

Norma Trespach

Universe in Harmony

2nd edition



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Original title: Universo em Harmonia

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Electronic publishing and Cover art: Willian Castro

File typed and reviewed by the author, who authorized the printing of this book

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Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP)

Trespach, Norma

Universe in Harmony / Norma Trespach
– Porto Alegre: Alcance, 2020. 2nd Edition
128 p.

1. Philosophy of Mind and Spirit – 2. self-help.
I. Title.

CDU 13

Responsible Librarian: Maria da Graça Artioli – CRB 10/793

ISBN 978-65-86910-09-4

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Rua Bororó, 5 - Bairro Assunção - Porto Alegre/RS - 91900-540

*To my companions of travelling,
who at some point in my life, in some
way, have helped me to understand the
entanglements through which we learn
and evolve.*

*To God, for giving me wisdom and
courage to transform my learning into
this book.*

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AUTHOR'S WORDS

This book was made for you with lots of love. On each page, I hope you find words of hope, and that those words warm your heart.

Walking along the beach, I found a small shell. I picked it up and returned it to the sea. This gesture made me think about how we use our hands. Here are some ways:

Hands that applaud, but also that boo;

Hands which help us to be born, but also carry our coffin away when we disincarnate;

They save us in a surgery, but also hurt us with a stab;

They throw us kisses of love, but they also stone us with contempt;

They manipulate in laboratories the finest essences to transform them into perfumes that make our presence standing out when we pass. On the other hand, they separate the drugs in dark and dirty environments. The same drugs that later our children, siblings, relatives and friends will use, becoming puppets of that world and seeking death more quickly;

Hands which cuddle a beloved face, but also slap it;

They lovingly wipe friend's tears, but also make gestures saying that they have nothing to do with the pain of their peers;

They wave when a friend leaves for a trip as if they say: "I will always be here for you", but they can also make a gesture meaning: "go away and forget me";

Hands which drive a car, taking people to a fun day, and also drive a battle tank, destroying many lives and many dreams;

They manipulate substances to cure a serious disease, but also pull the trigger of a revolver or throw a grenade;

Deaf people use their hands to communicate;

Hands of friends manifest the pleasure of a reunion, but also demonstrate the sadness of a farewell.

These are some of the uses of our hands, but there are thousands of other utilities and meanings, and I am sure each of you will remember many others.

Always try to use your hands for good, because, for everything we do, we receive twice as much.

INTRODUCTION

Out of the blue, the sky becomes cloudy, predicting a storm. Bolts of lightning and claps of thunder take over our day, which was light and suddenly gets dark. Soon after, the pouring rain seems to flood the whole Earth, or at least as far as our vision reaches.

Lightning strikes clouds full of energy and water. It is a beautiful phenomenon to see: nature in action.

Many people get afraid of that, because they do not have control of what is happening.

Sometimes it takes a short time, sometimes it lasts longer, but little by little the storm dissipates and only the rain continues. As it all began, everything changes and the sky becomes clear again.

The sun comes back and only the smell of the wet soil and the plants remain, even more beautiful by the water they got. The rivers and lakes get full once again, and the air lighter due to the rain that took to the ground the dust particles raised by the wind.

In our lives, in the same way, storms happen and, because of them, we despair. We have no patience to wait for them to pass and see the good they brought us. We curse our pain without thinking about everything that is happening.

Sometimes we need a little push in order to move, otherwise we stagnate. We need to think about the things we have learned from life, and put them in practice. Extend your look to this universe and see how perfect it is. So why are we unhappy, when everything was given to us for our happiness?

Unfortunately, we spend much of our life searching for and accumulating material goods. Sometimes we get really tired, because after getting those goods, we have to take care not to lose them and we end up forgetting how temporary our passage on Earth is. We were not told the time we would have to enjoy all this, nor that we could take anything with us when we leave.

We also forget that we are born, grow up and get old. We will not always have the vitality of a young person, but we will never be deprived of the pleasure of enjoying all that the universe has to offer us. It is logical that in every moment of life, our tastes and needs are different, but we will always have the feeling and the wisdom acquired in the previous stages of life, which can be used in the current phase in which we may be.

Even in our greatest difficulties, the Creator of our universe does not abandon us. He places those hard moments in our path so that we can evolve. We have a powerful weapon at our disposal: prayer. God gives us problems, but He also offers us help. He often carries us in His arms so that we can overcome everything.

Humanity needs to learn to have a humbler heart and to ask for help when it cannot solve its problems alone, as well as to learn to use the intelligence He has given us to try to solve them.

Everything is at our disposal. Live and be happy in our **universe in harmony.**



SO THAT YOU START YOUR
DAY OFF RIGHT

Before you get out of bed, as soon as you wake up in the morning, sit down, fill your lungs with air and then breathe out, at once, relaxing your body. Then close your eyes and travel mentally to a place that gives you peace, a place where you have been, or even one you have created in your mind. It may be on the edge of the sea, in the woods, on a hill, near a lake. In the pyramids of Egypt or in an oasis in the middle of the desert. It doesn't matter, it's your place, it's special, it's a creation of your mind. This place represents God, the Creator of everything. Then speak to Him. You can be in the previous position or lie down, the way it's best for you, and with an open heart and a clean mind, you must say: "Father, allow my guardian angel to be with me during the day and to show me the best ways for me to get the solutions I need; allow him to put on my lips words of peace and in my heart the best feelings. Allow him, Father, to protect me from the evils of the world and, above all, to help me to be useful".

Stay tuned for visual messages or information you will receive during the day. This will be His way of communicating with you. Always follow the voice of your heart.

Before going to sleep, do the same procedure as in the morning, after saying: “Thank you for the day, my Father, I am sure that today I was better than yesterday and I promise to do everything to make tomorrow better than today”.

Your night will be tranquil, with enlightening dreams, and you will wake up peacefully.

Get used to it and you will feel a big difference in your life. You deserve all the good things the world can offer.

Just ask for it, and life will become lighter and more rewarding.

PS: this prayer was given to me by my friend Hugo A. Motta



THE PERFECT VESSEL

We are made of raw material: our body, our spirit, strength and energy. We dedicate ourselves to having a perfect appearance, going to the gym, getting silicone implants, *botox*, etc. However, no matter how we shape our bodies, time is relentless and nothing will stop them from aging, at a higher or lower speed, depending on the life we live.

We care more about matter than about spirit (or strength, and not energy). The spirit does not age, it evolves. It needed a vessel (our body) to reincarnate in this dense world in order to continue its evolution, so the concern is to learn from physical differences, to see “beyond” a visible body. We receive the body we ask for when we reincarnate for our evolution.

Drawing attention through a perfect body is like looking at something lifeless, inanimate. Unless within that image is a spirit of light that does not allow itself to be contaminated by its appearance, becoming a prisoner of its external beauty. We form a perfect set here on Earth, one thing does not live without the other: strength and energy or raw material and spirit.

We see the perfect bodies of artists and actors on television. Bodies sculpted at the cost of a lot of weight training, silicone implants, liposuction and so many other aesthetic artifices. They say they do it for their fans, to look good for them, but in fact they want to look perfect and show that they are special people – different from other mortal beings – and that they don’t age. They are slaves to their appearance and induce their admirers to follow the same path. To take care of the body is everyone’s obligation, but they should do that within the limits, in order to keep themselves healthy.

We have also witnessed the growth of various religious sects. Many of those sects say they are better than the others and some accuse their fellows – members of another church – of being heretics, children of darkness, preaching that the Devil will torment them.

But if we are all children of God and His commandments say we should love our neighbors as ourselves, how can we be arrogant, boastful and judgmental with our own fellows? Why do they say that if we don't do what the church preaches, we will go to hell and Jesus will be discontented?

We came to this world to be happy, and not to judge our neighbors. It will not be a piece of clothes we wear, a song we listen to, the things we hear, or a healthy entertainment, that will take us away from God or from our path to learning. Everything in this world is His work. Living with different people, respecting their way of thinking, their tastes, their doubts or certainties, is the great wisdom.

We live in a great Universe formed by small worlds of beliefs in the same God, each one of them closed in their own discriminations of faith, in their dogmas created to be unique and special. Nothing, or very little, is done for these small communities to open up.

We can embrace the fellow who has faith, even if he or she does not share our belief, after all, it is not necessary to think in the same way in order to have a harmonious coexistence. In fact, what would become of this world if everyone loved God the same way, thought the same way, dressed the same way, ate the same food, liked the same colors? We learn from different people. This is the great beauty of the universe, and what makes it so special. There wouldn't be a day if there wasn't a night, but the two are important, each in their own phase.



KNOWING HOW TO ASK

We often find ourselves in a tangle and don't know how to get out, even though events are not happening to us, but to people we love or are emotionally involved with. When this happens, we should ask for superior help. I can confirm that help comes.

One of the messages I received when I asked was that God made this world perfect so that we could be happy.

Sit down, for example, in front of a waterfall and look at the beauty that nature offers.

The light we use is provided by the water we transform into energy.

The cars are powered by gasoline that is extracted from underground.

The wind can generate wind power.

The rain supplies the rivers and dams so that we do not lack water, light, and the plantations can give us food.

Nothing is created by men, unless they use the resources that nature offers and transform sources according to their needs.

Our thinking is so fast that in seconds we can go wherever we want. He is our supply of happiness.

Why go where there is negativity if there are better places, full of what is good to see and feel?

Ask God to supply your heart with only what is positive every day when you wake up. May your eyes see

the beauties He has placed in order for us to live with joy and peace.

If someone comes to you to speak ill of others, listen and try to help by speaking good words, so that this person will slow their heart. Pray that their mind will be filled with the positive messages that their fellow pilgrims, volunteers and helpers, send and that their mind will be open to receiving them. May their heart be cleansed of sorrow and resentment and may their feet take them where they need to go, in order to enrich their journey constructively.

Fear? We all feel it. But try to occupy this empty space with something good you wish for.

Loneliness? We're never alone. We have our evolved fellow volunteers by our side, supporting us. Just ask them what you need; they will always help.



THE PATH OF LEARNING

Have you ever walked in the woods with all kinds of trees and lianas intertwining, forming almost a net, some of them with thorns? If you walk arrogantly as if the thorns are not going to hit you or the branches of the trees should give you passage, stop and think: you are invading a world that already existed before your arrival. Everything in it has been growing and creating form, respecting the space of the other things. You will have to choose the right space to walk through and slowly and carefully move the lianas away. If, by chance, your clothes get stuck in something, stop, come back and, with caution, unhook it. It may happen that branches or thorns injure parts of your body that are uncovered. Treat those injuries so that no wounds get infected.

