

Relationship

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The pain in my left shoulder blade felt like an ice pick stuck in my bones. It had been a reliable gauge of my stress level for years. I'd learned to use it as a reminder that other things existed in life besides the pressures of raising a family as a single mother and the amount of work necessary to provide a living for all of us. Then the children were gone, but my workstyle persisted: that is, I must do, **DO MORE, DO IT ALL!** I took all this with me, including the familiar ice pick in my shoulder blade, to a yoga weekend, featuring personalized yoga therapy sessions as well as meditations and yoga classes.

On the third day, my yoga therapist said it was time to "go for it". She held me in a pose that concentrated on my shoulders by pulling my arms back and supporting them there. She held them there far longer than I could have done myself, asking how it felt. It felt great!

After a while longer, the ice pick seemed to be digging deeper. It hurt, but it felt like something was happening, so I decided to stay with it. I breathed long and deep as I broke into a cold sweat. Her voice gradually grew fainter as I submerged into my own experience, until it was like a deep meditation. Suddenly I was a bird. Sitting on a high tree branch with two other birds, I had folded my wings and was sitting quietly. I could see the ground below, the sky above, and the tree tops of the shorter trees nearby.

As we sat together, one of the other birds lifted his wings and flew away, looking for food. The thought arose inside me, "I will not fly for food." I knew what those words meant, that hunger and need would no longer motivate me into my old pattern of incessant activity. I to sit with the other bird nearby.

Then a flock of birds flew by, and my neighbor joined them. The thought arose inside again, "I will not fly for company." I knew the deeper meaning was that I would no longer be driven by desire for companionship, through sex or simply social interaction. This could no longer drive me into the painful activity and lifestyle I had known so well. So I sat alone. I was content in my aloneness, yet something was incomplete.

Below me, a child ran into the dirt clearing at the base of my tree. He began to call up to me, making human sounds I could not understand. Two older children joined him, and the question arose, "Do I fly?" Inside was a solid and easy, "No, they are no threat. They are only curious."

The children laughed and called together until their adults came. The adults began to confer, and I realized they wanted to capture or kill me. They brought equipment, including nets and ropes. Still I would not fly. They threw stones, but I was too high and the stones could not reach me. There was no reason for me to fly, for I was safe.

Finally, someone arrived in a car and carried out rifles, which looked to me like long sticks. Yet I knew these sticks would smoke at the end and they could reach all the way up to me and kill me. Still the feeling inside persisted until it became words, "I will not fly for fear."

The adults talked, stalked, and finally aimed their guns. A few bullets whizzed by. I knew I could die. But more important to me was the knowing, "I will not fly for fear." Fear would no longer impel me in my life. But would I die?

I sat with that choice, willing to die rather than fly. After seemingly endless seconds ticked by, a voice spoke deep within me. It was a different voice than the thoughts and words I had before. It was a deep voice, God speaking within me, saying, "Fly. Because I made you." At that moment, I leapt into the air. With great joy, I soared to the tune of the impulse inside, "I fly because God made me! I fly because God made me!"

I soared over the trees, toward the horizon. I streaked faster across the top of mountains toward the sea. Powered by joy, I flew higher into the sky, headed home toward God. I knew I would never again feel trapped in the frenetic pace of life. I knew that I would now choose to do it all. Now I participate for the only reason worth living, "Because God Made Me!"

And my shoulder pain is gone.

Faxed to Arielle Ford, 454-3319 - for book on mystical experiences (Divina) 8 December, 1995