

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 NEWSLETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

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CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING

William Timpson, Del Benson and Lloyd Thomas
Fort Collins Rotary Club
Jim Halderman, Rotary District 5450
Dayna Larson, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Fort Collins

NOTE: Dayna Larson will speak to our Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship

Wed. April 7 from 1:30-2:30 MDT.

All are invited. Share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/494943309?pwd=SmtTUDYzTlZrcVBhblVLRmdvbVh6dz09>

In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to educate others by promoting the foundational skills for promoting sustainable peace and civility, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties among people in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of their people, their economies and their environments. In this issue we focus on the ideas and skills that can help us better deal with healing from conflict using cross cultural wisdom. Visit our blog and comment if you wish:

www.rotarypeacebuilder.com

CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH AND RECOVERY FROM WAR

William Timpson, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University in its School of Education and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club. He can be reached at william.timpson@colostate.edu.

The following “tip” is adapted from a book of ideas that an international group of scholars collected for teachers, students, community members and organizational leaders to use when promoting sustainable peacebuilding: Timpson, W., E. Brantmeier, N. Kees, T. Cavanagh, C. McGlynn and E. Ndura-Ouédraogo (2009) *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Peace and Reconciliation*. Madison, WI: Atwood, 143-144). Cross-cultural understandings can challenge and broaden our thinking, especially about the impact of war and violence on societal and environmental health.

Dean Nelson is a combat veteran who now refers to himself as a “peacenik.” He writes: “Although different peace symbols are used throughout the world, the meanings are typically the same, that is, the absence of war, strife and suffering, a nicer and gentler world free from fear. Several symbols seem to have near universal appeal, e.g., the white dove with an olive branch. Others may be associated more with a particular culture; e.g., the peace crane. Helping people learn more about the origins of these symbols can lead to valuable discoveries and rich discussions” (pp. 66-67). The Buddhist practice of *Tonglen* guides us in breathing in the horrors of events like the My Lai Massacre and breathing out positive thoughts of healing and peace.

In remembering the horrors of the atom bomb that the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima, Nelson found that the origin of the white dove as a symbol of peace has its roots in the Bible and the story of Noah's Ark. The olive branch in its bill signaled the end of the flood and God's forgiveness. The peace crane has its origins in post-World War Two Japan and the story of Sadako Sasaki and the thousand paper cranes. The following description can be found on the web site for the Children's Peace Monument in Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park:

Visitors to Peace Memorial Park see brightly colored paper cranes everywhere. These paper cranes come originally from the ancient Japanese tradition of origami or paper folding, but today they are known as a symbol of peace. They are folded as a wish for peace in many countries around the world. This connection between paper cranes and peace can be traced back to a young girl named Sadako Sasaki, who died of leukemia ten years after the atomic bombing.

Sadako was two years old when she was exposed to the A-bomb. She had no apparent injuries and grew into a strong and healthy girl. However, nine years later in the Fall when she was in the sixth grade of elementary school (1954), she suddenly developed signs of an illness.

In February the following year she was diagnosed with leukemia and was admitted to the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital. Believing that folding paper cranes would help her recover, she kept folding them to the end, but on October 25, 1955, after an eight-month struggle with the disease, she passed away.

Sadako's death triggered a campaign to build a monument to pray for world peace and the peaceful repose of the many children killed by the atomic bomb. The Children's Peace Monument that stands in Peace Park was built with funds donated from all over Japan. Later, this story spread to the world, and now, approximately 10 million cranes are offered each year before the Children's Peace Monument. (See City of Hiroshima (n.d.). Paper cranes and the Children's Peace Monument. Retrieved from <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/shimin/heiwa/crane.html>)

In this next essay on Traditional Chinese Medicine, ask if any of these concepts or practices could help in healing from war or an atomic attack as described above. What is the role of energy (qi)

EASTERN APPROACHES TO HEALING

Dr. Dayna Larson, DAOM, LAc., a licensed practitioner of traditional Chinese Medicine with a Doctorate of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (DAOM). He is a Colorado and California state board licensed Acupuncturist and Herbalist who has studied in China and Germany and is known for his ability to treat chronic pain, orthopedic and musculoskeletal injuries.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is widely practiced in Asia, throughout Europe, and is rapidly gaining popularity as a complementary approach to health in the United States. TCM is comprised of acupuncture, herbal medicine, and life cultivation. While studies behind the

science of TCM are still catching up, those treated by this practice of medicine have benefited from its efficacy for more than 2,000 years.