Keeping an eye out, you will take care when taking the next step. If you don't, you'll be so tangled between branches and thorns that your clothes will get stuck and your skin scratched.

The world is a jungle as well, although in this case trees are replaced by people and leaves and thorns by feelings and words that we use.

We need to recognize when people are hurting our feelings and we need to take care not to fall into the same situation again. We must trust ourselves, our intuition, identifying what kind of feeling a certain person awakens in

us. They will continue to be part of the world, but we must untie the knots which bond them to us and move on. The mark will stay and nothing will make it disappear, but treat it as a trophy that you got for finding wisdom in a problem.

The road of life must be walked and observed in all its splendor and we can only do it by walking step by step with all the care and attention.



THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY

When I am worried with all the things in this world, like our responsibilities – and, to top it off, I have the habit of wanting to solve other people’s problems -, I remember the day I saw my father’s corpse, in his funeral. He had lived his whole life solving or trying to solve his children’s problems.

As time went by, he got older, acquiring a hump thanks to the weight of the life he had. It felt like he carried everything on his shoulders.

When I got close to the coffin, I noticed my father looked 30 years younger. His expression was light and calm, as if he were free of all the burden he had carried, all the responsibility he had assumed in order to keep his family together and at peace. Now he was free of all that. Was it for the mission he accomplished? I do not know, but this scene stuck with me. All the suffering that the disease had caused in his body left no marks after the release of the spirit.

The one who used to be on artificial respiration and had to have a tube feeding, which caused him great discomfort, now was free. His spirit had fulfilled his time here on Earth and now was releasing the body from its mission.

He was dressed in the clothes he had worn at his 50th wedding anniversary – as he had requested before passing away. He did not want new clothes. He did not want shoes

to be put on his feet either, since in life he had never liked to wear them and would not do that now. Hands crossed over his chest, shaven face and combed hair; I will never forget the scene.

This makes me wonder: why are we so attached to our problems and material things?

When we leave, we don't take anything with us, only the learning that we can acquire. We should learn to be freer and spend more time enjoying this world that God made for us. Everything in it is perfect and it gives us everything to live healthy and with tranquility.

But we're arrogant, wanting to sort it all out by ourselves. We are not humble enough to ask for help when difficulties arise, but if we did, He would certainly help us find a way out and give us the knowledge to solve our problems.



THE PURSUIT OF SECURITY

Have you ever stopped to think that we have no security in this world? The type of security I'm talking about is a safe place where nothing can happen to us, where we know everything we want is within our reach, visible; full security.

We have a home we surround with bars, alarms, dogs, iron gates, locks on doors. We stay inside it, locked everything up, and yet we don't feel safe, because the danger is on the streets and, even with all the protections we put in our homes, nothing prevents us from being robbed.

On the other hand, our spirit is not trapped within four walls. Our thoughts go to unimaginable places in a matter of seconds, causing, therefore, a lot of fear, because we go where there are wars, disorders, sadness, catastrophes and we do not find, within us, the confidence to change the direction of our imagination. We don't have a fixed point giving us support and security – that's when we start being afraid or developing a phobia.

We create mechanisms to give security to our mortal bodies, but we haven't found a way to balance our spirit. For example: when we are in love, we think we have found our journey companion in this world and we place all our hopes and security on this person... But sometimes we forget that this other person is looking for someone to give him or her security as well. And each person takes full responsibility for making the other one happy and calm. For some time that works, but little by little the idealization of a partner

goes by land, because the other person is also a human being, someone full of insecurities. And then we get lost and frustrated again.

Many people try to find in religion security and the answer to everything, starting blindly to follow what the preacher teaches. As we are lost and desperate, we agreed to hold on to that board that was thrown to us in this river of uncertainty in which we find ourselves. We try to continue blindly, giving our lives into their hands.

As time went on, we begin to notice the world is too small and that we don't do anything of our own accord. Everything is determined or guided by them and we see that our insecurity has increased because not even what we need or feel is evaluated by us. We put our whole life in the hands of others, without ever questioning or having ideas of our own, such as interpreting or criticizing what we hear. Pain and pleasure are personal, so no one can feel them for other people. We can even try to understand and be supportive, however, never feel for the other. Each human being is unique and is in a stage of evolution of its own.

And then what happens to us? We feel lonely and disillusioned again. We often try to do the opposite of what we were doing before. We throw ourselves into worldly pleasures, because we feel lost. Everything that was offered to us as true, certain and eternal, was unsustainable because that faith didn't come from us. We weren't taught to question and feel the Divine Love in its fullness.

We live in a world with people who do not think like us, but with whom we daily make rewarding exchanges when we are not imbued and pressured by thoughts that the world is our enemy and only those who are part of a specific

religion will be saved, while the rest will burn forever in the fire of Hell.

What about nowadays?

I believe in a Greater and Loving Father who, indiscriminately, created a perfect Universe for His children, who came to populate it. We have the free will to take advantage of it as we see fit, without hurting our peers, following the feelings and desires of our heart, which are exclusive. God will supply us with whatever is necessary for us to be happy. We don't need intermediaries to reach Him, because no one is better or more special than the other one when it comes to talking to Him. We must know what we want and then we will be able to have an honest and deep conversation to ask for what we need. We do not always receive things the way we ask for them, nor at the time we want them, but He always answers us. It doesn't mean we can't have a religion. Each one of us is free to decide. Being part of a group in which we feel good, and having travelling companions who support us and are in the same phase of evolution we are, strengthens our journey, which will be lighter this way. This helps us in the learning we committed ourselves with when we reincarnated. But our individuality must never be lost.

Listen to your heart to feel what you need. Then, run after it, because God has given you everything you need to complete your needs here on Earth. He gave you the rivers so that you could be supplied with energy and wash away the body impurities. He gave you the sun, which can warm you during the day. He gave you the night, for your body to rest, for your spirit to come out and seek answers from the other side, along with more evolved spirits. The Mother

Earth, from where you make a living for your body and that brightens your eyes with beautiful colored flowers, trees and lawns, forming the sacred carpet where your feet step on, where birds find their food and the wind dances a beautiful ballet with the leaves of the trees, offering us the pleasure of the breeze on our face, making us feel alive. All is contributing to form a beautiful thing, called Nature. We also have the sea, a rare beauty, at our disposal. Its waves, which seem alive, are tireless; a place where we can recharge our energy. Walking on the seashore, feeling the sand under our feet and the water hitting our bodies, the sound of its waves, the brightness of the sun on its surface. The horizon, where the sky meets the blue of its waters, is a perfect picture. All those things evidence that God created the space for us, so that we could supply ourselves when we needed. Everything is at our disposal, free of charge.

We are free to come and go. We just need to know that the security we need is within us, and everything is available to us in this world. Live life, don't fight with it.



SHARING LEARNING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

On the day of the release of my first book “A Norm to Live for – The life of Norma Trespach”, Dr José Valdaí de Souza, who prefaces it, was present. In his speech, he talked about the suspension bridge stamped on the cover and asked who of those present had not seen one of these, very common in the countryside. It is built of wood and, on the sides, only two wires are there for the users to hold themselves. The floor is made of pieces of planks, often poorly preserved.

He said that many people go up the stairs and when they face their particularities, they are afraid and do not cross it, but a child overcomes it by running. If there is wind, the bridge swings, offering greater difficulty. It does not offer security for us to move forward, but then he said that I had courage, I believed and I overcame it, knowing the dangers it represented.

He talked about the bridge to give an idea about the beginning of my journey. I wasn't sure if life away from my parents' house would be safe, but only by going forward would I find out. And today we can say it was worth it and it worked, because there I was, victorious and alive, telling my story in a book.

The difficulties served to carry me forward. The first bridge I crossed, and many others came. I, based on the past, did not stop and used those bridges to go in search of my dream and my personal fulfillment.

He admired the courage I had of opening my heart and taking all the difficulties out of it. I had opened to the world what we normally keep hidden from others so that they do not see: failures and weaknesses. He ended up by congratulating my courage.

My intention was showing to the world, the people who will read my book, that it is worth fighting for a dream. If we stagnate, we'll never have emotions nor development.

Fear is our permanent companion, but we cannot let it paralyze us. We need to take the first step when we have a goal, then another one, and this way things start to happen; we get involved and eventually forget about what we are afraid of, because we feel the taste of victory, and that makes us happy and strengthens us.

Living without daring is to stagnate and go backwards, letting good things pass us by. How can we not be part of this world that has so many significant things to offer us?

The return I had after the book's release was rewarding. Many people identify with some part of the book and express this calling or emailing me, thanking me for having had the courage to expose myself and, with that, help them to understand their problems, sharing with them the difficulties and the victories I had, encouraging them to go ahead.

I believe that we should share our learning with others, because if we keep it just for ourselves, we will miss the opportunity to exchange experiences.



THE COMPLICITY AND LOVE OF ANIMALS

Readers who own a pet will certainly relate to some of the points that will be brought.

I've never been greatly in favor of having pets in the house being treated like family members. I often wondered why people didn't give the love and comfort they gave to their dogs, which they adopted as children, to some street child who lived outdoors without anyone.

Right after moving to another city and to a new job – having to totally change my life after 20 years living in the State Capital and going to live in the countryside, where I was appointed – I was presented by a college colleague with a newborn puppy. A brown little dog that I found very ugly at first. He had a slightly wrinkled face, darker snout and ears, and also two curious features: a light-colored spot on his chest that looked like a tie, and a little tail, hairy and curled upwards. But as soon as I picked him up on my lap, I was taken by a feeling so strong that it seemed like the return of something I had experienced before. From that day on, November the 5th of 1989 (he was born on September 7th of the same year), I started to include him in my life and not do anything that would leave him unprotected, as I do until today.

I named him Bimbo. He is my thermometer. If I'm sad, he won't leave my side, he'll lean on my legs and then sit there staring at me as if he were telling me that I'm not alone. Our affinity is so great that if I have a stomach ache for something I ate, he starts to walk without stopping and little by little throws up. I think dogs are more sensitive than we are. They are our surge arresters, because they capture heavy energies and protect us, besides being our guardians against strangers. I also believe that Bimbo has much more sensitive and accurate vision and hearing than mine. He warns when there is something strange going on before I even notice it. Sometimes, when he is lying down, he raises his ears barking at what I am not seeing or hearing, getting his fur bristly.

