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## YOGA OFF THE MAT

**Eddie Weinstein-Moser**

### Once Wild

Some time last year, I found an object that I keep in my car to remind me of who I am. It is a fairy in flight with the words of Isadora Duncan inscribed on it: "You were once wild here. Don't let them tame you." She hangs from my rear view mirror lest I am tempted to forget.

She caught my attention today on the drive in to work. "What does it mean to be wild?" I mused. Different things to different people, obviously. Lately I have called into my life folks who walk a bit of a different path because they are unwilling to be tamed. They dance their passions in a manner that may raise eyebrows, but they have become my role models for going for a full, rich, juicy life. They range from a movie producer to an astrologer; from tantra teachers to spiritual mediums; from a 'bighearted lawyer' to a past life regressionist who witnesses people on their journey to freedom; from a man who laughs his visions into reality and shows others how to do the same; to two enterprising business women who educate and heal with their true to life t-shirts; from photographers who see with the heart's eye, firmly affixed to the camera lens; to one who is stepping out of his suit and tie businessman attire into purple and blue yoga wrap pants as he allows his inner healer to come out and play. From poets to yoga instructors and a person who recognizes and honors his true self regardless of form and appearance, and put a smile on my face this past Valentine's Day; and another who stretched his own comfort zones (and mine) this past weekend. From authors of books on manifesting your heart's desires to one on recognizing transcendent sexual experiences and yet another on acknowledging both the Divine and human Beloved. There are too many more to mention, but know that I honor all of them.

Although it may not seem possible to believe for those of you who have come into my life in the past 7 years, that once upon a time I was hesitant when it came to making decisions, filled with fear, timid, like a deer caught in the headlights. What changed all that was the need to rise to the occasion when my husband Michael became ill. I had to quickly strip off the shroud of lingering self-doubt. I didn't have the luxury of a negative thought. Once it became second nature, I was able to relax into the experience. With each new friendship, I felt nourished; absorbing the love and the inspiration that they shared with me. I saw that it was possible to live my dreams, fully and freely without, as Michael was fond of saying: "Looking over your shoulder to see if the propriety police were watching you." I found out that they really weren't even in the neighborhood, let alone focusing their attention on what I was up to.

Over the past few years, the desire to stretch even further was kindled within me. Multiple opportunities to 'be my bliss' present themselves daily, mostly because I invite them in. Lately, I have been questioning the fears that used to plague me and wondered about their origin. I had a conversation with my mother a few days ago. I had told her that even at 47, I still valued my parents' approval. I quoted something I recalled my parents telling me as I was growing up: "Don't do anything we'd be ashamed of.", juxtaposed with: "Anything you do will be good enough." She said in surprise: "We never told you not to do anything we would be ashamed of, but rather not to do anything *you* would be ashamed of."

All these years, I had been living with a misunderstood version and acted as if my parents should be the barometer of the validity and worthiness of my choices. Whoa! Big revelation there. If I can face the woman in the mirror each day and know that I am in integrity with my decisions, then I am living that innocence rather than shame. As a woman, I have struggled with this dichotomy of wanting to revel in my strengths and 'goddess energy' and simultaneously fearing it, all the while projecting that fear onto men I have drawn into my life. Naturally, the more comfortable I am with the energy, the more at ease they will be with it.

This past weekend, at a workshop in Maryland, I participated in a puja (a Hindu ritual that honors the Divine in each being present) and found myself face to face and heart to heart with a few men in the circle. Afterward, I commented that no one seemed overwhelmed and no one's head exploded. Later that evening, one man told me that he welcomed powerful women into his life and I felt honored by his expression of that statement.

My friend Naila sent this poem today that 'wrote' her and I share it with you since it resonates with my own experience of living wildly and with passion.

*I vibrate to the rhythm of joy  
Gladly accepting its sublime invitation to dance  
Twirling with the stars, spinning on the sun's golden beams  
Carrying laughter in my belly that rises up in exultation  
Triumphantly giddy in unleashing its fullness on the world  
Below, I tread on fields of endless possibility  
Above, the angels soar, all glitter and glory, in delight at my  
effervescence  
I vibrate to the rhythm of joy  
That casts my world in brilliant incandescence  
And I am bold in drawing beauty to my heart  
In weaving dreams so deliciously outrageous  
I taste their unfolding, like a sweetness on my tongue  
Yes, joy, joy and more joy  
I am soaking in it  
Reveling in it  
Expanding in its powerful presence  
Vibrating to the rhythm  
That is God expressing pure pleasure  
In the perfection of His creation.*

She said it was "Inspired by love and by my friend Shira's encouragement to live a "wondergasmic" existence."