Acupuncture is a medical art based on the laws of nature and on the idea of energy channels, called meridians. These meridians are patterns that run through the body and are associated with the major internal organs and regulate energy flow. Acupuncture points follow these meridians; when an acupuncturist determines where in the body the energy (qi) is blocked, they use needles to reestablish the proper flow of qi. This will stimulate the body's natural ability to heal, harmonize the flow of qi and promote well-being.

Chinese herbal medicine works along the same principles with a deeper affect for change and brings the body into balance. Herbs are essential for resolution of disease. They bring significant changes through their medicinal qualities and work synergistically with the body. TCM believes that man lives in conjunction with nature and the universe and is inevitably influenced by the laws of nature. In the classical book called the Huang Di Nei Jing, it speaks of qi, referring to the basic element which constitutes everything in the world. Qi, essence, and spirit are the basic substances essential to living.

Essence in TCM is the basic material constituting and promoting the growth and development of the human body. It is divided into two aspects, congenital essence and acquired. Congenital essence is what is inherited from parents similarly to our genetic code that we inherit. Afterbirth is the acquired essence, which is derived from the food, the air we breathe and the way we conduct our life. Both types of essence can be transformed into each other and mutually they form the dynamic foundation of living. For example, it is believed that if essence is deficient, our vital health will decline, causing things like premature aging and susceptibility to disease. Qi is also an important substance constituting life.

The amount of qi determines the strength of the life force and the length of one's life span. The phenomena of the movement of qi is ascending, descending, coming-in and coming-out which are the basic functional activities of qi. Spirit is a general term for inward vital activities of the body and the outward manifestation of vital activities. It includes the mental, emotional, spiritual, subconsciousness, consciousness, movement, and perception. Sufficient qi and essence will contribute to a prosperous spirit and healthy body.

TCM is a science based on the summarization of the practical experience of thousands of years. It is a comprehensive academic system with health and longevity as its purpose. In TCM, life cultivation follows the patterns of natural changes. These natural changes are derived from the foundation of yin and yang.

Yin and yang by nature are opposing but complementary forces, this interconnection is a guideline to observing the material world. Under the guidance of TCM theories life cultivation is to achieve the purpose of conserving health, preventing disease, enhancing health, and prolonging life span by means of various healthcare measures. Embracing the rhythm of life with the laws of nature, harmonizing life within yin and yang, qi, essence, and spirit will contribute to living a healthy balanced long life.

References

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BENEFITS OF CHANGE

Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach with a long history of writing regular columns. He can be reached at ljtddat@aol.com

For the past year, most of us have been forced to make large changes in our lifestyles. The COVID-19 pandemic required that we practice new daily responses to it in order to stay healthy, respond to disease, cope with major losses, support the different adaptations of friends and loved ones, manage our stress levels more effectively and more personal changes. I have been pressed hard to identify the possible benefits to these changes. Nevertheless, I have discovered at least some of those benefits and share them with you today.

Someone once said, *“If you do not create change, change will create you.”* When we are confronted with circumstances over which we have no control, it becomes critically important that *we create* new ways of responding to them. The only thing we *can* control is how we respond to new and different circumstances. That is how we don’t become “victims of circumstance.”

Unfortunately, we are usually highly resistant to change. For instance, the process of aging is making changes in our bodies all the time. Nicole Saporita wrote in her article, *The Science of How Your Body Ages*, *“Aging is happening on a cellular level at every moment.”* We spend millions of dollars resisting aging by cosmetics, cosmetic surgery and various diets and exercise routines. Nevertheless, the changes brought about by aging continue.

