

The Art of Kintsugi

I was reading a travel blog recently which enlightened me to a practice I faintly recall seeing an example of in a museum as a child. As I mulled over the philosophy behind this art form I thought what a beautiful gift it would be to apply it to the cracks of our lives and not just to physical goods.

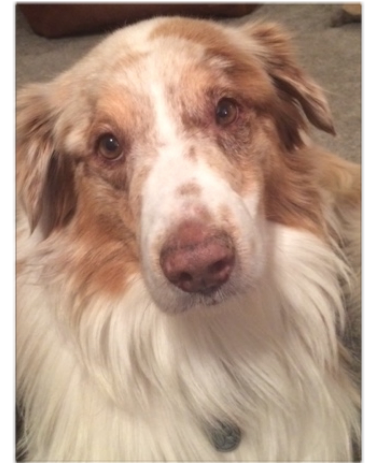
Kintsugi is a Japanese word meaning "golden joinery" or "golden repair". It is practiced as the art of repairing broken pottery by filling the cracks with a golden epoxy to create something entirely new, celebrated, and even more valuable. These mended and beautiful creations are cherished and are even stronger than the original pieces because of the framework of golden veins holding them together.



When recent events such as what happened in France a couple of weeks ago occur I think about our country pre-September 11, 2001 and how much has changed since. At the time, we generally went about our business, attending to our day-to-day lives, feeling secure in our own sense of safety within our nation. Extremist attacks only visible to the vast majority of us through highlights shown on the nightly news, and even then, happening only in far-away countries. Empathetic to the people who had to endure such difficult lives in those war-torn lands, of course... but the fear for our personal safety was not

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The love of a pet.



Murphy Sikora 2015

As most of you know I have worked with Punky for a long time, almost since he came into my life 13 years ago. Those of you currently seeing me are aware that Punky passed away in late October. This followed a very rapid decline from liver cancer. He was pretty much diagnosed one day, gone the next. As I've recommended to many others, I wrote a letter to Punky after he passed and given your relationship with him I thought I'd share part of it in the newsletter to commemorate him.

*You walked into my life unsought.
 You captured my heart in a moment.*

So swiftly, surely, unblinkingly.

A little fuzzy pooh with eyes

That warmed, snuggled in, said so confidently,

"You're mine. Take me home."

And I did.

You grew, you jumped, you ran.

You, dearest Punky, taught me searching is ok.

Laughter comes from simple actions.

Joy comes with love.

You also taught me, dearest Punky, love means terror for your safety,

Sacrifice at the most inconvenient of times.

Confidence it would all somehow work out.



*As my co-therapist you helped me to wait,
To slow down, move carefully.
Sometimes my clients grew not
From my actions or knowledge or words.
But from you. Your unconditional regard.
You often drew them out –
Helped them relax. Then let me work.
Protected.*

*I miss your gentle, soft kisses, my dear Punky.
Your tongue that licked so gently to say
“I love you” and “Good morning! Let’s go!!!”
You going up from floor to foot stool to couch.
One fluid movement.*

*Through you, Punky, my ability
To give love goes on.
Dearest boy, run pain free now.*

I want to thank so many of you who have been supportive to me, the therapist, over the past weeks. His work certainly was evident in the care and loss you have had, and know that is appreciated. However, please feel very free to process and talk with me if you have grief about him not being with us. That is normal, and I am able to be with you in your process as well.

While I’ll miss Punky, a new companion has joined me, Murphy. He is as calm as Punky was active. And he’s still adjusting to life here. He is about 1 ½ years and came from Aussie & Friends Rescue after being first lost and then abandoned following abuse. So he’s had a tough time, and he amazes me that after that all he wants is to love and love. Quite an example in resilience! He’s not a replacement, as any pet owner knows; but certainly he will warm my home and our therapy in the future – with Punky watching over his shoulder, I’m sure!

Dr. Beth

Recipes:

I don’t know about you but as the weather cools I start thinking soups, stews, and warm drinks in the evening.

Buffalo Sausage Stew: Here’s a tasty sounding recipe that is also gluten free. For those of you who aren’t too sure about the meat in it – try another type that works for you, like perhaps Aidells’ Cajun style andouille or Applegate farms chicken and apple sausage. Enjoy!

<http://glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.com/2008/01/buffalo-sausage-stew.html>

Change up the Coffee or Tea: I love the original Good Earth tea. But, given the fact they have come into today – the original is not something I can find. Instead, I do enjoy their Good Earth Sweet & Spicy Tea, available at local stores or at www.goodearth.com or at amazon.com.

What about coffee? Bon Appetit suggests adding sides that include nutmeg, maple syrup, or apple juice. Take a look at <http://www.bonappetit.com/drinks/article/fall-coffee-ideas> for their recipes.

Kintsugi (cont.)

not something that many of us had ever truly felt pre 9/11. Occasionally driving through areas of our cities that we deemed “unsafe”, walking through a dark parking garage, a noise awakening us from sleep in the night—those times may have been felt with a momentary fear, but nothing like what we felt in the wake of 9/11. Yet, throughout it all, we came together. Neighbors helped neighbors. Non-profits were formed seemingly instantly to put together a framework of help for those in need. One foot in front of the other, we made our way past that fateful day. A sense of pride to be an American was a new feeling for many of us where previously it had been taken for granted. Through tragedy, we became a stronger nation. Our cracks filling with golden threads. Our nation, once fragile, was now more connected, stronger, and in that process, more beautiful.