The night before my hospitalization, when I had to be submitted to a surgery, to remove a cancer (the way I found out I had cancer and its subsequent cure were reported in my first book, *A Norm to Live for – The life of Norma Trespach*), I talked to him and told him what I was going to pass through, and that perhaps I would not come back, but that if that happened, someone would take care of him. However, I would do everything to come back cured. He seemed to understand, because he nestled in my lap and sighed. The next morning I left home carrying Bimbo with me. On that day, I met up with Mara, my sister-in-law. I asked her, in case something happened to me and I didn't come back, not to let anyone mistreat him and give him to a person who liked dogs a lot. She assured me that nothing would happen to me, that I would come home and that she would choose me to be her daughter's godmother, as a proof of my victory. I knew she had been trying to get pregnant for

several years without success, so I thought the promise was a little strange, but I did not say anything. We hugged, I kissed Bimbo saying that I would come back soon and then I left. I got in the car, looked at the gate and saw him looking at me, as he always did. Mara waved to me saying to be calm and not to worry, because she would take care of him until I came back. He was one of the reasons that made me fight to live. I didn't trust anyone to take care of him for a long time.

My surgery was successful and, when I returned home, I found Bimbo at the gate waiting for me, as he always did. I felt that I was alive again and that I loved that little animal that sensed my return, cured.

A year and ten months later I got another reward, a beautiful girl as a goddaughter. Her name is Caroline, and she's very sweet. Every time I see her, I know I'm alive and I remember the promise made by Mara and how good God is, because He gave me a second chance, besides a beautiful goddaughter.

Today, Bimbo is 17 years old and we are still more and more friends and accomplices in this journey. When he leaves, because nothing is eternal and for him the time will come too, I hope he can have a peaceful death. It will remain the learning of complicity and unconditional love, without charges. He has made me come back to reality many times when I was sad, with his sweet look and sly bark, calling my attention as only he knows how to do it.

Thank you, my God, for this little animal that reached me because of You.



WHEN A MIRACLE UNITES
SCIENCE AND PRAYER

My name is Rodrigo and my wife's name is Gisele. We lost our first son, William, shortly after our wedding. We had had a calm pregnancy, accompanied by a doctor and with several clinical exams performed for the baby's safety. In childbirth, it was not possible for him to be born in a normal way. A cesarean section was necessary. It took some time until everything was ready, and Guilherme did not resist the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

It is not needed to say how much pain invades a newly formed family when they are unable to see the fruit of their love overcome the difficulties of the first moments of life. Increased pain when you know that two other close families had their babies at the same time.

Once the initial sadness was overcome, we waited for the time indicated by the doctors as reasonably safe so that we could have another baby and soon this baby was conceived.

Everything was double-checked, new tests were performed, more frequent consultations and a new doctor was chosen. Not because we discredited the first one, but so that Gisele did not experience in the second delivery the difficulties she had had in the previous one.

Everything was thought carefully. The doctor was on notice throughout the whole pregnancy. Until on a sunny morning at the beginning of August the baby decided that the time to come to this world had arrived. One month ahead of schedule. His name? Until that day, Wilhelm. Until that day...

The doctor was notified and we went to the hospital. An analysis was made and it was found that everything was fine with the baby but, as a precaution, Dr. Ângelo Mazon Neto decided to perform a cesarean section in the first hour of the afternoon.

We were again in the same place we had been two years ago, when we had spent our darkest moment. But a bolt of lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place, does it? That old popular saying is not part of our pregnancy experience.

After a long time, I was informed that he had come into the world. But without crying. The long wait – from our previous experience – had already let me know that something had gone wrong again.

At 1:55p.m. on August 6th he was born. But he was not well. His Apgar score was 1. Only later, after the scare was over, I found out that Apgar is a scale from 0 to 10, a grade given to the newborn. And zero means death. Our baby was given a grade of 1 at birth, which means he had a minimal chance of survival.

My wife wouldn't see him for the next three days. When I first saw him, his skin was as blue as the shirt of the soccer team of my heart. I was called separately by the pediatrician who accompanied him, Dr. João Wagner, and by the clinician who delivered him, Dr. Angelo Mazon Neto. Not pleasant news for a father: there was the possibility that the baby had been born malformed. He had to be removed to a better equipped hospital. He had respiratory and heart failure and would not survive for long. Also, maybe he would have some mental disability. The shock was tremendous.

From then on, a mad rush began in an attempt to find a hospital and ambulance with ICU to remove him. We looked for a hospital that could receive him through the National

Health Service. Nothing. A measure had to be taken and we decided, even without financial conditions, to take him to a private hospital. *Mother of God* was the name of the hospital. There was no better name. Perhaps one of the best and most expensive hospitals in the state.

But the ambulance was missing. We got one, about midnight, on the same day. When it arrived, we saw that it was not a mobile ICU, so it was not suitable to take it safely anywhere, let alone to Porto Alegre, more than 100km away from our city. But the risk was necessary. In a meeting with my father and the doctors, we found no alternative. I would have to risk my son's life if I wanted to save him.

We left towards Porto Alegre as soon as possible. My sister-in-law, Cátia, my wife's sister, went with him in the ambulance. I went by car, right behind, with Pedro, my wife's brother.

Only at that moment we thought of his name. Those who stayed in Osorio wanted to know a name to pray for. My aunt Norma said he needed a name. We're not sure who said his name first, I think it was my mother. He would be named Junior, Rodrigo Jr. And that's it; now he had a name.

Anyone who knows the highway between Osório and Porto Alegre might know the place. Near the company GM, that at the time was being built, the ambulance increased the speed considerably. My brother-in-law thought it was better not to keep up with it, but we knew something serious had happened. Only later we knew that he had suffered several respiratory arrests and might not hold for much longer.

By the time we got to the hospital he had already been taken to the neonatal ICU. My siblings-in-law and I waited a while before they called us.

A few hours later I was called. Dr. Simoni, to whom I owe Jr.'s life, spoke with us long and patiently. We heard many things, apprehensively, but I have never forgotten what she said: "Well, we did everything we could to save him. Are you religious? Do you believe in anything? Do you know how to pray? Then that's all that's left to do." And I really think it was God, through that doctor and those nurses, who saved him. We never found an explanation for what happened to Juninho.

Well, if praying was what they needed to do, that's what they did. For the next three days I stayed with him all the time, because my wife was recovering from the cesarean section. Only four days after Junior's birth she was able to see him, something the doctor was not ok with, after all, traveling 100km by car after a recent cesarean section is not very recommendable.

Incredibly, and for our happiness, the days were passing and Junior was recovering well. Every hour was a battle won, every day a war overcome. Thirteen days he was hospitalized and until today it is inexplicable that he recovered so well and in such a short time. We think it was really because of God and the prayers he received, along with the help of medicine.

But for those who are curious to know about his health I can say, based on the exams carried out later during his first years of life, that Juninho is now a normal child. No sequel, no anomaly, no delay. He is in the first grade and for him it's easy to learn.

We truly believe that the survival of our child is a work of God and an example of how He acts in our lives.



THE AWAKENING OF THE PROMISE

Junior's story, told by my nephew in the previous chapter, is a special event for me.

When I arrived at the hospital, still the one in Osorio, Jr. was in the nursery and couldn't stop crying. I asked the nurse if I could come in a little bit to see him up close. She looked at me and as she sensed that his life was like a lottery – he was supposed to be in an incubator with oxygen and there was no such resource there – and then she allowed me to enter.

I got very close and noticed that the baby was struggling and screaming incessantly. I bent down, put my hand on his chest and spoke with all the love I already felt for him. I remember well the words I said: “Junior, I know you're scared. You were in a warm place, and your outgoing wasn't very nice. You're afraid of this world that you don't know, but I'm your aunt Norma and you'll always have me to help you when you need it. There are many people here who are happy with your arrival, you will have a lot of love from them and even more from your parents and grandparents, and my helping hand to support you. Take my word for it – I said, holding his little hand, always passing my hand on his chest – I will not let you down”.

Little by little he stopped crying and looked at me, and then I repeated: “I promise you you're not alone, many people are waiting for you.” The nurse inside the nursery

came quickly to see what had happened because since he had been there, he had not stopped crying and now he was silent. I told her not to worry that everything was fine. My time had run out and I kissed him and said: “Trust your aunt Norma and do not be afraid”.

I only saw him again after a month, because fortunately they took him to Porto Alegre.

Time went by and it was apparent that Junior was a very insecure child. While walking, he used to never let go of the hand of the adult who was with him. He also used to hold the skirt or pants of those with him. One day I looked at him and remembered my promise. I knelt down next to him and repeated the gesture I made at the hospital, placing my hand on his chest and speaking softly, I said: “Remember when you were very small and aunt Norma told you not to be afraid, that you could always count on her? I’m aunt Norma and you can trust that I haven’t forgotten that.” As I was talking, he looked at me as if he were reliving that moment. I kissed him and left.

From that day on Junior gradually felt more secure to walk. Today we are friends and his parents trust me letting me take him to a drive downtown, to buy some toys or to have some ice cream. I thank them for this, because doing that I can keep my promise.

He learned to swim in my pool, with me as his teacher. In the beginning, he was very scared and could just stay in the water grabbing my neck. I always told him that he could believe in me, and that I would never let him drown, and little by little he started to feel safe. He was already ok holding on to one of those pool noodles (made of foam – used to float),

but always asking me not to let him go, and I was always reaffirming that I would only do that when he wanted to.

One morning we were playing inside the pool: Junior, me and Rafael, another nephew of mine, and a good friend of his. Rafael already knew how to swim and dive. Junior was still holding on to three foam pool noodles when, suddenly, he turned back to where I was holding him and said: “You can let go, aunt”. I was very happy; I went in front of him and said that I would be taking care of him and anything bad would happen to him. I let him go and he started to shout out, treading water and laughing a lot with this victory. The two cousins spent the rest of the morning playing make-believe (first they were racing drivers, then pirates, and then many others). It was like he was used to doing that. I always kept an eye on his movements, because I was a little afraid that he might get too excited, let go of the supports and drown, but luckily everything went well. Now he knows how to get in and out of the pool in a way that he invented himself, but always leaning on the pool noodle.

It is very pleasant to witness a child’s conquest, because the children grow in size when they achieve something, so much so that on that day, when he left the pool, he walked upright, chest forward, like a winner. And he was a winner, and he knew he should recognize that.

I believe people reincarnate, and this is the most wonderful proof of that. I don’t know why I had that attitude at the hospital, but I was sure of what I should do. We are spirits who have decided to reincarnate to rescue something, and so we are doing. Since I don’t have children, it is difficult to know how to deal with them, but I don’t feel any difficulty in relating to them.



