



COVID-19

A tragedy and a gift

At a recent talk I was asked to share my reflections on the current global health crisis. My response was based on three separate but related ideas, all of which are simple. I have long been convinced that everything in life is simple and the events of the last few weeks have affirmed and strengthened this.

THE CATALYST – SOMETHING NEEDED TO HAPPEN

The first point is that something needed to happen. Over the last few decades, wise people from many different backgrounds have been telling us that we cannot sustain life as it is. Some people might argue that we've been warned that for thousands of years; Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad all told us that we needed to have a change of heart. Unfortunately, most of us have ignored these repeated messages and have carried on in the same old ways and in the same old structures.

So, something needed to happen; it could have been anything. The Covid-19 virus was just one possibility. The sole purpose of what is happening is to get our attention. It's a wake-up call. It's not a punishment, it's not retribution, it's actually a gift. It's the universe saying to us: take stock of this and have a look at what is actually going on.

There's a huge collective denial around the way we are living. If I was going to bet what the world would look like twelve months from now, rather sadly, I think it will look pretty much the same. All our energy and resources will be going into the financial repair and rebuilding. We will try to carry on as usual. If that's what we do, then the next message will be significantly louder and significantly stronger.



IT'S A WAKE-UP CALL.

**IT'S NOT A PUNISHMENT, IT'S NOT
RETRIBUTION, IT'S ACTUALLY A GIFT.**

FEAR AND GRIEF

In essence, the virus is about fear and grief. The fear is on three levels; individual, collective and ancestral – we inherit the ancestral fear that’s unresolved. It’s really important to acknowledge that all three levels of fear existed before anyone had heard of coronavirus. Twelve months ago, we were all living our lives with fear and this fear is now looking to latch onto something.

If we want to do something positive, then one of the things that we can do is to go through an inner process. I’ve spent time looking at my life over the last few weeks. I’m 64, so I literally reflected on every year of my life to see how much unresolved fear there was. Then I examined my current life to see what decisions and what actions I’m taking from fear. I guarantee that if you really do this honestly and diligently, you will find a lot of fear. Everything we fear individually, we also fear in the collective.

We need to begin to acknowledge our grief. What we have done to each other and to the planet. But this comes with a warning; people have a tendency to get stuck in the grief or get attached to it, particularly with a close loved one. Of course, its incredibly sad, people are dying and that brings up grief, but we need to process the grief and move through it so that we heal it and leave it behind.



WE NEED TO PROCESS THE GRIEF AND MOVE THROUGH IT SO THAT WE HEAL IT AND LEAVE IT BEHIND.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

As a species we have evolved looking for something to fulfil us from the outside. All our energy has developed in terms of doing, in terms of effort and in terms of achievement. The reason for this is that we want to find something that will fill the emptiness inside to give us a sense of fulfilment. I don’t care if you’ve got 800 million or 2 billion dollars, 8 gold medals or 4 best sellers, if all your energy is going into the outer world then you will never be fulfilled. It never lands. You just keep moving onto the next thing. The stark reality is that your husband cannot make you happy, your wife cannot make you happy, even your children cannot make you happy. If your happiness or fulfilment is based on anything outside yourself, you are going to be miserable.

One of the effects of what is happening is that it has put us all in the position of stopping and pausing, of having a lot of reflection time. We need to stop, we need to pause, we need to look inside, and we need to begin to rebalance.



WHEN YOU BEGIN TO WORK THROUGH THE GRIEF, YOU FIND THE POCKETS OF JOY.

FEAR – THE CONNECTING FACTOR

Connecting all these things is fear. Essentially, we have been running our lives and organising our lives based on fear. The best thing we can do for the collective is to begin to acknowledge our fear and to move beyond it. One of the things that I've been doing is to bring awareness to the fear. Without awareness there is nothing you can do about it. Yet awareness is not sufficient. Once you have the awareness of your fear, you need to make a decision. It's like an existential decision: am I serious about moving beyond this fear? When the fear arises and we want to make a decision or take an action based on fear, we need to have the discipline to choose something else.

Fear leads to disconnection. It's impossible to create intimacy or connection from fear and what we need in the world right now is far more connection. We now all have opportunities to create more connection with our loved ones and that's where it starts. If we don't learn the lessons from this crisis, the next event, which again will be a gift, will try to help us get back onto a path that is sustainable. Back onto a path that will give us a sense of fulfilment and a sense of joy. Otherwise, the price we pay for unresolved grief and fear is the absence of joy. When you begin to work through the grief you find the pockets of joy will arise spontaneously.

Q & A

Q: Can you give a few tips for how to manage fear?

We all have different stories, different origins and different fears. For me, the place to start is always in my marriage, in my relationship with my beloved, because that's a place where fear is going to come up. Fear creates the absence of intimacy, the absence of connection. Our current imposed isolation is creating huge friction. There is a lot of domestic abuse and there will be an increase in divorce. This is an opportunity to see that our words and actions, as well as our detachment is coming from fear. If we are prepared to move through that fear and connect more deeply with the ones in front of us, we will create breakthroughs in our lives. It is a very good place to start. I see this on a daily basis. If you look at the phenomenology of what's happened due to the virus, it's brought us all together into families. Families carry a lot of unresolved issues. We need to turn up in the present without the back stories or resentments. We need to try and jettison our fear and begin to connect on a deeper level. It's not easy or we'd all be doing it.

Q: As we are more connected to family, do you think this is a time when we should all be dealing with family issues, mis-communications?