Each of us has gone through moments that we thought would break us. All of us individual and unique, those painful moments are different for every one of us. Whatever the tragedy, now that you are through it (if you are healed), I challenge you to think of just one thing that has come from it that has made you stronger, one lesson learned that has had an impact on your life. Perhaps a strengthening of some relationship that came as a result of an experience of undeniable pain. Admitting that there was something helpful or meaningful that came from this pain does not imply that you are glad to have gone through it. We are just looking for awareness of what life is now. This is an exercise in introspection, and through it, peace. A mental examination of our proverbial vessels and the cracks we have witnessed, a thorough inspection to see that we too have been filled with a few golden threads. A thing of beauty. Not intentionally created, but with time and wear, beautiful indeed.

Holiday Reminders:

This will be our last newsletter until January, so I thought a few reminders about self-care at the holidays might be important to everyone. Although there are many, many situations that can cause pain at holiday time, i.e.: loss of a loved one; difficulty due to being new in addiction recovery and surrounded by so much in alcohol, food, fill in the blank; divorce; a recent move; and a slew of other situations, it seems that many of the ways to make it through in the healthiest way are helpful for anyone. Just fine-tune them to your situation:

1. Think through what might be difficult for you this year. Identify what the triggers for pain or sadness or excess might be.
2. Make a plan for how to deal with those triggers. Then find a friend (or your therapist) and get some support in committing to your plan. Perhaps it is to make a completely new plan as what you’ve “always done” or the person or people you’ve “always been with” aren’t available or have moved on. Or, perhaps it is to focus on giving rather than receiving. Or, perhaps it is to spend time focusing on a child.
3. Be sure to plan in time for gratitude and thankfulness. Increase your gratitude awareness by committing to a gratitude journal through the first of the year. In this commit to writing down 3-5 things, people, situations, or experiences for which you’re grateful each day.
4. Decide now if you need to get away to be with someone for part of the time. If you’ve always celebrated with parents or a husband and they aren’t there, decide with whom you’d like to be and try to make that happen. Or, plan a trip to see someone else at some point this holiday season and make that your focus, not any specific holiday.
5. Plan a day alone. Yes, that’s right, alone. Slow down, relax, and go to a spa, take a day and drive leisurely to Prescott for the day, wander around, and come home that evening. Stay away from the mall!
6. Memorialize a loved one no longer with you. I was given an idea from Hospice of the Valley years ago and I do it each year for my parents. I create my own candle creation with 5 different candles on a plate and decorate it with various materials, i.e.: stones, silk flowers, glass pieces. Then I light the candles in memory of my folks and for each candle consider one of the following: grief, courage, their memory, love, and hope. If you want more details on this please let me know and I’ll be glad to share the entire exercise with you. This can also be meaningful to do with a spouse, significant other, friend, or family member.
7. Plan some fun! What do you enjoy most? Listening to music – find a music performance and go to it. Playing games – plan a game night. Reading – make it a priority for 15 minutes each day. Talking with a friend – spend time on the phone or get together for coffee.
8. Finally, keep taking care of yourself in small ways throughout the rest of 2015 and as you move into 2016.

And remember, please, a wonderful quote from Julian of Norwich from the 1300’s that still applies today: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well”. Until next year, be well.

Holiday & Growth Resources:

Read:

All Will be Well (30 days with a spiritual teacher) - <http://www.amazon.com/Will-Well-Great-Spiritual-Teacher/dp/1594711518>

Grief and the Holidays: Dealing with the Pain – article at <http://grief.com/grief-the-holidays/>

Meditation and Relaxation in Plain English by Bob Sharples - http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0861712862?ref=cm_lmf_tit_2

Watch:

The New World or *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* during Thanksgiving; *Elf* or *It's a Wonderful Life* near Christmas, *Fiddler on the Roof* or *Lights: The Miracle of Chanukah* during Hanukkah, and *After the Thin Man* or *Bridget Jones Diary* or any movie that is inspirational for you as you begin 2016 for New Year's Eve or Day.

Listen:

The Most Relaxing Classical Music in the Universe at http://www.amazon.com/Most-Relaxing-Classical-Music-Universe/dp/B00008RH16/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1446515409&sr=8-5&keywords=music+to+calm or *Winter Solstice Solo Piano: Relaxing Piano Music to Calm, Relief of Stress, and Deep Sleep* at http://www.amazon.com/Winter-Solstice-Solo-Piano-Relaxing/dp/B00M907R60/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1446515491&sr=8-2&keywords=holiday+music+to+calm



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Did you know I have a website?

www.thewholenessinstitute.com

And a blog...

<https://thewholenessinstitute.wordpress.com/>

I am also on social media!

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/BethSikoraPhd>

Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.com/bethsikora/>

Instagram:

account name: thewholenessinstitute

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<https://plus.google.com/112460066306008133466/posts>