THE ENCOUNTER WITH OURSELVES

On a cold winter afternoon, Joana was sitting, lonely, on top of a cliff, facing the sea, with the sun behind her, feeling the gentle breath of a light breeze.

Her gaze was lost on the immensity of the ocean and the emptiness of the beach.

She had parked her car after driving alone and crying a lot for several miles, trying to find answers for her life. She had already tried to find them, attending parties, traveling to distant countries, knowing different cultures, being loved by her partner, but nothing filled the void she felt in her heart. She felt that the things her eyes saw and the words people said to her couldn't overcome the invisible wall that surrounded her, not letting her feel the beauty of the Universe or the sweetness of messages sent by friends and seen in movies.

She remembered the vacation trip she had taken to Paris with her friends. At the time, she was very excited about the idea of traveling to a country that had always been her dream to visit.

She had packed her bags with enthusiasm, asked for her vacation and left. She chose a good hotel, well located, and decided that she would enjoy every moment of that experience. She made a list of the museums she would visit, the plays she would watch, the good restaurants she would go to and the beautiful walks she would take.

When the plane landed at the airport, she thought, "My new life certainly begins here."

She went to the hotel and approved the accommodations. She didn't even unpack her things, and immediately went for a walk, going to a very cozy cafe she found relatively close to the hotel. She chose a table with a good view of the

street and asked for something to eat. She had no difficulty communicating, since he spoke French fluently.

After eating, she decided to go back to the hotel and get ready, because at night she would go with her friends to a play. The place was very beautiful, everything was perfect. She liked the play, but felt nothing different from what she felt when she saw other plays in Brazil. That started to worry her, because the same thing had happened before, in the cafe. Place after place, she followed the script she had planned, however, she increasingly felt empty. It was as if she were just doing a pre-established task. When the trip was over, she came back. She had taken many pictures and, when she looked at them, she felt as if she were not present in them. Just her face was there, not her heart. She commented the case to her friends, about how she was feeling, explaining that the trip, although perfect, had not added anything to her, as she was still empty.

She remembered the boyfriend she had found in Brazil and who, she thought, would fill her void. They hung out a lot and he was quite handsome and kind. However, she couldn't continue that relationship, because the feeling of loneliness, despite being with him, remained.

The sea has always been her great companion. She didn't know what made her feel that way, if it were the salty breeze, the sand that her feet touched, the tide that tirelessly kept itself alive, coming and going, throwing its white foam on the beach, or maybe the whole thing.

After a long time contemplating the infinite, she decided to walk along the seashore, as she always did when she needed to think or feel the pleasure of the sand and the sea water at her feet. Perhaps that would help her to understand that moment of her life.

She walked absorbed, savoring the breeze on her face and the cold water on her feet, letting her footprints in the sand.

The beach was almost deserted, only a few fishermen with their reeds trying their luck in the fishing industry.

The birds used empty beaches to feed on small fish that the waves brought to the shore. They took flight when Joana approached, forming a beautiful postcard together with the sea, its waves and the fishermen.

She looked up to observe all of this, when she seemed to hear a voice that said: “God made a beautiful world with all the things we need to be happy. Nothing has meaning if we don’t look inside ourselves and look for our essence, our divine spark or our inner self. We must love ourselves and live knowing that everything is at our disposal for our pleasure. We must not forget that we are unique and individual, but we are never alone. We have always a Guardian Angel with us. Just call your Angel and be humble to hear its answer and feel its presence “. She looked around and saw no one, but everything seemed so clear and real that that voice did not come out of her mind. She asked herself: “Did God look at me and answer my prayers?”.

Tears started to run down her face. They’re not tears of sadness, but of emotion, making her feel alive again, filled with a great feeling of peace and love for everything around her and for the life she had. She felt a great gratitude for the Being who had sent her that amazing feeling of protection and love.

She opened her arms, looked at the sky and said: “Thank you, my God, for the grace to feel Your love for me,

and to be able to see and experience so much beauty in this moment and in this small world”.

She wet her hands in the sea, washed her face and walked a little into it, until the water was touching her knees and the waves splashing salty drops on her body.

She went back to where she had left the car. She got in it and, feeling light and safe, started it. On the radio, the song that was playing completed the moment. She started to follow the rhythm by tapping her fingers on the steering wheel, trying to sing along. She felt young again.

When she got home, she realized for the first time how nice it was to return and see her things again.

When she opened the gate, she felt as if she were embraced by that small world, created by herself. The house looked bigger and more welcoming; her garden exhaled the scent of beautiful roses that were in bloom. She didn't even remember there were so many roses, and she definitely couldn't remember when she had seen them bloom for the last time. She felt the warmth and didn't seem to be alone anymore. Everything was part of her life and she saw herself as part of that Universe.

She would start working again, her vacation was ending, and she would think more about other people. She knew that peace she was experiencing would not last forever, because life's difficulties would continue to happen, but she also knew she would not be alone to overcome them. She would be humble and ask for help from the Master and Creator of this beautiful world. She trusted that He would not abandon her, that He would send her help and wisdom, so that she could move on.



JOINED HANDS

Esther is my friend. Truth be told, she was one of the people who helped me the most to understand that we should fight for our rights and not let ourselves be used for the benefit of others. Today she is no longer present in matter, but in spirit. I feel her presence when I am in difficulties and she feels that she can collaborate.

In one of my visits, she told me that she had something very sad to tell me, but that she trusted me and would do that, so I could help her, giving her some support.

Mauro is her oldest son and, when he was 18 years old, she began to notice that his behavior had changed. First because he started to isolate himself from his family, sleep a lot during the day and stay out all night. When asked where he had been, he used to say that he had gone out with friends. But she didn't know these friends. Her son never took them home. At the same time, his old friends were always calling and asking about him, and he was repeatedly ignoring them. He started wearing some of his clothes inside out. He got a tattoo on his body, stopped bathing regularly, shaving and even having his hair cut or, when he did, shaving his head. He started having some drastic attitudes towards his body, he wore rings, *piercings*, things he used to hate before. At first, she thought it was a teenage rebellion.

Mauro studied at a private school, and used to spend some time at the neighborhood club. Esther tried to find out if his friends were also in that phase of rebellion. She had a big surprise when she found out that her son was no longer attending classes nor going to soccer or to the neighborhood club. His old friends were worried about the new group of people he was going out with and because nothing had happened between them so that Mauro would no longer accept invitations to parties and football matches on weekends. She was speechless by everything she was hearing, but this was just the beginning. When she got home, she decided to get into his room, a place she didn't always enter

because she worked during the day and went to college at night, and the person who took care of the house was the housekeeper. He was still sleeping, and she noticed that the room was almost empty. The bicycle she had given him last Christmas was missing, the guitar he liked to play (and now she remembered that she hadn't heard him play anymore) was not there either, and the stereo had been replaced by another of inferior quality. She didn't have the courage to wake him up before assimilating everything she had seen and heard that day.

She closed the door, went to her room and started to remember that she hadn't seen him leave with his guitar on his back like he always did when he went out to meet his friends. Lately he kept asking for some money, saying it was for tasks he needed to do for school and he was thinner. It was as if the pennies had suddenly dropped; she collapsed, not knowing what to do, what attitude to take in the situation that was now in front of her eyes.

Was her son using drugs? That was something she had always been afraid of happening to any of them, and, for that reason, it had always been the subject of honest conversations. She sat on the floor, cried and asked God not to allow this to be the reason for so many changes in Mauro's life.

She didn't know how to deal with what she had discovered. She was afraid to question him, because he might deny it and run away from home, because he had been discovered and because he knew, after so many conversations, his mother's position against the use of drugs. She would have to find a way to find out the truth without scaring him. She didn't know where he was going when he was out with his new friends. She had to work, but she was on vacation from college and decided to find out where they used to meet.

She gathered her strength, courage, and looked for a taxi driver who would inspire confidence and could help her. Then,

in the evening, she began to go to the places where she imagined young people would gather. Since taxi drivers are knowledgeable about nightlife, they collaborated. She was careful, so Mauro wouldn't see her, what was important, since she would not know how to act if this happened. It was the driver who often visited the places where there was a group of young people and, through the description that Esther had given him and the photos that she had shown him, the driver used to make up some excuse and tried to see if the boy was among them. It was more than 2 weeks since the search had begun, and nothing concrete yet.

On a Saturday night, it rained a lot. Mauro had left the house on Thursday and Esther hadn't heard from him. She called the taxi she always used for searches and prayed that God helped her find him. He was probably cold, because he had left with light clothing, besides, the temperature had dropped and there was still the humidity of the rain. He might not be well. They went around a lot, but they couldn't find him. It was dawn and Esther was hungry, tired, sad and disappointed. She decided to eat something and asked the taxi to stop at a snack bar, which looked more like a ruined house, but had a sign and the lights were on. She went to the counter, ordered a sandwich or a *cheeseburger*. With her eyes tired, being wet from the rain and feeling miserable, she decided to walk through that environment to distract herself until the snack was ready. She arrived at a door that seemed to lead to the bathroom, looked inside and almost fainted: there was her son and some other young people piled up, sleeping on the filthy floor, and you could tell they were very cold. She was petrified, but she thought she couldn't ruin everything now. She also told the owner that the young people were cold, to which he replied: "The way they are, you understand me, they don't feel anything, they are numb. I let them sleep here from time to time because they are calm, they just want a place to sleep and they still eat snacks when they wake up, so I make a profit. You know, life is

hard.” Esther wore simple old clothes depending on where she went to do the searches – and this was one of them. She also looked like someone who was a little lost. She agreed with the man, paid for her snack and left the place shaking.

She walked to the taxi that was waiting for her parked one block away. She got in, told the driver what had happened and collapsed in tears. They ran around the city until she calmed down. She wanted to go there, pick him up in her lap and take him home, but she knew that on the other day he would do the same things again and maybe disappear, since his secret hiding place had been discovered. This way, at least she would know about one of the places he frequented. She decided to wait for his return home, thinking of the best way to help without scaring him.

Despite the discovery, she managed to sleep, because she knew her son was alive. When she woke up in the morning, everything came to her mind and tears began to flow down her cheeks. She felt alone and helpless with no one to turn to for help. She could not count on Mauro’s father, because since they got divorced, or even before that, he did not care about his children and already had another family that, he said, took all of his time.

Esther began to wonder where she had gone wrong with Mauro’s education, but she came to the conclusion that now was not the time to demand too much from herself and whine. She had a son who needed her, and she couldn’t keep crying and feeling sorry for herself.

