

Day Two: Triage Tango

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 11 November 2016 18:06

Another election. Another Veterans Day. Another round of triage. Yes, it's a new day. Welcome to Group.

Might be nice to start out this session by reminding everyone that those five Kubler-Ross stages of grief are not linear, bim, bam, boom, and all-done. Elisabeth Kubler Ross has herself had mixed feelings about coming up with that scale, saying it was always meant as a guideline, not a serial shopping list of tasks to be done, and crossed off in that specific order -- nor was it meant to exclude other facets.

So, as we move through our reactions and feelings, it might be helpful for us all to remember that each person experiences grief in his and her own way, and each person works through it in an individual way, too. There will be setbacks, repeats, stumbles, dance steps done out of order, time-outs, new steps added in...

Try to think of it as celebrating your own personality and path -- don't penalize yourself for grieving in your own way, in your own time, and in your own fashion. Mark your own progress with yourself, not others. Don't rush it.

Meanwhile, If you're looking for prescriptions, here's some that are pretty cheap, effective, and easy on the system: Build in more time for the people, events, and activities you already know you enjoy; pleasure, love, and laughter are nice distractions, so to say. Other suggestions? Music, movies, reading walks in the park; pamper yourself a little, treat yourself, and do it on purpose, with meditative Zen focus. