

Have you ever noticed that building inner wisdom requires you to embrace the light and the shadow sides of yourself? I have had moments of awakening sourced by positive and negative experiences, lessons and discoveries. It seems that as we open to qualities of being, those aspects of ourselves that we may consider strengths or weaknesses, we become receptive to the wisdom they have to impart.

Last month while doing research for a series of talks on inner wisdom, I became inspired by the light and shadow aspects of the quality of being called Wonder. It began with some passages in *We Are Not Alone*, by Rabbi Abraham Herschel where he says, “Wonder, rather than doubt is the root of knowledge.” This peaked my curiosity. I then checked out the definition of wonder and there it was; a stellar example of the light of possibility and the shadow of doubt wrapped up in a curious little package. Webster's defines wonder as (1) “exciting, amazed admiration; rapt attention and astonishment at something awesomely mysterious or new” and (2) “a feeling of doubt or uncertainty”.

And with this clarity, I felt a shift in my awareness, an awakening to the moments when a quality like wonder arises and then can turn on itself, intent on shielding from risk. I was present to the state of “wonder”, an open portal to the Most High, a time when new ideas and concepts can emerge in our human consciousness.

Have you had a similar experience? Have you ever, out of the corner of your mind's eye, caught a glimpse of who you might be if you reached more fully your potential? A moment perhaps when

you saw an image of yourself with skills, talents and poise that you never realized were possible? Did it take your breath away? Then did it scare the heck out of you?

These are moments akin to what Rabbi Herschel refers to as “radical amazement”. Here too we enter a state of “wonder”, only this is its shadow side expression. It is a place where we are so knocked off balance that what we think we know about the world isn't necessarily so, in that instant. For instance, I remember the moment when, with crystalline clarity, I saw that I was supposed to go to ministerial school. It was a moment of wonder. Until...doubt took me by one arm and fear took me by the other and dragged me off and made me eat cheesecake. Highjacked by my doubt and fear, I put off answering that call for years.

So how can we deal with the shadow side of wonder... better known as doubt? How do we strengthen our ability to remain present when we glimpse our greatness and embrace the moments, when we are face-to-face with our own Higher Being?

Perhaps we consider treating doubt like an advisor or an auditor, someone who comes in to give us a little reality check, but not one that we should entrust with the keys to the vault. Why make “Mr. Doubt” the CEO of the corporation, when in fact, what he does best is audit the books and provide an objective assessment of the situation in a given moment.

When we remember that Wonder is the root of knowledge, not doubt, not reason, we regain the keys to our own inner wisdom. We become present to our light and are able to embrace the shadow side called doubt as resource that moves us toward our full potential.

What if we learned to cultivate this amazing quality of being? I wonder?

Try these WONDER cultivation practices for yourself. Embrace your INNER wisdom.

01

Incorporate wonder into your spiritual practice. Be open to moments of wonder; invite more wonder into your life by affirming it in your prayers. If you don't have a spiritual practice, adopt wonder as a meditation. Here is a quote from Ernest

Holmes, founder of Religious Science:
“This is the great mystery, the limitless wonder of the universe – that, which out of nothing, can make something.”

02

Rewrite Mr. Doubt's job description! Make sure he's auditing, not running the show. Pay attention and listen to what your doubt has to say, and then make your decisions about your life based on wonder.

03

Read poetry; listen to song lyrics. Word play is a great way to surprise our minds and surprise is a key element in wonder.

04

Pay attention to people and animals. This great mystery of life is playing hide-and-seek with us everywhere. Look for Spirit winking at you.

05

Resurrect wonder-filled moments of your life and make them sacred somehow. Put them on an inner altar where you can count them among your treasures.

06

Follow your curiosity. Spirit is calling to you through that which captures your imagination.

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