She sat down in bed and asked God to help her to have wisdom and not to take the wrong attitude by making him distance himself from her even more, or disappear with shame because she found out his secret. She was very afraid that something like this might happen. She decided not to talk about what had happened the night before, not even about her discovery about the drug use.

She got up, took a long bath, got ready, looked in the mirror, took a deep breath and went towards Mauro's room. She knocked gently on the door. Since he hadn't answered, he opened it and found that he was sleeping deeply. She went inside and got close to him, kissed him on the cheek and woke him up. Mauro took his time, opened his eyes slowly, looked at his mother and asked her what she wanted. While she was deciding how to rescue him, she came up with an idea that might work. As he liked to drive, she would use him to take her where she needed to go, saying she had a problem with her arm that made it impossible for her to do so. Then she said that she needed him to go to the hospital to visit Paulo, his uncle. He sat in bed frightened, because he did not know of his uncle's illness, for whom he had great admiration. Esther asked him to get up and take a bath while she prepared some coffee for the two of them, so she would explain to him what was going on with Paulo.

She went to the kitchen, made some coffee, sat at the table and waited for Mauro. It didn't take long and he came to the kitchen (after taking a shower, shaving and putting decent clothes on). While they were having coffee, Esther explained that Paulo was struggling to overcome a tumor that had appeared in his stomach. They finished the coffee in silence. They got downstairs, got in the car and went to the hospital. They exchanged almost no words during the whole journey, except for some comments about the traffic jam.

The meeting of the two was exciting, Mauro hugged his uncle and cried. He asked why he had never talked about the problem since they were always calling each other. Paulo argued that he only now knew about the tumor, and this was enough. They began to remember the times they went out for a snack and what they were up to in the summer they spent together on the beach. Little by little, they relaxed and laughed about the things they remembered, until Mauro got sad when

he remembered the reason he was there. Paulo patted his forehead lightly to bring him back to reality. Paulo said that, before, he was the one who took Mauro for a walk, and that now he needed, from time to time, or whenever Mauro wanted, that he went there to talk to his uncle, because Paulo didn't know how long he would stay in the hospital. He also asked Mauro to bring a snack in exchange for those he had paid in the past. They laughed and the boy agreed to come back. At the farewell, Esther kissed Paulo on the cheek and only thanked him, because she felt that he knew what was happening to Mauro, since he was much thinner.

They came home and nothing more was said about the subject. Mauro locked himself in his world and went out again that very night. In the morning, Esther left a snack on the table, to be taken to the hospital. She also left a note saying that she was following the medical instructions and that everything could be consumed by Paulo. Sometimes he would take the snack to the hospital, but sometimes he wouldn't show up at home until she went to work.

Esther also started asking Mauro to take her on the weekends to the beach house, saying that she was missing the sea. He never refused, because he loved driving, especially on the road. They went in the morning, and she took the chance to go for a walk. Sometimes he would go with her, but other times he would visit his old friends, promising to come back for lunch. They would have lunch, take a walk on the beach and return to Porto Alegre.

In one of his visits to the hospital, Mauro observed that in the next bed there was a skinny young man. When their eyes crossed, he saw a sad and empty look, dry lips and that was on a drip and had a tube through his nose. He also had black and disheveled hair, and was unshaven. It was the picture of sad abandonment.

He left and asked nothing, but the picture of him remained in his thoughts. When Mauro returned on his next visit, he did not see him, and only then asked his uncle about the young man.

Paulo then started to tell him a story. The young man's name was Victor, and from the age of fourteen he had started using drugs. Now he was 26 years old. Vera, his mother, only found out about his addiction the first time he was arrested by the police for stealing the tape player of a car in order to buy drugs. He was 17 years old at the time and was already using several drugs. When she was called at the police station and the police officer told her why he was arrested, his mother couldn't believe what was happening. She had never suspected that Victor was involved with drugs, although she had noticed that his behavior was different, but since she worked during the day, and three nights a week she took care of an elderly woman to help to support her three children, she did not stop to think about that. Her husband had abandoned her by moving in with a 16-year-old girl. Victor, their youngest child, had suffered a lot from the separation from his father who, while at home, was very playful and close to his children, but then he moved to another city and hardly saw them or spoke to them by phone. He had formed another family and had a daughter from that relationship.

Victor had become a needy boy. His siblings tried to make up for their father's absence, but as time went by, he had become unsociable. Everyone believed it was because of his father's absence, but, in reality, he had found friends who said that the coolest thing to do was to smoke a joint. One day, he was very sad because his father had forgotten his birthday. His new friends told him that if he took a drag on the pot they were smoking, he would feel better. At that moment he remembered the recommendations of his mother and siblings, that he should never use any drug, for the damage it caused and the misfortune that being an addict was. However, he decided to take his friends'

suggestion, but he did not like the feeling he felt. He was absent-minded for only a few moments, but thought that leaving reality and sadness was worth it. He also thought that he would only do it that day and never again. But the days went by and as he was the youngest one in the group, he had to continue to smoke a joint from time to time to be accepted. He had no money to buy drugs, but they said he didn't need to be concerned with that, because friends are for such things, to share pleasure.

Unfortunately, he started to miss the drug. It was hard enough to wait for the time or day he was with his friends, and many times they had already smoked everything they had, and there was no more left. He thought of a way to have his own drug and not depend on his friends anymore.

His mother gave him a small allowance, so he could eat something at school, and he found a way to be independent. But as time went on, he found that his allowance was too little money. Besides that, his need to use the drug had increased. He started to take the change his mother used to leave anywhere when she got home from shopping, but he was always careful not to pick up everything. Sometimes he would take small amounts from his sister's purse and from his brother's and mother's wallet. But this was becoming dangerous, because they began to argue and suspect that someone was stealing from them. They even blamed Jessi, an old lady who came three times a week to clean the house and make the food they froze for the other days of the week, in view of Vera's lack of time. Jessi had been with his family since Victor was born, and he argued that they had to be crazy to think that Jessi was taking their money. He said that they were disorganized and were probably spending their money on crap and did not remember. As the situation had complicated, Victor would have to find another way to get the money, but without the drugs he could not stay. He had stopped studying, but his mother didn't know. He asked her to sell his bike, saying

that it only took up space in his room, since he wouldn't use it anymore. Vera agreed, advising him to keep the money in his savings to buy something else later or even to use on his studies. He agreed and said he would do it, but he did not.

The money ran out and the little things inside the room were sold, that's when his and his group of friends' petty thefts started. While they were only using weed, they were not aggressive, but with the other drugs they were using they were doing crazy things and challenges. That's when they were arrested by the police.

At the police station, Vera tried to get the delegate to release him, saying that she was responsible for him, however, it was no longer possible, because they were already forming a gang committing petty crimes, and the police were already looking for them. As he was a minor, and because it was the first time he was arrested, he was sent to an institution for minors where he should stay for six months. There he knew other ways to get money and drugs – which he continued to use. They can get drugs there, in the institution, you only need to have money.

Once his sentence was served, he left and promised his mother he wouldn't use drugs anymore. That had been a lesson, and he would get a job to help her. Vera cried and believed that the hard lesson had been worth it.

He would have to get a job and put his plan into practice, because he would have to be very careful now that he had turned 18. Victor was tall, dark-haired, green-eyed and, when taking care of himself, a handsome young man. He started to work out, and told his mother he had got a job selling a new product on the market and that he could get good money out of it. His mother was happy to believe that he was on the right track. It looked like he was selling well, because he started wearing good clothes and taking care of his appearance. They didn't question him much and his cell phone kept ringing all the time. At those moments,

he used to say it was a sale that he was about to close. So he went out of the room and often did not return until night time. But, in reality, he was working as a male prostitute. Confabulating with his friends at the institution, he decided that he could use his body to make a lot of money, live well and have drugs whenever and however he wanted. He lived several years in this life. In the beginning, his clientele was female, but with the passing of time he did not discriminate anymore. He accepted any kind of client, as long as they paid well.

One weekend, after several orgies and excessive drug use, a client complained. He said he was unhappy with Victor's sexual performance, and sent him away, refusing to pay the agreed price. Victor refused to leave and went to his direction. The client started to dodge him, which made him fall through the window of the apartment on the second floor. The fall caused him broken ribs, a broken arm and a broken hip, as well as several abrasions and a small puncture in the lung. During the hospital examinations, they found a tumor in his esophagus, perhaps due to the use of such a mixture of drugs, bad diet and unruly life. The doctors could not tell whether it was malignant or not, it would depend on the results of the tests they were doing.

Mauro kept quiet for a long time, went to the window and stared at the street. Paulo commented that only Victor's mother came to visit him once in a while, because she worked a lot. His siblings had married and moved to another city, and they didn't care about him, because of the life he had led and the suffering he had caused to their mother. Paulo also said that he and Victor met when they both had exams and had to stay all day together, and he found him very sad. Victor didn't talk to anyone; he just answered the questions of the doctors and nurses.

At the end of that day, while they were waiting for the test results, there were only him and Victor. That's when he started to tell him some things and ask him others. Paulo said,

“It would be so good if we stayed in the same room. If you want, we can talk to them and see if it is possible”. Victor agreed. Fortunately, the good will of the hospital staff and the coincidence of having the same health plan made it easier for them to stay together in the same room.

After a week sharing the same room – on one of those sleepless nights – Victor told him his story. Mauro remained silent. He told his uncle that it was time to leave, gave him a kiss and left. He walked through the streets, but saw nothing. His thoughts were on the story he had just heard and on his current life. He felt a strong desire for drugs, because he didn’t want to think about Victor’s physiognomy, which insisted on occupying his mind, but he fought against the desire.

He went to a park near the hospital. There was a small chapel nearby. He couldn’t remember how long he hadn’t been in a church, or even how long he hadn’t prayed, but at that moment he wanted a quiet corner to meditate and try to put his thoughts in order. The door was open. From inside came a delicious smell of incense, and candles flickered near the images of the saints. He sat down in a place right in front of the altar. When he raised his eyes, he saw someone smiling at him and stretching his hands. Mauro got on his knees, started crying and said, “Please help me, I don’t know your name, but help me.” He cried for a long time and kept asking for help, from his heart. Little by little he calmed down, and felt as if a light breeze touched him; He experienced peace. He lifted his head, thanked and left. He said nothing to his mother about the story his uncle had told him. Deep in his heart he had the feeling that Paulo knew he was using drugs, even though he didn’t say anything.

On the following day he didn’t have the courage to go back to the hospital. He walked on the streets and met his group of friends, with the intention of saying that he would stop, but

the desire was stronger and he accompanied them in their drug use, but he returned home afterwards.

