

Plank

Rosh Hashanah 5781

I remember being in a Yoga class and coming into plank (not my favorite pose) and after a while as my strength was waning, and my arms were beginning to shake, I heard the teacher say, “Breathing deeply, Take your awareness inside, experiencing the energy and sensation, not shutting down to it or just waiting for it to be over. Choose to feel. Whenever we choose to feel, we’re choosing to be alive in that moment.”

And now as this pandemic time and this era of social unrest, environmental danger, economic uncertainty and turmoil drags on, I hear her instructions.

“Breathe deeply”— Don’t let the shallow breath of anxiety take hold. Take the fullness of this moment all the way in, in spite of you discomfort.

“Take your awareness inside,” — This is a moment of great potential. It is a moment of unprecedented opportunity for spiritual awakening. Yet if we are only fixated on outer events, the news, the precarious shaking of everything we thought should be stable... we’ll be lost in despair and victimized by fearful imaginings. Our inner awareness can show us the Oneness of which we are all apart. Our inner awareness can show us the great expanse of Soul that thrives on the process of death and rebirth. Our inner awareness can open up a well of unimaginable Joy that can see us through painful times.

“experiencing the energy and sensation,” — Let the fullness of our grief become a doorway to greater compassion. Become curious about the potential of this moment as it is unfolding right now. Let your experience of this energy and sensation find expression through your unique voice and instrument.

“not shutting down to it or just waiting for it to be over” — Yes, it’s the hard parts of life that actually hold the most potent keys to transformation, but only if we stay present, surrender to what is, open, soften the hard edges of our resistance, interrupt our patterns of denial and reactivity, trust in the mystery that’s unfolding through this painful time, and stay curious.

“Choose to feel.” — Choosing to feel means choosing NOT to numb ourselves through false comforts, but instead to be with this moment, which is a moment of opportunity — a moment that is dynamic, changing, breaking us open. Choosing to feel means NOT distracting ourselves from this present moment with our grasping for the future.

“Whenever we choose to feel, we’re choosing to be alive in that moment.” — This means experiencing this moment as a threshold, a doorway opening up onto the vast landscape of possibility.