

Waking Up with the Help of Others...

**“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”
– Buddha**

While on a flight home from visiting my daughter in Hawaii, I was scrolling through the film list to see what was available for viewing as my antiquated laptop booted up. I came across the PIXAR short film “Piper,” and decided to check it out. Over the six minutes and 26 seconds, I watched as a young sandpiper learned how to feed himself. It was a rude awakening for him when his mother gently refused to feed him the traditional way. Instead, she showed him how to forage clam meat for himself. Of course, the learning curve was fierce for this little piper – first trying to figure out where the clams were and then learning how to actually get to them. But the most daunting of tasks lay with figuring out how to dodge approaching waves. In his first encounter with a wave, the little sandpiper gets pummeled. Having no experience with one, he is engulfed by the water. Throughout the day, he repeatedly has the same experiences with the waves, unable to figure out what to do differently. By the end of the day, the little piper is cold and hungry. The next day, he is out at the beach again, trying his luck to get food. But this time, he has learned to fear the waves and runs into the sea kelp in order to avoid being hit by the impending surf. It becomes clear though that if he continues to run into the kelp every time the waves approach, he will go home hungry. But it is through his friendship with a little a hermit crab that he learns to do something different and ultimately resolve his problem with the waves: he learns to hold his breath and dive into the water, letting the waves pass over him. In turn, he teaches the other pipers how to do the same so that all share in the abundance of food.

I was in awe in what I had just watched in a few short minutes - it was a great way to illustrate what do-overs is all about. Life will constantly give us opportunities to learn something and do it differently; we need only be aware that the opportunity is presenting itself. But many times, like the little piper, the situation may seem so challenging and overwhelming that we can't see our way through it. Sometimes we freeze or are paralyzed to do anything other than what we've done before...we become stuck with a familiar pattern.

Yet, somehow, when we manage to wake up and take courage to step towards the different, the proverbial next question to answer is “*where to?*” It can seem daunting to calculate direction when you're already lost, and oftentimes, we believe that we're meant to go it alone. So, we avoid reaching out to others, thinking that we are failures for not knowing the way. We presuppose that we are meant to take this journey in isolation, but that is a misnomer. It is a reflection of a culture that values individuality and separateness over interdependence, a cultural norm that is out of sync with our true nature as human beings: our inherent connection to one another.

Our connection to others is what helps us see the untried path

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge how many people in my life helped shaped the ideas for this book. They are family members, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. They are often the mirrors to

our souls showing us what we cannot or refuse to see at the time. They give witness to what we do and if we stay open, they can help us pause and find our way back to ourselves.

Ten years later – it's 2017. I am sitting in a car with my newfound friend Carlos. He is recently separated from his wife, and I am listening to his plans in starting a new life for himself. He is telling me about his past relationships, how things started and ended, what he did next...I'm listening to him tell me how he plans to move to another state.

"Oh, that sounds familiar," I think to myself, "he just told me how he moved after this relationship ended, and then moved after that relationship ended... and yet again, moved after another. Hhhmmm."

I continue to listen.

When he is done, he asks me, "So, what do you think?"

I gently tell him what I have I heard. "Carlos, it sounds like you're repeating your patterns all over again."

The look on his face tells me he didn't care for my response. Later on, during a phone conversation, he tells me "I know you don't think that I listen to you, but that day when you told me 'you're repeating your patterns,' that stuck...that stuck with me." For him, it was an a-hah moment, it was his wake-up call. I was merely reflecting back to him what I heard, but it was enough for him to hear so that he could wake up to a dominant pattern in his life.

When we keep the heart open, we allow the universe to give us feedback. Sometimes it comes from within, from the depths of our soul... at other times, it is in the song of the wind. But most of the time, it comes in the form of people – people who just happen to be present when we need them most.