When he woke up, he found a note from his mother asking him to go to the hospital to bring some fruit and a snack for his uncle, who had called asking.

At first, he thought about tearing up the note and not going to the hospital, as he had done other times, but after a long bath he gave up the idea. He probably wouldn't find Victor, who might be in surgery or might even have changed rooms. He didn't feel like seeing him. He would go there quickly and then leave. In fact, when he entered the room his uncle was alone and got happy with his arrival. Playing around, his uncle asked him if Mauro wanted to let him starve to death without his favorite treats. They talked a little and Paulo said that on the day before, his secretary had left some documents for him to sign that they needed to be taken to his office still on that day. So, he was counting on Mauro to do him this favor. Mauro accepted the assignment. It would be no bother, because he would have to go downtown and it would be very simple passing by the office and leaving the documents there. They were talking when the door opened and a nurse came in with Victor, who was on a wheelchair. He looked different, and Paulo even joked with him saying that he was in the wrong room, because that bed was already occupied by his friend, who would soon arrive. Victor gave him a slight smile and said that he had received a "makeover", and he even had his hair cut.

Paulo then introduced them, saying that Mauro was his dear nephew. They shook hands saying "nice to meet you", and just that. Mauro tried to get out of there right away, but when he was leaving, he said to Victor: "I can see you're getting better, and I want this to happen." Victor gave a light smile and thanked him.

Mauro continued with his visits to his uncle and started talking to Victor. Sometimes he would ask if he could do something for him, bring something, but he would always thank

him and say he didn't need anything. Victor was getting stronger to have the surgery, and every day he got better and spent more time talking to Mauro.

One afternoon, the three of them were talking when Paulo said: "How wise life is! He gathered in the same place within this immense world – a hospital room – three people, in different phases, who went through the same experience so that they could have the chance to get to know each other, hear stories similar to their own, and help each other".

Victor and Mauro looked at each other without understanding what Paulo was talking about. That's when Paulo decided to talk to them, because he sensed that one knew about the other's case, although the subject hadn't been commented yet.

Paulo said: "In my youth, I was a drug user for a while. I wasn't totally dependent, I was a weekend user, I liked to smoke a joint. But one day, coming back from my cousin's wedding, where we had used drugs and drank a lot, I crashed my car, my first car. Luckily, I didn't cause the death of my mother, who was on the passenger seat. I decided at that moment that if God helped me and my mother survived, I would never use drugs again. Fortunately, the scare was bigger than what really happened. My mother was only admitted for observation, nothing serious happened to her. She was the only one I had that mattered to me. Our family was not united and we both depended on each other. Mauro, as a former user I know that you are involved, I don't know to what extent, but it is visible to those who have been with drug addicts and, as I was one of them, I can identify you are part of this group. You also know Victor's story because he authorized me to tell it. So, there are three of us in the same boat. Fortunately, it's been more than 20 years since I used drugs."

Victor looked at Paulo and said, "Will I one day be able to count the years that I have no longer used any drugs? Will I be able to do that even away from this hospital and along with all the

temptations?” Paulo thought a little bit about that and answered him: “Victor, you must find within yourself a greater strength. Not the strength of a giant, but the one of love. It is like a little light, a little heat. Sometimes it almost goes out, but if we believe that someone loves us – and this someone is ourselves – little by little the flame begins to balance itself and once again it warms our heart. It’s a long journey, and we must pass through it step by step, and with a lot of awareness of what we really want. Our greatest evil and enemy is to think that everyone is happy and has everything they want and that only we were abandoned by luck. But that’s not so, everyone has their difficulties and their joys. We need to know that difficulties come so that we become strong, know how to enjoy life and feel when good things come. Pain does exist, but there is no point in seeking escape from it in drugs, because the problem that caused it will not cease to exist just because we take drugs. When the effect passes, the pain will continue. Sometimes suffering is for such a silly reason that if you have the courage and go deep to seek the reason for so much despair, you will see that in reality most of it was fantasy, the deification of pain”. Mauro asked him why he had never spoken to him about this subject if he knew about his situation. Paulo answered that there seems to be a Higher Being who decides the right time people should talk, and that day everything was perfect.

After this day, Victor had the surgery and was convalescing when Paulo was discharged and Mauro went to pick him up. Mauro told them that he had met Mari, that he thought he was in love and that he had not used drugs for 25 days. Now he was thinking about going back to school, the same one in which she studied. Paulo looked at him seriously and said, “I think this is great, because I’m going to need someone to help me at the company more assiduously, now that I’m going to take over again – his nephew had continued to do small errands at the company while Paulo had been hospitalized – how about it? Would you

accept to be my full-time employee? But don't think it will be easy, because I am very demanding with my employees".

Mauro hugged him, said that he accepted the opportunity, and that this was what he most wanted at the time; that would help him get up when he felt he was about to weaken. He needed to prove to himself that he was able to keep working and studying. Victor wished them both good luck and asked them not to forget him, which they both promised to do.

Months went by, and Mauro continued working at his uncle's company and studying at night. He found out that Mari was pregnant and, when he told Victor (they kept talking to each other over the phone), he heard that this was a great surprise, and that soon he would have another one that he would surely also like.

On a Monday, when Mauro came to his office to work, he heard a voice that sounded familiar to him coming from his uncle's office, next to his. He thought for a while. Then he got up, went there, knocked and entered. At first, he didn't recognize him, but when Victor smiled Mauro gave him a long loving hug. Victor was unrecognizable, his hair was well cut, his beard was well done, he was stronger, well dressed and very elegant. Paulo then told the good news. Victor had left the hospital and had called him wanting a chance to start his life again. Paulo demanded that he take a computer course and go back to school. Victor fulfilled the requirement and today he was starting as an employee of the company. He would work in another sector, but whenever they wanted, they could meet to talk and support each other.

It now depended on everyone following their dreams. Destiny had to unite them inside a hospital, so that they could share their experiences, each at their own stage, to feel that there was hope, because inside each one of them there was a faint spark of light with a chance to stay lit and give strength

to go on, each day as a new chance to overcome this monster that was now identified as possible to live with without further involvement. It would certainly be difficult, but if they believed and had patience, reviewing the past that made them suffer so much, each day would be a victory, and the desire for fulfillment would be achieved as long as they occupied their time and mind with things that gave them satisfaction and pleasure.

The last time I spoke to Esther, she said that Mauro was the father of a beautiful girl and, from what it looked like, he had abandoned drugs, because he was no longer spending time with his old group of friends; now his time was spent between work and his daughter. Esther and her son spend many weekends together, and he seems serene. She cried and said that, before, she did not believe in God, but she began to pray and ask for help when she found out that she was losing her son to drugs, and He answered her. The struggle was long, but it was worth it, and she thanked me for telling her that when you don't know what to do, you should ask God for help, because He can show us the way.

During her fight to get Mauro off drugs, many nights Esther called me crying, because it looked like everything would fall apart. I encouraged her to believe in God, to live one day at a time and to give a lot of love to Mauro – who never knew that his mother had discovered his experience with drugs.

The last news I heard from Mauro, even after Esther's death, was that he was still working and living with the mother of his two daughters.

Esther was very wise. She did everything without confronting her son, or demanding something from him; she took him by the hand and showed him another way: the way of solidarity, where someone was also in need of help and encouragement to live. And it worked!



GOD'S ANSWER

When we throw a seed into the ground, it has a certain period to sprout, and we have to have patience and wait for its cycle to complete, because each type of seed has its own germination period. Only then small roots begin to grow and, little by little, leaves begin to appear above the ground.

If we don't wait, if we start messing with the seed, it probably won't grow. Everything is programmed by nature itself: the roots are born when the seed has its nutrients ready for development; the leaves leave the earth when roots can provide nutrients capable of making them develop. Everything is perfect and has its time. Sometimes it can happen faster, depending on the right amount of water, heat and fertile soil.

When we pray asking God to help us achieve something or overcome a difficulty, we want the solution to come immediately. We feel sad thinking that God is not listening to us when He does not answer us quickly.

Prayer is a seed that we throw to the universe and if we do not do our part, watering it daily with clear and positive thoughts, fertilizing it with confirmation of our desires, it will not germinate. It also needs fertile soil, which is our calm heart. Finally, our request must be a request of kindness, and not something to harm our fellows.

We need to have humility, pure eyes and feelings to notice when what we ask is happening. It doesn't always come as we think. It is as if we asked someone for a gift already imagining how it would come wrapped, even the color of the wrapping paper and the shape of it. But it doesn't always come like this. But even in those cases, inside the wrapping is what we ask for, perhaps with a different brand, or maybe a different color than we were expecting, but not without the same meaning.

The same thing happens to the requests we ask God. He sends us what is necessary, but in the way He thinks is useful for us at that moment. So, when you ask for something, be aware of the following events, because the answers come subtly and gradually. If we lose the little drops of wisdom He sends us, we will feel frustrated. It will not be so simple: He will not send us a message in a package by the mail, or an airplane in the sky carrying a banner with giant letters answering our question and saying, "Here is God, here is your answer".

Always remember that asking for something is like planting a seed: do your part and be attentive to the little information, signs and thoughts that come up, because these will be the answers God will be sending you.



STABILITY IS NOT THE
SAME AS HAPPINESS

Juliana is 60 years old. She worked most of her life at private companies, always worrying about taking courses to improve the way she performed her duties, attentive to the needs of the company where she worked, because she knew that the better the company was, the more guarantee she would have to keep her job; and it was pleasant to see things prosper.

She was happy in the morning, when she got up to go to work, because every day something different came up and she liked challenges. It made her mind stay alert.

Within the company itself there was a pulse of positive and living energy, because each one knew that its permanence depended on their production and collaboration. Of course, there were also those who disagreed with the vast majority, by being more concerned with defending their positions and jobs than with producing like the others. They lived by creating gossip among colleagues. Nobody stays for long trying to hide their inability through disagreements, little by little people notice the “rotten oranges” and walk away from them because they have nothing positive to teach.

At the last private company she worked, she was an Executive Secretary. Due to changes in the country’s financial policy, which affected most of the companies in the country, the place she worked was forced to reduce the number of employees before closing its activities. Since

Juliana's salary was the highest one, and despite all her unquestionable ability, the Board had to dismiss her.

At first, she was disoriented because she had lived for this job; she liked the staff and the work she did. As it was impossible to reverse the decision of the Board of Directors, she decided to take a public service exam, because at her age it was difficult to find a job in the private area – a situation that everyone, especially women, face when they approach the age of 40.

