough, three months later I found myself in Guatemala living in a village where I spent five months studying alternative medicine with three shamans six days a week. I had not even considered visiting Guatemala. Now, nearly ten years on since I last spent time with them, many of their teachings have expanded and been proven through other people and I am doing everything that Linda said I would.

At a time when it felt as if my soul had been ripped apart, when all I knew was pain, these women lifted me up and showed me the power that lies in the feminine energy and the simple, profoundly powerful tool of questioning and finding my own truth. They brought immense healing into my world and taught me how to trust again.

I have learned through my own experiences and lessons, my own search for truth that life is too short to hold onto hate. Hate cannot serve you. Our world is proof of that.

It is interesting to me that at this time of year we have become consumed with materialism and the many expectations we place on our families and loved ones. Christmas celebrations often devolve into family arguments as we hold on to past memories of hurt and use it as ammunition against each other. The teachings of this sacred time have been lost.

Instead of letting irritation, resentment and anger get the better of you this Christmas season, use this time to reflect on what blessings you have and what it is you wish to create in your world. Be grateful for all the things you take for granted. Be compassionate towards yourself and then it will become easy to be compassionate to others. It has to start from within first.

The Dalai Lama says that "too much energy is spent on developing the mind instead of the heart". It is time for us to spend some of our energy developing our hearts. Use this time to let go of the past and create space in your life for what you seek. The time is now. It is only when we open our hearts that we will be able to find peace.

Reflecting back on how the past ten years have flown and how many changes have occurred in my life, I am aware that there is still so much more for me to learn. But I have never forgotten, nor will I forget the teachings of those medicine women and the simple truth they lived by.

"Be in balance  
Live in harmony  
Walk in beauty"

I wish you all a joyous New Year.

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