Yes definitely. This virus has brought us all together into intense family groups. It's still fifty-fifty whether we use that opportunity to create more connection, or more disconnection. Some families and some individuals will become even more disconnected but the opportunity is there to work through any unresolved issues. Sometimes unresolved issues need to be talked through but a lot of the time, it's just a willingness to let go and just show up without the baggage. To let go of resentment and say, I'm here, you're here, let's just enjoy one another. It's possible, it's perfectly possible.

Q Building on that, do you have any tips on how to establish a safe space for those misunderstandings to be voiced/heard?

The most important thing, and unfortunately, it's the most difficult thing, is that when there is misunderstanding, or when there is hurt, or resentment, we think it's about the other person. We always think, she didn't do this, he didn't do that. But, it's never ever about the other person and that's a difficult thing to accept. The single most important thing is that although the other person might be doing certain things, it's the hurt in us, it's the feeling of rejection in us, it's the feeling of not being good enough in us that is causing us to either lash out and say something nasty, or to close down and detach. It's a very simple dynamic so the thing is to watch ourselves and take responsibility. Take responsibility for our feelings which are old feelings. They have very little to do with the person in front of you.

Q: It seems like a lot of what is happening is only feeding our disconnection, not just physical but emotional too. Any practical ways that you might suggest to reconnect?

Yes, reconnect with yourself. Look at your fear, look at your grief. It's very easy to sit back and say that it is other people who need to change. It has to start with us. Everything starts with the individual, so the way to connect more with myself is to connect more with my fear. To look at the fear and not to reject it, just move beyond it. Look at the grief and to really accept ourselves in a new way. To learn to love ourselves, the bits we think are good as well as the bits we think are bad. That's where the connection will come from. Instead of pretending it is not ours and projecting it onto other people.

Q: After adapting to this forced lockdown and finding more time for family & friends ourselves, how are we going to go back to our life/work, once the lockdown is over?

We set up so many false dichotomies. We think that we have to choose between outer success, outer achievements, outer financial security and inner fulfilment. This is a completely false choice. A lot of what I teach is that if you put the emphasis on inner fulfilment, if you continue to connect more with yourself and continue to connect more with your family, you will be more successful in the outer world. It sometimes doesn't feel like that. Sometimes we are confronted with choices between our business and our family. But if you put the priority in the place of love and fulfilment, the business side will take care of itself.

Q: Do you think children will be deeply affected by this period?

I think young people are already ahead of the curve on a lot of issues. If you look at the research on climate change and capitalism, it's young people that have a voice telling us that something is wrong, and that we need to change and they don't like the world that their parents are leaving to them. You can't generalise too much because they will all develop in different ways, but the next generation have the opportunity, the enthusiasm and the passion. They want to see a different world and they are the people that will create the world that is coming. Let's hope that their voice is heard more, that they get into places of influence and that they begin to create a different world. But they will still suffer from all the things that we do in terms of fear and grief, which is individual, collective and ancestral.

I look at this a lot from a biological, evolutionary perspective and what the human species is going through right now is an evolutionary shift. There have been major evolutionary

shifts before. For example, when the first creature stood upright for the first time, it was a completely different world they saw. It took three and a half million years for this to happen – change doesn't happen quickly. I don't know if this is going to take 50 years or five hundred years.

Q: Can you recommend some good books to read that have got you to this place of teacher and wizardry?

Yes, but they come with a warning. I spent two decades devouring books which I loved. But. I often say to people, if you met someone from another planet and you wanted to teach them about love and asked them to read the 20 most profound books about the topic, would it teach them anything about love? The answer is no. So, the best thing to do is to create connections, great connections – connect with yourself, connect with others, but if I had to pick three, they would be:

- 'The Four Sacred Secrets' by Preethaji and Krishnaji
- 'The Untethered Soul' by Michael Spencer
- 'The New Heaven, the New Earth' by Eckhart Tolle

Different books speak to different people, so it's important not to be prescriptive, not to be dogmatic – the books will find you. It's about experience, it's about living it.

Q: Have you any advice around having a baby at this time?

It's an interesting question. First of all, the soul that's coming in has chosen this time from a place of consciousness and it's about reassuring, soothing and communicating to the baby, even from the first trimester onwards. At the moment there are two positions in the world. On the one hand we can say the world has gone crazy. It's very fearful, lots of people are dying. Or we can say that the world is healing. Thank goodness that something has happened. We're changing, we're getting more in touch with our hearts. There are two completely different narratives and an awful lot in between.

I had a great friend who was born in 1943. She was Jewish and was in her fifties when I met her. All her life she had experienced this unspecified fear. This is because all through her pregnancy, her mother was terrified of bringing a new life into the world as part of the Jewish community in 1943. So as mothers, after 12 weeks the neural tube closes and the baby and the mother are living in exactly the same electromagnetic field. A mother's thoughts are a baby's thoughts. Not that a baby has a defined cognitive neo cortex but the sensation is the same.

Mothers have fears and joys but it's best just to be reassuring, as you would to anyone else. It's like golf, people who are good at golf spend four hours a day on a golf course. We need to practise being in our hearts and practising gratitude and practising love.

There is a philosophy that I came across many decades ago that believes that there are really only two energies. Fear and love. 95% of fear is an illusion. If there was a wild tiger in your room right now and it hadn't eaten for two weeks, a certain amount of fear would be healthy. But 95% of fear is an illusion and ultimately what this community says is that love is the only reality. I would say that in one sense, we are love, and in an evolutionary sense we are now finding our way back to the truth.