I invite you to drink in the nectar of your own beautiful, wild self as you live your passion and purpose.

## Last Train Home

Round about eleven o'clock last night, before I headed for pillows and blanket, I was engaging in a pre-sleep ritual, listening to a radio show called "Echoes" on WXPN. The familiar, soothing tones of John Diliberto filled the airwaves. I had the pleasure of meeting John this past New Year's Eve at my friends Ed and Laura's home. It's really fun to connect with someone live and in-person when you have no clue what they look like, having only heard their voice for years. John Diliberto was playing a bunch of music that fit the theme of 'trains.'. One of my favorites is a composition by Pat Metheny called "Last Train Home". No lyrics, just instrumentals with soaring vocals at the end, riding on the wake of the express. John mentioned that he intended to play it, but before he could, I was immersed in dream land (crazy, powerful dreams...but not about trains). When the alarm went off, guess which song announced wake-up time?

Although I hear it fairly often, the last time that piece came serendipitously into my consciousness was nearly five years ago. My Aunt Sue was in the last hour or so of her life. My sister Jan had called me and said the hospice nurse was suggesting circling the wagons. I headed to their home in Willingboro, about an hour and a half from my nursing home job in Doylestown. I was about five minutes out and heard that song on the radio. My thought was "Ok, Aunt Sue, it's safe to get on the train now." Five minutes later, I pulled into their driveway and Uncle Jim met me at the door. "You just missed her," he informed me and then collapsed into a hug, tears filling his eyes at the loss of his sweetheart. "I know," was my reply.

This morning on the way to work my mother sadly told me that one of her dearest friends, Miriam, had died last night. She and my mom had known each other since their early 20s, when they met on the job. Miriam's drug of choice, like mine, was chocolate. They would laugh as they related stories of her being able to eat chocolate all day and never gain an ounce while my mother could look at chocolate and feel like she was gaining weight. Although we weren't related by blood, we certainly were family of choice and of the heart. She and her husband were 'Aunt Miriam and Uncle Dave' to us and we considered their son Brian our cousin. Christmas Eve was always celebrated at their Chester, PA, home. My sister and I wondered how Santa Claus knew to deliver gifts for two little Jewish girls to be placed under their tree and in stockings. As an adult, she and I bonded over spirituality. A devout Christian, she was delighted that I was interested in learning more about Jesus, even if I didn't see him in the same way that she did. She never pushed her beliefs on me, just shared her perspective. I hope that her vision of joining him in her death came to be.

My mother described that her Ft. Lauderdale condo is filled with reminders of Aunt Mir. Hand made items, gifts infused with love. The last few weeks of her life, were spent in the hospital as she lay dying of cancer. A long time smoker, she finally succumbed. Uncle Dave is likely to follow soon after since his voice has almost been completely taken by throat cancer; also at the mercy of tobacco.

This morning, even before I heard the news from my mother, I was looking around my room, taking in the beauty of the items given to me by my loving friends: cards, pictures, faeries, books, crystals, scarves, music, candles, and jewelry. Yesterday, my friend Peggy who had returned from a workshop with one of her favorite teachers named Dawna Markova, took something out of a bag and handed it to me. One of her classmates, an old friend, had given her a beautiful reversible hand made vest. Magic was stitched into it, I could feel it. Peggy is a little wisp of a woman, with the power of a sturdy oak and the flexibility and resilience of a willow. When she had tried on the vest, it was too big for her. She told her friend, "I know who to give it to when I get home." Now I am the grateful recipient.

What I remember, is that the train is always running, 24/7, headed for destination unknown. When it comes my turn to step on board, I know I will take with me scads of memories. I

remember writing the following piece when I was in seminary, training to be an interfaith minister. It is even more poignant seven years later.

