

## I CLOSE MY EYES

By Sonja C.

I close my eyes.....and turn towards the sun. I lift my chin up and up a little bit more. The sun pours through my closed lids. It's so bright – a landscape of blazing orange, so intense, it almost pushes me back. I stand tall and still, the warm rays washing all over me. My face, neck, shoulders, arms and chest doused in light.

Time stretches.

The water is the perfect temperature. I'm in the swimming pool doing the last section of the Sudarshan Kriya breathing practice, having completed the breathing sequence and body scan, now just being poised and still. In my mind's eye, I see a little girl in a summer dress, hopping and skipping in a field, chasing butterflies. Bursts of joyous, innocent laughter tumbles out of her as another butterfly escapes her friendly grasp, completely and utterly care free. She glimpses back at her parents with a wide smile across her little face, just momentarily checking that they are still there and on she goes, with stretched out arms twirling and whirling. She's as light as air, she is me.

I see the parents now, holding hands, laughing and smiling, taking in the beautiful summer's day and their daughter's delight. They look so relaxed and happy together. They are a young version of my parents. I stay in the scene. I take it all in – the all-encompassing feeling of lightness of being. There's another loving glance.....

And then I'm back, in the swimming pool, diving into the soothing water, feeling weightless and supported as I glide through the water with no hint of effort.

My mind wants to make sense of what I just saw and felt so vividly. It eventually settles on an explanation – my parents were present as their higher selves, with fully regulated nervous systems which created a safe and loving container enabling me to be joyous and free in their presence. A deep sense of self-compassion washes over me. I can't remember ever feeling like that in their presence. How I wish I did. Next, a sense of compassion for my parents washes over me, how sad that they too did not learn from their parents how to self-regulate and be fully present in the ordinary. How sad for all of us.

The image of the carefree family stays with me over the next days while I keep struggling to sever the energetic cords between me and my parents. Just thinking about them sucks all the energy out of me. Talking to them is not even an option at the moment, their "love" drags me down. I just want to take care of me for a while. I want to nurture and comfort myself. It is enough of an effort to get through a day.

Four days later, we're in my comfy supersized bed. The moonlight streams into the room. The air conditioner is humming. I can tell my eleven year old daughter is in dreamland from her slow, rhythmic breathing and I try and relax into meditation. There is unease in my body. I place my hand on my stomach and follow the waves of breath. I tune into the sensations starting with my face. There is a pulling sensation in my cheeks. I follow it into my gums and my lips. My tongue presses into the roof of my mouth, I feel it behind my teeth, the now very familiar suckling sensation. I've been with these sensations many times over the last months. Can't say that I like it but I remain curious and open. My attention moves down my body, into my legs. There is a sharp pain in my hip and buttocks. My legs feel

like they are twitching on the inside. My breath gets caught in my throat. My legs are stiff. I want to get away but can't. I'm frozen – in terror. There are strange pleasurable sensations in my loins and pelvis. I want to puke but, remain frozen. Time passes or does it stand still? My body goes limp, like a rag doll. What did just happen? I'm sad but there are no tears. I am numb. Am I in shock? And then it hit me – this is an old body memory from way before I could remember or talk.

Tonight was the night my body allowed the terror to surface, because it felt safe enough to do so. I glance over at my daughter, relieved that she is still fast asleep. It took some time for me to fall asleep, my mind looping, searching for explicit memories again. How many times have I racked my brain for evidence that my father sexually violated me? But tonight, this night, there is no denying it anymore. I felt the chilling truth in my bones. This strange night marks the end of all the crazy making questioning, denial, minimizing and normalizing of how I feel around my father. How being in close proximity to him makes my skin crawl. It explains my recurring childhood nightmare that came back with a vengeance when my daughter was born, with the strong inclination to protect her from him, for no logical reason.

It explains how inherently broken and worthless I have always felt since kindergarten, the deep sense of shame that has always been with me.

It explains the migraines, night sweats and addiction.

It explains the subconscious choices I've made throughout my young adult life, putting myself at risk of harm.

It explains how I didn't trust the love and safety I grew up with.

It explains how I felt 'less than' in the most significant friendships and partnerships in my life.

It explains the depression and anxiety.

It explains why my nervous system's default setting is freeze.

It explains the rage I've uncovered towards my father, why I want to annihilate him.

Was this the root cause of it all?

How many times have I wished living a new story was easier? How many times have I wished I could be done with trauma work, for it to have an endpoint?

I feel my feet on the floor. It may be that this journey has no end.

So I just take the very next step. I return to the present moment. I return to practices and visuals that make me feel safe, secure, nurtured, comforted, supported. I sit with the expansive questions, beliefs and visceral feelings I am learning to embody. I work with triggers and limiting beliefs as they show up, learning to be with the unconscionable emotions and body sensations. I focus all my attention on building a regulated nervous system, creating and recreating - again and again - a safe, calm, peaceful place where I feel connected to something bigger. It's here where self-compassion finds me. It's here where I can give myself credit for working through the multi-generational trauma passed down to me. It's here where compassion can incrementally surface for what was done onto me.

In this space I can declare; "I am a strong, courageous woman. I have sovereignty over my body, mind and soul. I am learning and growing all the time. I am connected and guided by Source which I am

beginning to trust deeper and deeper. My choices reflect my values of trust and growth more and more. I am stepping into my inherent value. I dream big and ask for what I need. I allow goodness in. I am never alone. I am living it all – experiencing the exquisite beauty, spontaneous joy, deep peace, immense gratitude, soaring freedom, my own voice as well as the grief, sorrow, despair, shame, rage, horror and disgust. I am becoming more and more regulated to be with it all.”

All is well. There is a new world behind my eyes. The world in front of my eyes is following suit.

I close my eyes.