Not only do our bodies continue changing, so do our brains. Neuroscientist, Dr. David Eagleman, has demonstrated that we are born with an “unfinished” brain and it takes a lifetime of experiences to “rewire” its functioning. He writes, *“our brains are rewriting themselves all the time.”* [<https://www.gettingsmart.com/2015/09/we-are-wired-to-learn-change-and-engage-the-brain-with-dr-david-eagleman/>]. That “rewriting” we call “learning” or “adapting” and that is one dramatic change we value...even promote. Benjamin Franklin wrote, *“When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.”*

While it may be “normal” to resist change, such a “fixed mindset” may result in a failure to be prepared for the future and may even be dangerous. I am reminded of those who resist vaccinations, resist wearing masks during a pandemic, deny the truth of pain or painful events and maintain a “closed mind” to new and unfamiliar facts (truth). Rather than always resisting ongoing change, it seems that it would be beneficial to become what Amy Sargent calls *“an Agent of Change.”*

In her essay titled *Becoming an Agent of Change*, she wrote, *“A change agent is a person who initiates, promotes, and supports a new way of doing something, whether it’s the use of a new process, the adoption of a new structure or bringing about the transformation of an old way to a new one. In business, some are given this title to bring about the necessary change within an organization, whether it be in management processes or structure or a shift in the business model.”*

But whether or not it's in your job title, in some form or another, we all are called to be agents of change.” (Institute for Social and Emotional Intelligence, January 21, 2021)

So what benefits can be derived from becoming your own personal agent of change?

Here are but a few:

- Change helps avoid stagnation
- Change forces us out of comfort zones
- Change introduces adventure
- Change conserves energy (it takes more energy to fight change than to embrace it)
- Change brings about learning
- Change enables you to see possibilities
- Change provides fresh opportunities
- Change forces you to move in a new direction
- Change can help you overcome fears
- Change is a harbinger of possibilities

[<https://www.allankarl.com/everything-must-change%E2%80%A620-reasons-why-change-is-good/?>]

While we all cope with this pandemic and its consequences, I hope you will reap some of the above benefits of becoming your personal change agent and enjoy the process.

HUMANS AND NATURE ARE INTERDEPENDENT AND INTRA-DEPENDENT

***Del Benson**, Ph.D. is a Professor and wildlife specialist for Extension at Colorado State University. His work is with wildlife and recreation enterprises on private land, conservation education, hunter attitudes and behavior, public input to resource management decision making and campus environmental management. He can be reached at Delwin.Benson@ColoState.EDU*

My writing job in the PeaceBuilding newsletter is to bridge perspectives with humans and nature. Can we learn important “cultural perspective” lessons to interact with each other and with nature?

Are species, races, or populations of animals similar or different from humans? Each of the same group of animals tend to interact socially and ecologically with others of the same species, race, or population. Animals within these groups are in a state of harmony except that they still compete for space, breeding partners, food resources, and a social order that enables them to live in harmony most of the time. They leave the group at other times in search of new experiences with the same species, race, or social units.

In simplest terms, animals from single-celled to blue whales are programmed genetically and socially to eat or live upon other species (plants and animals) or they are the ones eaten or used for life. In complex terms, animals are part of interdependent and interconnected communities arranged in complex food chains and food webs where diversity from soils and waters, plants, and all forms of animals help to make the system more fit for survival. Species with limited scope of needs are more easily reduced in the ecosystem compared to those that are resilient and adaptive. The niche or ecological role of each animal species, race, or population has values for others in the system. Humans might be slow to understand values of all groups, but that does not mean that they do not exist.

Nature provides a “balance” only because of its interconnectedness. Nature’s way is not always nice, humane, or loving as we hope humans should be. In the wild, lions eat lambs and elephants frighten other animals from water holes. When social posturing or biological defense mechanisms do not solve disputes, then aggression might.

Humans should know better than to fight before discourse, but centuries of human cultural interactions remember more about failures than positive interactions that led to successes. Recently, Royal Family Feuds in England provide examples of disputes that should be solved within the family but were elevated into public view. Perhaps family discussions were not working and new strategies became necessary. What seems dysfunctional in human terms might be how the natural world would behave.

I recommend not rationalizing and using human behaviors based upon “animal instincts” as the first line of action. Human behaviors should be more constructive. Humans need to try harder.

Engage family members, work associates, friends, and even “enemies” in thoughtful and constructive approaches. Humans often fail to be positive and to put their interests directly into the discussion because there are risks. Humans opt out fearing failure, rejection, repression, anger, aggression, or at the minimum, uncertainty with the outcomes. Human health and adaptations suffer when difficult discussions are bypassed. The unfortunate alternatives are avoidance, gossip, media publicity, legal actions, or fighting that substitute for empathy, dialog, understanding, and cooperation.

