Just Breathe

By Greg Cochran

Darn nectarine!

Maybe more accurate, darn me!

Kids camp was about to begin. I had just finished organizing all of the supplies in our cabin while the children were out exploring the camp surroundings.

Hurried, and not wanting to delay eating a snack I had packed “for later,” I took a chunk of a bite of a nectarine as I exited the cabin. In too much of a hurry, I did not chew thoroughly before I swallowed.

Without warning, the nectarine lodged in my windpipe and air stopped flowing. I could not breathe. No sound; no air. The closest adult was about a hundred yards away. Panic started rising. All I knew to do was to move toward help.

This program year, Well for the Journey will focus on the theme of breathing. Just as I realized then that I was choking because of my hurried pace (and being distracted by tasks beyond the moment) the same outcome may also be true now for our spiritual wellbeing. We realize that our spirit is not breathing. No sound; no air. It seems as though help is a universe away.

At best, choked spiritual breathing is labored with no clear rhythm. Our spirit’s knuckles become white from the firm grip we exert – trying to hold on to expectations…trying to maintain “to-dos,” trying to hold everything in our minds – when spirits are suffocating. We hold our breath thinking we can sustain life on our own. We try to control the natural exchange of the Spirit to spirit conversation.

But just as a deepening relationship is a process, so is the process of “letting go” – of not laboring after every breath, of trusting the natural rhythm, of learning to be open and moving toward help.

It was my decision to jump off the porch of the cabin and move toward needed help that caused the nectarine to be dislodged so that my airway opened.

I invite you to move toward spiritual wellness as you listen to your soul’s natural instinct to breathe. I invite you to move toward the community here at the Well as we explore that natural exchange of breathing in (discovering) and breathing out (loving).

Every breath is one closer to who we will be – just breathe…

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Reflections from the Well

In our “hurry up and get it done” world, we seldom take time for ourselves. I often found myself falling into the trap of believing that if something was not productive, it was not worth my time. It has taken me a long time to realize that taking time for ourselves, to nurture our souls and to spend time with others is a very good use of my time.

I have participated in Well for the Journey programs for well over 10 years, and through these programs I have been shown that time away, time alone, time for deep thinking and pondering is a terrific way to re-energize our tired souls. Taking time for me (or you) is not a selfish thing; it is a holy thing.

If your days are frazzled and you feel like you cannot find a place that offers what you are looking for, I suggest you check out the programs at Well for the Journey. In particular, Women at the Well programs are wonderful places for women to companion and explore spirituality together. You will spend time with like-minded wonderful ladies and learn from one another, share joys and sorrows, and feel surrounded by grace that comes from true friendship and understanding. I am a better person for having participated in Well for the Journey. I assure you that if you take the leap into the Well, you too will be better for the time you invest in programs there that tend your soul.

– By Kathy Baker

Kathy Baker is a wife, mother of two, volunteer, and a graduate of the Ecumenical Institute at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore. She has a deep interest in spiritual development practices as well as supporting and affirming women in ministry. An adventurous spirit, Kathy loves the beach, travelling, writing, a good book, and stargazing on dark, clear nights. One of her favorite quotes is from Michelangelo who, at the age of 87, declared “Ancora Imparo,” which is translated “I am still learning.” She hopes to make the same declaration on her 87th birthday!

A question posed to me when I offered to write this reflection was this:

“How does the Well nourish your spiritual journey?”

The spiritual journey is filled with uncertainty. We need companions, fellow travelers, and also expert guidance, those with experience in travelling the Way. Nourish is a fitting word in this question. Travelers need to be fed and watered. Travelers also need a safe place to rest and replenish in order to set out again. Travelers need community. There is manna here.

Oh, how we need the support and encouragement of fellow seekers! We are simply unable to go it alone, nor are we meant to. My growth encourages the growth of another, and her growth is a catalyst for mine. At all the classes I have attended, and especially in the Women at the Well gathering, I have met kind, open, and accepting women who offered support and trust, wisdom, and a willingness to share knowledge and faith. I have been privileged to meet with folks who are seeking to grow and flourish and who trust the sanctity of the group.