"As we face the loss of someone we love, it causes us to ponder our own mortality. In my belief system, Death is like walking through a door into another state of consciousness in which all that we were becomes transmuted into light. An ideal illustration is the scene from the movie 'Ghost', in which Sam (played by Patrick Swayze) is given one last chance to say goodbye to his beloved Molly (Demi Moore). He is standing in exquisite spirals of illumination and as he reaches out to kiss her, he says, "Molly...all the love inside, you take it with you when you go." How then, can death be something to be feared when love accompanies us on our journey?"

## **Mom-isms**

When I think about all that I have learned from my mother, my head fills to overflowing with word soup...alphabet letters forming guidance. Selma Rose Hirsch Weinstein at 82 is every bit as wise and loving as was her mother Henrietta, a.k.a 'Giggie' (I couldn't pronounce grandmom as a little girl, so the name stuck), who I am told is my guardian angel. Never fully her own person, borrowing value and identity as 'Moish's wife' and 'Edie and Jan's mom'. I have reminded my mother over the years of her own worth. For my entire childhood, she worked, not only as a homemaker but doing part-time jobs that allowed her to be with us when we weren't in school. Sewing doll clothes, writing a local newspaper 'gossip column', gate guard at the local pool in the summer, switchboard operator at Sears, until we were old enough to be home alone. Swim team car pool driver during our adolescence, she suffered through the bizarre aroma of wet bodies, chlorine, and vending machine Fritos that we munched on throughout the station wagon ride home. Even the memory makes her cringe now.

One of my mom's strengths is what she calls her 'broad shoulders'. She is one of the best listeners I know and welcomes people to share their stories; both their celebrations and sorrows. She also has the capacity to handle any crisis, "and then I fall apart," she has smile ruefully. I hope that I have inherited those abilities from her. Perhaps they were the seeds planted that led to my career as a 'privileged listener', along with bar tenders, cab drivers and hair dressers.

Over the years, she has offered the typical mom-isms. As a child, when I would ask her how to spell a word, she would say, "Look it up in the dictionary." I would sigh, roll my eyes and tell her that if I could do that, then I wouldn't have to ask her how to spell it in the first place. Still, I dutifully went to the well used book. She nourished my love of reading by taking us to the library for story hour and by having us read to her every chance we got. Dr. Seuss, Highlights Magazine, Little Golden Books, cereal boxes, newspapers, phone books – she didn't care as long as we read. When high school relationships ended, she would comfort me with the reminder that "there are other fish in the sea." When I broke up with one boyfriend, he turned to her for solace, asking her to convince me to change my mind. Sadly, she wasn't that persuasive.

One of the best pieces of advice she gave, wrapped in solid gold, was: "Walk in like you own the joint." What might that look like? Head held high, breathing comfortably, easy stride. Whenever I am tempted to feel intimidated by anyone, that gives me confidence.

Long distance to Florida calls are a daily occurrence...thank goodness for our within-cellphone system plan. :) Just a five minute check-in and our days begin. These days, the subject matter focuses on weather comparisons, doctor visits and my dad's progress with getting back on his feet in recovery from hip surgery, Parkinsons and arthritis. She is no less a good listener as she 'kvells' (Yiddish for taking pride in a loved one's joys) over adventures I share with her. Thinking that some of my left of center activities are a bit 'meshuggenah' (crazy), and she wouldn't

engage in them, still she says it's fine if I'm happy about them. Today she told me that she has stopped teaching her 'Stretch with Selma' class, which she offered for years at their town center. Her energy level has diminished and she finds that just walking and stretching at home, swimming and helping my dad with his care, is exercise enough. The end of an era. I see my parents in a different light now, somewhere between frail and strong. Now I'm the mom (sometimes even to my parents), the broad shoulders, the fixer upper, the one who kisses it and makes it better, to the best of my ability, as she modeled for me and my grandmother modeled for her. Often we don't say these kinds of things until someone has passed. I choose not to wait until that day that is hopefully long into the future. I want my mother?? to know this now, thus this lengthy tribute. She personifies the words to a treasured childhood song "Nature Boy"; the chorus of which still gives me God-bumps: "the greatest thing you'll ever learn, is just to love and be loved in return."

**Rev. Edie Weinstein-Moser** is a writer, speaker, interfaith minister, clown and reiki master. Her work is in being a way-shower, encouraging people to 'be their bliss'.

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