



Haiku by Sue

If storm clouds gather
Hearts often lift when seeing
One tiny sunbeam

Brilliance and darkness
Full moon veiled in cloud cover
Metaphor for life

Quotes I find Comforting

I can do all things through
Christ who strengthens me.
--Philippians 4:13

Bidden or not bidden, God
is present.
--Carl G. Jung

All shall be well, and all shall
be well, and all manner of things
shall be well.
--Dame Julian of Norwich

My religion is kindness.
--The Dalai Lama

Live gently with yourself
and others.
--Sue

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Dear Friends,

This is a "from the trenches" MuseLetter about the importance of finding the joy amid the shadows of sorrow.

Our forty-three year old daughter (my stepdaughter, Lynn, whom I have loved since she was seven) has breast cancer. From the joy of having all four children—plus grandchildren, a spouse, and significant other—with us for Christmas, Lynn and all of us who love and support her, segued directly into the sorrow of biopsy, diagnosis, surgery, and the knowledge of treatments to come.

Joy? You've Got to Be Kidding! Why? How?

Why Find Joy?

It's important to find joy in the midst of all circumstances because *joy is healthy*. Joy buoys and illuminates body, mind, and spirit. Joy is light, and light is healing. Light—sunlight being the most obvious example—is essential for the health and flowering of all good and beautiful things.

Please know I'm not talking about Pollyanna, candy-a-rotten apple, or denial/pretend joy. No way. Some things simply suck, and Lynn's illness is one of them. The joy I'm talking about can be found by mindfully turning toward the light while simultaneously acknowledging and accepting any fear and sorrow that may be within and around us. Not an easy challenge but definitely an important one to tackle.

What is Joy?

I didn't like most of the definitions of joy I read because they hinged on feelings of happiness. So, I created one that resonates with my heart.

To me, joy is more an *attitude of mind and heart* than it is a feeling. A good way to cultivate a joyful attitude is to consciously notice, appreciate, and feel gratitude for all tiny, or brilliant, rays of sunshine along the way. Of course feelings of happiness, wellbeing, love, and warmth may accompany joyful moments. However, sometimes our hearts and minds can *know* joy even when all we can *feel* in the moment is sorrow.

How to Find Joy in Sorrow?

Everyone finds joy in his or her own unique way and, of course, I don't know the best way for you to do so. All I can do is share a few ways that are helping me find joy right now. For example, as my husband, Gene, and I left Lynn and Shawn's house the other night saddened and shell-shocked by the latest pathology report, we consciously made an effort to notice and comment on the exquisite sunset spreading over the mountains. We accentuated the positive by underscoring how healthy and strong Lynn is, and how amazingly well she is recovering from surgery. We shared our gratitude to be living close by and able to be a part of her extensive support team. We reiterated, for the umpteenth time, how thankful we are to have each other. We cheered at our grandson's basketball game and basked in our little dog, Lily's, welcome when we got home. And, we also cried together...

Accept What Is

One of the best "how's" I know for finding joy in the midst of sorrow is *accepting* the reality of what *is* without resisting or wishing for what *isn't*. Along with accepting situations and circumstances, it's vital to accept our own feelings and responses as well.

Resistance magnifies pain. Resistance shuts us down and closes us up. Resistance can trap us in a never-ending loop of pain, regret, resentment, self-pity, depression, anxiety, ad infinitum... On the other hand, accepting reality opens our hearts and minds to a modicum of peace and the ability to love and be loved.

Accepting the feelings sorrow stirs up, allows them to "move on down the road." Even if the reality you are stuck in *is* resistance, gently accept that too!

- * Resistance promotes "stuckness."
- * Acceptance encourages progress, growth, and healing.
- * Resistance closes.
- * Acceptance opens.
- * Resistance imprisons.
- * Acceptance frees.

Awareness, appreciation, and gratitude are more easily noticed by open hearts and minds.

Ask Your Angels

I firmly believe each one of us has Guardian and "Guide-ian" angels who are thrilled to come to our assistance whenever we call on them. I have a quirky visual of groups of angels congregated in a heavenly lounge (in sort of a reverse PBS *Upstairs, Downstairs* way) waiting for us to tug on the bell cord.

Even if it feels like wishful thinking, please try asking your angels for what you want and need, for both yourself and others. Very importantly, allow yourself to be aware of the comfort of angelic presence. Bask in it.

Act with Kindness and Patience

During difficult and stressful times, most of us run the gamut of emotions. Feelings such as vulnerability, anger, over-responsibility, exhaustion, helplessness, irritability—plus countless others—are natural.

Responding to our own, and others', feelings with kindness and patience allows each of us to remain open to love, learning, blessings, and joy. Kindness and patience invite connection with those whom we care about. Connection contains joy.

Accentuate the Positive

Open your eyes and heart to the positives within both the circumstances in your life and the people experiencing them. There are almost always positive behaviors and attitudes that can be respected and celebrated in both ourselves and others. Become aware of those attitudes and behaviors. Congratulate yourself and others on them. Highlighting positives lightens the energy of both people and circumstances.

Appreciate, with Gratitude, the Beautiful, Inspiring, and Blessed

Noticing even tiny wonderful stuff, and being grateful for it, etches uplifting feelings and attitudes into your consciousness and, as a result, elevates your spirit.

Dear ones, both known and yet-to-be-known, thank you for reading these musings. It has helped me to write them. May you consistently find joy in the midst of all life's various offerings.

May wellbeing bless your body
May peace quiet your mind
May courage lift your spirit
May love be your guiding light.

With love and gratitude,

