



Notes & Quotes from Dawn

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Aging's not for sissies

The first time I heard that quote (before I saw it on a bumper sticker) was a number of years ago in a care facility where I was conducting a weekend workshop. Walking down a hallway, I passed a stooped, determined elder moving along fairly rapidly in the other direction, aided by the rail attached to the wall. Looking at me, she declared in a sermon-like voice, "Aging is not for sissies!" Decades later, keenly aware of my own aging process as well as that particular evolution among close friends, along with a heightened awareness of the unpredictability of all our lives on multiple, concentric levels, the phrase has hit home. If we are lucky, aging is inevitable. It brings changes and challenges for most of us along with new lessons to be learned. Patience, with ourselves and with others, becomes essential.

To be loved is to be recognized as existing. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Among my memories from a memorial service for a family member some years ago is one in which I greeted an aging gentlemen whom I'd met only briefly in the past. "It's good to see you again," I said, shaking his hand. Smiling, he responded "It's good to be seen!" American society is one that has long idolized youth and youth culture. As a result, invisibility often becomes an issue for older adults, particularly for women it seems in our youth obsessed culture. I have observed this occurrence a number of times, in the lobbies and hallways of care facilities, and I have experienced it myself more recently, especially in restrooms full of teenagers.

... only by owning who and what you are can you start to step into the fullness of life. Every year should be teaching us all something valuable ~ Oprah Winfrey



As I write this our youngest daughter and her wife are preparing to help their thirteen-year old Bluenose pit (mostly Staffordshire Bull Terrier mix) out of her aging and weary body. This great loving and lovable, Boddhisatva being appeared after being abandoned on a street shortly after giving birth to puppies, before she and our daughter rescued each other. Many of us have had to make the tough decision, which only tears and time can heal, to let go of a canine and/or feline companion in order to relieve their pain, although it always seems too soon. A cousin of mine, familiar with letting go of beloved canine companions sent the story below (edited).

A Veterinarian, I was called to examine a ten year old Irish Wolfhound named Belker. The dog's human family, a married couple and their little boy, were all very attached to Belker and hoping for a miracle. After my exam I had to tell them there would be no miracles and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure in their home. The couple told me they thought it would be good for their four year old son to observe the procedure as they felt he might learn something from the experience. The next day, I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker's family surrounded him. The son seemed so calm petting their old dog for the last time that I wondered if he fully understood what was going on. He seemed to accept Belker's transition without difficulty or confusion. We sat together for a while after Belker's death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that the lives of dogs are generally much shorter than those of humans. The young son, who had been listening quietly, piped up, "I know why." Startled, we all turned to him. "People are born so they can learn how to live a good life, how to love everybody all the time...right? Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long."



Thought subsides when you pet your dog or have a purring cat on your chest...watching an animal closely can take you to the present moment, which is where the animal lives all the time—surrendered to life.

~ Eckhart Tolle

We miss the boat if we think that losing a beloved animal companion is anything less than losing other precious beings. ~ B. Silverman

Recommended Reading: *The Dharma of Dogs: Our Best Friends as Spiritual Teachers*

May we continue to practice gratitude, kindness, and compassion. May we be open to teachers in all their forms.

Blessings ~ Dawn