She passed on the exam she took to become a county servant – assuming the position and staying in it for a short time – soon being called to assume another position as a federal servant, in which exam she had also passed. As her salary was much better being a federal servant, although she had to change cities to assume the position, she resigned from the county job and began her duties as a federal public servant.

She tried to be as strong as she had been when she worked in the private area. She did not worry about stability, because she used to say that stability is obtained through good and serious work.

She's retired today, but she's still dynamic. She likes to read and to travel and, as every human being, she has her days of sadness, which is normal in life. She enjoys her retired life with intensity and always says that she is retired from her professional life, but not from her personal life. She is grateful for the salary she receives and distributes it wisely between her needs and leisure.

Luciana prepared herself for a public service exam, and said she wanted stability by having a job that would give

her security. She got married, had three children and made her dream come true: she passed on the exam.

As time went by, he became a bitter and sad person, going against what she said she wanted to be happy. She had job stability, a reasonable salary that gave her the conditions to have a tranquil life, a husband who treated her well

She became a lifeless person. She complained about her salary, but she didn't study to get a better position; she had no stimulus to get out of her doldrums, because she had her so desired stability. She had no greater challenges to overcome and she usually did the same thing. She got angry when they asked her to collaborate in another sector, claiming that she was not paid to do more things than the ones she already did.

Now, that she is retired, she goes to doctor after doctor trying to find the diseases she claims to have. She has spent a good part of her life complaining, saying that her misfortune for earning little was the government's fault. She has serious stomach problems. A lump has appeared in her breast, she is losing her sight and even making excessive use of alcohol.

In reality, Luciana began to die when she stopped dreaming: she dreamed of a stable job, marriage and children, and she succeeded. However, her life became tasteless. She did not understand that each day is a new adventure. She didn't like to read or to go out with friends when they gathered to celebrate someone's birthday. She did not look at the distant horizon, but only at the tip of her own toe. She did not take advantage of the beauties and all the things that God put at her disposal in this world, for fear of risking and losing control.

Life has no guarantee of happiness, but we find drops of pleasure in every challenge we overcome and our mind becomes more and more awake and demanding, forcing us to always go in search of something different. No matter how much Luciana won, she wouldn't feel joy because she said they don't do more than their obligation to pay her well. But what was she doing for her inner growth? She never thanked for the good things she received.

Juliana and Luciana had equal professional moments in a period of their lives, but the difference is that one did not accommodate when she became professionally stable. She used this to go in search of learning within her own division, always wanting to learn more, although her duties did not require it. She did that just because she felt pleasure in learning. The other one, Luciana, only did what her job required, and that made her world too small.

Professional stability, without fear of losing one's job, gives no guarantee of happiness, not even peace. Life gives us no guarantee that we will be happy if we do not challenge daily the comfort of our existence.

Living is challenging the difficulties that arise in our paths, and not being sure of tomorrow makes adrenaline run in our veins. That is what keeps us alive and confident with each victory; confident in knowing that it was God who made this beautiful world to give us joy and pleasure when we enjoy its beauties and its illuminated immensity.



THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

There are many self-help books showing us the power of positive thinking, and how we can use it to achieve our goals, whether personal or professional. Those books teach us methods of how to embrace the positive thinking.

We live in a world of energy, and we must channel this moving and transforming energy in order to achieve our goals. This desire must come from the heart, with a clear feeling.

For example, if I want a promotion and I put this idea into my thinking, I justify to myself that I am able to perform the function well and be useful to the company and, indirectly, to colleagues who will have the guarantee of the good work I will do. In addition, I imagine that someone else will happily occupy my previous position. In this way, I harmonize the feelings of desire coming from my heart and send them to my brain – this will create a propitious field for the universe to conspire, and everything will happen in order, without hurting anyone.

If, on the contrary, we base ourselves only on reason and materialism and use means that are not always licit until we are able to gain a certain position, the energy that will surround us, emanating from the people we step on, hurt or plot against, will not allow us to have the tranquility to carry out our functions correctly, and each day will be a war to

remain in office and obtain the collaboration of colleagues. It is a very difficult situation. We got the job, but together came all the hurt of the betrayed people and being in that place will not give us real pleasure. We will be seen as warriors who achieve everything no matter the methods: it is the power of positive thinking acting, but ignoring the feeling of respect all human beings should have.

Everything we want is at our disposal in the universe, but learn to listen to your heart first, before deciding what to ask for. Ask with your heart in harmony. Doing that, be sure that what you receive will be much more tasteful, and will give you much more pleasure.



BEING DIFFERENT

I go to a beauty salon, and I have great affection and friendship for John, the hairdresser and owner of it, who takes care of my hair and with whom I have long conversations. In his salon, I was introduced to Isaías, a handsome 18-year-old young man, with a captivating smile, who had started to work with John, helping in hair washing and other auxiliary services, always with great care and attention. Isaías is part of a different population: he is deaf.

With the help of John, who communicates with the Isaías through the Brazilian Sign Language – Libras (he took a course at the University Unisinos, and continues to improve himself), I had for the first time the opportunity to speak and feel what we were saying to each other without emitting any sound. The feeling is inexplicable and rewarding.

Trying to better understand this new world, I decided to talk more with John about it. He told me: “Norma, what is it like to be different from others? This question I asked myself when I came into contact with the magnificent world of deaf people, known to some and unknown to many. I was delighted to be part of that universe of silence, breaking this barrier. I have shared my space with this world of silence for three years. Deaf people are not part of a nation apart, they are everywhere, and we need to understand the differences between this world and the world of listeners.

They need to be respected and understood as they are. They do not use their voice to communicate, but their hands, and that communication requires love and patience. It is necessary we give up our culture and get into another one, that requires a look of respect, and not indifference or pride (pride because we may think we are superior since we are listeners and able to speak with sounds). God's masterpiece was to have created men, and those men need to be understood and loved, whether they are perfect physically or they have some disability, because everyone has come to this world to learn and exchange knowledge. If we ask what it means being different, we may get a range of answers, such as: the preference for some colors, for different types of food, for people, etc. And why then do we think we are better than some people, since what is right for some can be wrong for others? We also have these differences. We may not be deaf, but often we don't hear our neighbors' cry for help (or our own cry...). And how many hear and are deaf? Listen through your eyes and heart. When I began to share my space with them, I had to adapt myself to everything and everyone.

Once I spent days without speaking, because there were only deaf people around me and I had to communicate only with my hands, without using my voice. And I must say that my voice wasn't needed at that moment, since the integration was total and wonderful. I had to change my habits and live in this world to understand their culture, because to get in this word, we need to respect their history and habits".

And he continued: “Norma, so that you understand what it is like to live with deaf people, I’m going to give you an example through three items, so you’ll have an idea”:

1° – I had to train my eyes and they became even more accurate, because I needed to be aware of the gestures. I needed more concentration, because now the hands were my voice.

2° – I had to train my mind, because I needed a good short-term memory to translate Portuguese into Sign Language;

3° – I learned to always talk to them face to face, because they also use our physiognomy to understand what we are saying and feeling.

Norma, when I say that we must respect differences, I speak with propriety, because I know that deaf people are wonderful. They taught me that I don’t need to listen to be happy, but I do need to have love. Love can help us to find in other people simplicity and commitment. Their sensitivity is very acute. They like to be in places where the floor is made of wood, because they feel the vibration of other people walking, this is an example of the value they give to small things. Love does not need to be shouted, but felt. God speaks to us through feelings, and not through sounds”.

I continue to learn from John and I am grateful that he has included me in his two worlds, that now have become one. Because of his work, little by little the people who can listen are approaching the ones who are deaf, and this way everybody is capable of learning, exchanging experiences and growing in respect and humility.



THE REUNION OF FRATERNAL LOVE

Sida and Nair were part of a family of twelve siblings. Among them, there was a very great friendship. The two were companions of balls, parties and games at church; they were friends and confidants.

Both got married, but the complicity continued to exist, even after Nair and her family moved to a larger city, approximately 90 miles away from the place they once lived. The decision was made in view of her children. They were growing up and needed more job opportunities. Until that moment, they lived of what they could get from the farm.

Nair was sad for having to move and stay away from her sister, but she believed it was the best for her children, who would have the chance of working in a different place.

The distance, however, was no obstacle for the two of them to communicate. It got better when Sida also moved to a city with greater employment possibilities for her children and husband. In this city, she was also able to acquire a telephone – Nair had already made such an acquisition – which would make it easier for them to get in touch. Now it would be possible for them to get closer. They would be able to talk whenever they wanted.

The meetings between the two and their husbands took place two or three times a year, and it was always Nair who visited Sida, since her husband liked to drive and travel,

and Sida's husband did not like to stay away from home. He was a very good host.

The two took the opportunity to catch up and remember the past. They always had what to talk about, even if the visit lasted a week.

In a conversation, while having breakfast and after praying the usual prayer before any meal, Nair said that she listened every day at 6:30a.m. messages of optimism. They were told through a short story narrated by a Minister, who belonged to Sida's religion on a radio station in her town. That used to make her day better. Sida said he would try to locate this station, but unfortunately she never succeeded.

Nair passed away about four years ago, leaving Sida with a very great emptiness and the longing for her long conversations.

Sida's children decided to present her on her birthday with a stereo, so that she could select the songs she wanted to listen to through the purchase of CDs. She was very sad because she had also lost her husband, who was her companion and friend for 54 years, and she was feeling very alone. Of course, this device would not make up for the lack of her husband, but listening to good music would give her pleasure.

They bought two CDs of the Worship Hymns of the People of God and the book *100 Stories of Life and Wisdom*, by Prof. Osvino Toiller, and gave her as a gift.

As she received the book and began to read it, Sida got emotional. There were the stories that her beloved sister Nair had talked so much about. She checked the author's name and history and had no doubts. He pressed the book

against her chest and her eyes were filled with tears. It was the reunion with that fraternal love, so special that now it had fallen into her hands.

God makes things happen in a way we don't know the ways. Her sister is no longer physically present, but each time Sida opens the book and reads its stories, she feels closer to Nair. It is as if the two are communicating again, only now through reading. Each story she reads, she knows that one day her dear sister heard, and the two of them meet again, spiritually, in the words of the book.



LEARNING TO BE ALONE

People say human beings were made to live in pairs, as couples, never alone. It is the law of the Universe.

Previously, we needed a couple. Now, we still need a couple, but that doesn't mean they need to have personal contact. When a woman wants to get pregnant, she can decide what her child will be like, the color of her child's skin, hair, even the color of the eyes, choosing the sperm that will fertilize the egg, not needing personal contact with the donor. There are sperm banks available. I have no knowledge of how they work, but I want to give an example to justify our current situation of loneliness, which has been increasing more and more.