In my abundant life outside the group, I am a mom of two active middle school-aged boys. In order to guide them sufficiently and well, I need to feel supported, fulfilled, and useful in the wider community. Having moved here in August of 2016, with the typical struggle and adjustment of moving to an unfamiliar place, the Well has provided a soft landing spot. It appears this landing place is part of the plan for my growth. I am grateful for these resources, for the kind and open and listening hearts, and for the programs already in place!

As poet Mary Oliver said,

“Let me keep company always with those who say Look! and laugh in astonishment, and bow their heads.”

– By Paula Schonewald

Paula Schonewald hails from Massachusetts near Cape Cod by way of the Connecticut Shore. She and her husband, Eric, are the parents of two vigorous middle school aged boys. Paula enjoys reading, yoga, and walking in nature with her exuberant yellow lab, Sasha.
Editor’s Note  BY ROBBIN MARCUS

“Breathe…..”

Sometimes when we hear that word, it’s exactly what we
need to do, and it’s as if a soothing blanket has just been
tossed over us – we breathe, we calm down, we feel better.

And then there are other times, when hearing this word
can just make us SO frustrated and angry – when we’re in
the middle of a tough problem, when we feel like we can’t
possibly slow down or let go of what is so important, right
now, this minute.

As always, with every situation, with every word uttered
by us or to us, we have a choice. We get to choose our
response. Ralph Marston has written a wonderful piece
on this topic. I’ll share it with you here.

Wishing you peace and nourishing inhales,

ROBBIN

YOU CHOOSE THE RESPONSE – Ralph Marston

Choose your response. Nothing is inherently annoying,
yet you can choose to be annoyed by just about anything.
Similarly, no situation is inherently embarrassing, or
stressful, or frustrating. Embarrassment, stress, and
frustration are some of the many ways in which you can
choose to respond.

Keep in mind that your response to any situation is always
your choice. After all, it’s you doing the responding. And
it is in your best interest to choose wisely. Those who
consistently respond with anger or envy, annoyance
or frustration will reap the bitter rewards of those bitter
responses. Yet when you choose to respond with
understanding, with patience, with confidence and courage,
the rewards will be far sweeter.

The situation does not determine the response. You
determine your response. In every moment, in every
circumstance, you can choose the response that will move
your life positively forward. As such, nothing can bring you
down unless you choose to be brought down. Nothing can
annoy you, or frustrate you, or keep you dismayed.

You always have the choice to respond in the best and
most positive way. Each time you choose your own
positive, creative, empowering response, whatever the
situation may be, you move yourself and the whole world
forward.

Take a Moment to Breathe!

Daily Faith, the Well’s most popular offering,
transcends boundaries whether they be physical
or ideological. These daily emails are intended to
bring about quiet reflection. We hope you find these
brief quotes to be a reprieve from deadlines and
to-do lists. Email eleanor@wellforthejourney.org to
sign up.
OUR MISSION
To encourage and support spiritual wellness in daily life through innovative programs and resources.

CORE VALUES

BRIDGING: Inviting people from different backgrounds and experiences into community while honoring each person’s uniqueness.

REFLECTING: Taking time amidst the busyness of life to explore faith, find meaning, and grow into wholeness.

DISCERNING: Helping one another listen for, become open to, and respond to the lived experience of God.

WELLBEING: Tending the spiritual life as an integral part of wholeness in people and communities.

REACHING OUT: Becoming more compassionate, creative, contemplative, and joyful in our relationships and our world.

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OUR VISION
Gathering...
Seeking the Source of Wholeness and Life
Quenching a Common Thirst
Nurturing One Another.

In Community...
Being Nourished and Renewed
Becoming Living Water
For Others in the World.