Getting to empathy, dialogue, understanding, and cooperation is a path that you must create and follow. **The Rotary 4-Way test can help you to think, say and do better with each encounter: Is it the Truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?**

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF OUR WORDS

Jim Halderman teaches court ordered, private, and prison-oriented anger management and communication skills. A Rotarian of 29 years he is a Past District Governor, district peace committee chair, and ombudsman for District 5450. He can be reached at jimspeaker@comcast.net

“She plays like a man.” This was a typical compliment given a great female pianist in the 70s & 80s. In the 70s I had the pleasure of playing with the Phoenix Symphony and was, most likely, guilty of making such a “compliment.” This type of comment is referred to as a microaggression, a subtle, often unintentional form of prejudice. It was assumed by those expressing such a comment that, generally, a woman did not have the strength to play powerfully. It was intended as a compliment yet negated the natural talent of the female concert pianist.

Perhaps you have asked a third generation Asian “what country are you from” or held your purse a little tighter walking by an individual of color. Maybe it was an ethnic joke we grew up with but no longer works. Microaggressions play off stigmatized beliefs, whether race, ethnicity, gender, rural/urban. They typically are given in a positive manner with underlying prejudice.

I know of no one that describes it better than Norma Johnson, healer, poet/writer, and speaker, as illustrated by her great verse: *A Poem For My White Friends*. It follows.

*I Didn't Tell You
 I didn't tell you about my real life
 The one that haunts me most days
 It comes in moments at a time
 Triggered by a look,
 an attitude,
 a sense of superiority,
 a blatant ignorance,
 of good meaning intention
 dripping crap down my face.*

I didn't tell you about the look they gave me when I opened my door and they saw black me standing there...Their mouths agape, their thoughts running loudly thru my head.

I didn't tell you about being followed thru the store and how I obediently kept my hands and my bag in plain site.

I didn't tell you how quickly they look away when I catch them staring at me in the restaurant and standing in the supermarket line.

I didn't tell you how the clerk pretended the white woman had been standing at the counter before I had and waited on her first.

I didn't tell you how I have to take a really deep long breath every time before I walk into a room full of white people.

I didn't tell you that in the meeting, the classroom and the workshop, when the subject of diversity comes up, they all look to me as if I am the spokesperson for the whole nation of people of color.

I didn't tell you that when diversity is mentioned and needs to be, I'm too often the one who has to point it out.

I didn't tell you how many times white people say to me in one way or another, You're different, because they felt comfortable with me and that didn't fit their mold of what they figured a black person was like.

I didn't tell you how disappointed that white man was when, after eagerly questioning me, found out that I was not the exotic Nubian he had fantasized, but just another negro girl from New Jersey.

I didn't tell you about the white woman, a stranger who chose out of all the white people around us, to sit next to me and proceed to tell me about her favorite black performers and black friends and how this country needs to take integration to the next level so I could see how her life is an example of that.

I didn't tell you about the anger I stuffed down when that dreadlocked young white boy gave me a high five and called me "sistah".

I didn't tell you about the white woman I passed at twilight in the park, who tensed her body, tightened her grip on her purse and walked a large curved detour past me.

I didn't tell you that my stomach clenches when I see a police car because it means I may not be safe.

I didn't tell you that your world is not mine and that we are virtual worlds apart.

I didn't tell you that while you can somehow think of yourself as multi-ethnically expansive because you have a Black friend, I meanwhile just still...stay...black.

I didn't tell you that while you can walk boldly into a place you choose, I always have to consider where I am, who I'm with, and how I'm going to affect people.

I didn't tell you how your liberalism chokes me sometimes as you sit in judgment of someone you don't even know.

I didn't tell you that being a good person and being clueless can come in the same package.

I didn't tell you about the comments you made that would take a lifetime of explaining how you've bought into the system that keeps us ALL, ...in...our...place.

I didn't tell you about my day because I had been taught not to and you have been taught not to even consider it.

I didn't tell you about my day because then I would have to live it all over again...and I have to save that for tomorrow.

PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>. If you would like to respond to one of the pieces in this newsletter, check out our blog www.rotarypeacebuilder.com and join the conversation! If you would like to contribute to a future newsletter, visit www.rotarypeacebuilder.com/submit/. You can find some of our past issues at the Rotary District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>. Future issues may explore the following: May 2021 Hate, Violence, Reconciliation and Healing (Mumme); June 2021 Cross Cultural Understanding and Communication (Aoki); July 2021 Truth and Fact Checking (Meroney). If you have ideas for future topics, please send them to any of our writers.