They have changed the ways of procreation, but they have not changed our need for affection, tenderness and company from a partner.

Unfortunately, they still haven't created a way to store human warmth, love, friendship and fraternity, in a way that we would be able to acquire what we need to replace the touch, snuggle, the sound of a voice, a specific smell, companionship and the energy that one human being can transmit to the other one by a simple smile.

We are human beings who still need to share our doubts, our fears; wins and losses. We need accomplices on our journey here on Earth.

I believe that this is why many couples can't stand each other, they live in a relationship that is already strained, and even though they remain together. They do that because, this way, there will be someone who, even if only by obligation, due to a commitment made, will have to listen to them and stand by them, present at least physically.

Each human being is unique. We often say people have found their soul mates, since they make perfect couples. However, if we look closer, we can actually see one person annulling their partner for their own benefit. And this is possible to see even in very simple things. What can also happen is finding a couple where the two people are in the same degree of evolution, balance and have come together to help a group to harmonize.

We came to this world of challenges to learn. We often need to be alone to acquire knowledge.

We still haven't been able to assimilate that we're here just passing through, we are in a school and we will soon return to our home through the soul outcome. At school, what is the most difficult subject to learn? Isn't it the one that irritates us and takes a lot of time from us? It is the same with our life.

If I need to stop depending on others, if I need to have my own ideas and learn to have self-esteem without the benefit of others, I'll probably have to live part of my life on my own, but not necessarily alone. Our fellow travelers will always be by our side, or watching us – waiting for the chance to help us, as well as incarnate people who cross our path.

But we are so concerned with our own belly buttons, feeling sorry for ourselves, that we have not learned to value the smile of a stranger and the “good morning” from a friend. And then we think: “Good morning? Why will this morning be good? I'm alone!” By any chance were we born attached to someone? We were born alone, unique, but from the very beginning several people helped us: a doctor or a midwife, who helped us to be born; the nurse or midwife who gave us the first bath; the kind mother who gave the breast to feed us.

Now that we are grown up, with good jobs, a home to live in, a family that respects and supports us, in good health, we, paradoxically, feel alone.

Think that in each course we are going to take, we feel a little insecure at first, because it's something different, but as we understand what is happening and learn what the purpose of the classes is, we become more secure. Why don't we apply this to our personal lives – which should interest more than the professional? Our professional life is only part of our existence, the rest of the time we should learn to grow, live, live and grow old.

What are we so afraid of when we are alone? Have you ever stopped to think about this? Loneliness? Do you miss having someone by your side? Thousands of people are on your side, but that's not enough for you, you want someone all yours! However, when you have someone, you feel trapped, because the loneliness is yours. You don't solve the puzzle you built with your spirit. Despite the many lives you have already lived and the increasing number of pieces in your puzzle, you are not able to fit any. You don't build an image of yourself.

You spend your whole life looking for someone to complete you, but how do you find the puzzle pieces? They are loose, without shape!

We may have our hiking companions, but we are unique, and each feeling of ours is personal. Being happy depends on the love (specially self-love) we have, because we cannot love another person without loving ourselves first.

Loving someone expecting that this person is going to complete us, even when we don't practice self-love, is putting our happiness in other people's hands.

Love yourself first and let life take care of the rest.



THOUGHTS
DETERMINE OUR JOURNEY

How much space do we find in the media trying to show us that the world has good things too?

The headlines of the periodicals, in bottle letters, generally deal with a scandal, a heinous crime or the prediction of a crisis, shaking the credibility people have in the government.

TV channels also hold the same level of information. Crimes between family members, for example, are exploited, and those involved occupy endless spaces, and their lives are exposed. It is valid for the population to be informed that Justice is fulfilling its role, but certainly there are news that demonstrate love and hope among human beings, but these news, if shown, are quick, without further explanation or continuity of the case.

I have heard several times that tragedies and big scandals are the subjects that sell more newspapers, as well as give more audience ratings on the radio and television, because the population likes and enjoys knowing more about those things.

This is proven, because if you meet a friend, even on the street, and you stop to talk to this friend, soon the question comes: “Have you heard that...?” and you can be sure that

it is a disgrace the person read or heard, a malicious gossip about someone you know (who is probably bad financially) or something bad related to the person's family.

Sometimes the person also says something good about someone, but usually soon comes the malice. If it is the case that a person is in a better financial situation, doubts arise about the worthy origin of the money, as well as how the company's growth or job promotion was achieved.

Human beings, accustomed to being fed with misfortune, have difficulties in seeing the victory of other people, achieved by honest work, competence and objectives set with struggle, determination, correction and dignity.

It is not expected to happen the complete opposite of what we are seeing, reading and hearing. We need to be informed of what is happening in the world, after all, we cannot be dreamers and alienated, thinking that everything is fine, but we can't be pessimistic and believe that there are only misfortunes either.

There is a dispute between human beings to always win or to be better at anything they do. And there is the healthy dispute that does not allow us to settle down in life; this is the dispute for victory over difficulties.

Why are crimes and robberies more and more exquisitely cruel? Because the media publishes with great prominence the crimes committed and the perpetrator has space for visual exposure and gains prestige in the marginal world. There will always be another gang betting that they will do better or with more audacity and take more space than the other. It is a competition for evil.

We are supplied with this news and we begin to feel insecure and angry with those who should protect us and do not do that: our rulers. So we release the energy of anger. This can be felt when we are in a group and someone comments on something bad that they have read or heard somewhere. Then someone else comments on it and cites another case and in a short time you begin to feel as if you are living all those facts and your body reacts by releasing a vibration of anger or discouragement. When we separate from the group and each one follows their day, we carry in our brains all that evil information and, tense, we spread that heavy energy released through the thoughts. Then we don't understand when we get home why our day was so bad and we feel so tired and depressed.

Our thoughts are waves that go to where they can meet their equals, and then they return to us bringing all of the same frequency they encountered along the way, thus overloading our feelings and affecting our physical.

If we know that, why don't we start merging the information disclosed? We must divide the spaces with good news and bad news, just like the world is. Little by little, we get used to (some of us of course) want to hear and comment on rewarding things. It will be a small source of calm energy, but it also makes the same itinerary as the dense one, and it will come back to us tripled, giving us physical and mental reinforcement and great peace. Doing that, we will return home tranquil and with our physical light.

The difference will be felt by the people around us, and curiosity will lead them to think and ask us why we are so calm with the world in the state it is – according to their perspective. There is no point in wanting to make a speech

and trying to convince them to see the world through our eyes, but we should always take the opportunity to talk about something constructive, not failing to listen to their stories, just not getting in tune with them.

Believe that little by little a feeling of lightness is forming in the air, and the more people believe that we are what we think, our world gets better and we spend our positive energies with our neighbors, who need our attention. Then we will see our neighbors as our travelling companions, and not as our enemies.

Our earthly journey will become more joyful and fruitful, and our learning easier, because we will exchange experiences with others in the sense of growth, without fear that our neighbors will become better people. What we do not share dies with us. It is like a good seed that we keep instead of planting. It will dry out. However, if we throw it into fertile soil, it will germinate and give a beautiful tree with good fruit, whose new seeds will multiply and follow a new path, if the process is repeated.



USING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

I had just finished renovating my home, a dream that I had cherished for a long time until I managed to achieve it. During the works, I had to leave the house to facilitate the process and also because of the impossibility of habiting it because of the dust and chaos that every renovation causes. During this period, I stayed at my mother's.

I chose a great architect to design the changes I intended to make, so that my residence would be as I desired. Then, I took care to deliver the project to an honest and responsible builder, already known to me.

Everything ready to begin, I started to be afraid: I would change my small world, a delimited and closed space, and transform it. I would hand the transformation over to other people, and this scared me, although the team was led by a builder of my entire trust.

Since the beginning, I felt as if they were also changing things inside me. I looked at all those people inside my backyard, each one of them performing a different role, like: breaking the plaster, changing windows, doors and the roof, trucks bringing material and removing debris. In a short time, the house was disfigured, and no longer looked like my home.

Like all works, it had its setbacks, but finally it came to an end, in the time agreed, and even better than I was expecting. Of course I was tired of all that confusion, and you can be sure I often stopped and wondered why it all

started in the first place. I didn't want to remember that the house was in need of repairs and that it would be impossible to renovate it without disturbing the structure.

Approximately a month after returning to the finished house, an allergy appeared in my body, mainly in my arms, and also an irritating cough. I looked for medical help, and several exams were performed. However, they didn't find any reason for the skin and the respiratory allergies. I was treated with ointments and oral medication, but we didn't see any positive results, and the medication made me gain 10 pounds.

Time went by and I was not getting better. I was already feeling helpless and very irritated, and that was even affecting my sleep. After ten months of struggle, I started to think about the last events in my life: I had changed my "nest", my home, enlarging it. It was my space, and I was afraid of occupying it. My body answered by transforming the skin of my arms, which are our wings, into a breastplate, and I started to breathe as if my insides were smaller, due to the transformation of my home. It was as if the house was getting big and I was getting smaller. I was afraid to open my arms and take a deep breath.

It was a long learning process. It took me almost one year to start identifying what was happening and that my improvement depended more on me than on the doctors. I had the help of wonderful professionals, both in traditional and alternative medicine. I tried to strengthen myself internally and spiritually.

Fortunately, the same way my allergies came, they gradually disappeared. What healed them? The identification of the real problem.

After getting rid of what bothered me, I stood in front of my house and, for the first time, saw it as it was. I saw how beautiful it was, and felt that I deserved to occupy it with all the good things it had. I had dreamed of my house that way, and now I would occupy it with great joy.

Gradually, things started to get better. My friend, Professor Antonio Uliano, a parapsychologist who applies the Quantum-Alchemical treatment, and whom I have seen for many years, said: “we only learn in difficult times”. I looked for help in everything of good the Universe had to offer and that I was aware of. The path is slow and it is pleasant to notice each sensation reemerging. I didn’t taste or smell for a long time, and how great it is to be able to feel those things again!

During that period, I also had a small home accident, injuring a vertebra. I was semi-immobilized for twenty days, depending on others for almost everything. As I live alone and considered myself very self-sufficient, I learned to ask for help and to receive affection. For all those reasons, today I say that we learn in difficult times, and that the Universe is a school with teachers everywhere. Each one of these teachers has their knowledge, and all of them are ready to reach out to help and welcome all of us. We just need to be humble and know how to ask.



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