

The Dark Night of Awakening

Supporting ourselves and others during this powerful time of transformation

What is a dark night of awakening?

The language of the Soul is pure love, joy and happiness. When we are clear and open to the truth of who we are, we feel grateful to be alive, inspired, healthy, our relationships are in harmony and everything works out well for us. Sometimes, before we can know this to be true, we may need to first experience the opposite and go through a dark night of awakening.

Often, we may have had glimpses of feeling good, such as when we first fall in love or get something that we think will make us happy, and then something happens, and we suffer. While we believe that something outside of ourselves can bring us happiness, then we are not living from the fullness of our Soul. As our consciousness increases and our longing to become more deeply connected to our Source, old strategies of avoidance stop working, or the body gets sick, or a personal challenge threatens to shatter our carefully constructed veneer. The suffering can become an invitation, a gateway for self-enquiry and ultimately another step towards living a happier and more conscious life. Once we have decided to live more consciously and connect with our spiritual nature, the opportunities for dark nights of awakening increase. This may happen to you or your friends or loved ones and these notes are designed to support you during this bitter-sweet time.

In our modern western world, the dark night of awakening is rarely honoured or acknowledged for its beauty and power for transformation and freedom. Instead we may choose to stuff down the pain through over-eating, alcohol, drugs, or many of the other myriad of ways to ignore the ominous clouds of discontent.

There can be many mini 'dark nights' along the path, during which we investigate our issues and become more and more accepting of our past. And then often a more profound and prolonged invitation may be offered, and these 'long dark nights of awakening' can be seen to follow a pattern, passing through a number of distinct stages.

The First Stage

The dark nights can often begin after a major event that challenges everything we thought we were. The challenge may arise in many forms, an accident or an illness, an argument or an emotional difficulty, the loss of a loved one or even a profound spiritual experience of feeling so 'at one' with the universe that the person may not want to return to their 'human' life. This can be a very unsettling time as we seek to work out with our minds what is happening to us.

At this time, we may find ourselves or others blaming or being blamed for causing unhappiness. The truth is, and this may be very hard to accept right now, that there is nothing you can do or say to cause them to do or feel anything; we draw everything to us through our own Soul's longing for freedom. Everything we do, think and feel is our responsibility and ours alone to choose how we will respond. The more we grasp the truth of this the easier it will be to stay firm and centred.

Everything that upsets us is an indication that we are out of alignment with our Soul.

This can be a challenging place and it asks for considerable trust and courage. If you can feel peace in your core, love in your heart and a deep knowing that all is well, then this will be the greatest gift you can offer yourself or another Soul during their difficult time.

You may be blamed, hated, rumoured or maligned. Stay wide open and not take any of this personally. If you do then something has stuck, and here is an invitation for self-enquiry. This is a good time to seek out others who have experienced and grown through their own dark awakening. You will recognise them by their ability to inspire and up lift you.

The Descent

The descent begins when our sense of previously found happiness and relief evaporates and a dark, painful feeling smothers our being. I am reminded of the Harry Potter books and the dementors who suck out a person's happiness from their Soul.

This is a deeply painful and sometimes destructive phase. Your loved one or friend may angrily lash out and for awhile you may lose them. They may push you away and question all that you do or say.

This is the time to take nothing personally, and not to make decisions or take any action. Remember that there will be a wider picture, a purpose to this experience and in the pain, it is natural to contract.

If you are supporting another, know this for them, Open your mind and your being as wide as you can, trusting in the knowledge that everything is happening for a reason. Keep your distance energetically and physically if you can to avoid participating in the illusion by being drawn into a discussion or dialogue.

Open so wide that you can see the wider picture for them, and just know that you are witnessing a profound transformation. Once a Soul has made the decision to awaken, everything that is being experienced has been called into place, at a deeper level. It is not possible to work this out with the mind, and the solution will arise from the desire of the Soul, not from the problem. Trust, and more trust, and then even more to the point that you absolutely know all will be well. If it is you, then the same applies. Every day, look for things and experiences that support what you know from the deeper part of you. For example, new people may appear in your life who understand or have experienced something similar. You may be given a book or read an article that brings you hope, you may find your self releasing old emotional pain and feel the relief of finally letting it go, you may find yourself writing poetry or composing music or taking stock of your life and considering what you really want. Many of the world's best works of art have been written, composed or painted from this place.

Know, deep down, this is a special time, it will pass, and that you will not only survive but thrive again.

The Pain of Separation

The greatest gift you can give to a Soul who is experiencing such a pain of separation is to offer an unconditionally loving space. Each Soul has longed for this unconditional love, and we falsely believe that our parents, or our partners should give this to us; the pain of discovering that they couldn't and the blaming that followed may often have been the fuel for the fire of our spiritual journey.

To be able to offer an unconditionally loving space then becomes a huge gift, as the receiver discovers that there is nothing that they can do or say that can stop you loving them. You can see the truth; you are not touched by their pain.

This space will allow for the darkest corners to be exposed, for the worst fears to be met and the deepest most unpleasant aspects of who we think we are can be brought into the light.

This ancient spiritual practise is recognised in all indigenous cultures, but has been largely forgotten in our modern western world.

The Void

This is the space of disillusionment, of deep pain and the loss of trust & hope, and a feeling that all the searching, the spiritual understanding has been in vain. Nothing and no-one can be trusted, life may no longer be worth living, thoughts of 'I am a sham' or 'I cannot change' are accompanied by profound feelings of shame, unworthiness and hatred for self & others.

Continue to stand firm as this place signals the beginning of the end of the night. It is important to resist all desire to rescue, make better, justify or defend.

Stay wide open, keep loving energetically, give the other person space. Keep reassuring, staying very neutral, and own and watch any feeling that arise in you.

Know that this will soon pass. In this space, the deep recognition of the extent of the pain will draw them in. The body may get sick to ensure that the Soul has the time and space for the pain to be met.

The Gentle Light of Dawn

Just at the point when you feel that you can't hold this anymore, there will be a collapse of the illusion as the emotional pain begins to burn through the veils.

Encourage and reassure energetically, gently and unobtrusively. Stay deeply connected to Source as you continue to hold the loving embrace.

The Journey Home

As the gentle murmurings of understanding begin to seep into the person's awareness, you will notice how the mind stills, the body relaxes and relief begins to feel the space. You will both feel this!

This is a tender, gentle place; few words and no analysis are needed at this stage, just an understanding.

Continue to love unconditionally and energetically welcome them back. They will return to you in some way, although it may be in different form. The love between you will be anchored in Truth from their own Divine source, and your relationship with them will move into a deeply honouring place.

All need to blame or hold you responsible will fall away. They have woken up, rooted firmly in their own knowing of who they are. Once this happens, you will reflect this knowing back and forth and you will laugh and laugh and laugh!

Celebration

This is a time for honouring as you celebrate and acknowledge their awakening. The other person will feel a huge difference from the place where they began. This is a very authentic place, it brings a steady contentment, a seeping joy, a deep compassion & love and a detachment from suffering.

Receive their love and gratitude with the Grace of your knowing, aware of the privilege that it was for you, and acknowledge the strengthening of your own connection to Grace.

Just allow, and know that deep down our Souls would have put out a prayer for freedom; and our prayers always get answered, although not always in the way we expect!

Marion Howells March 2009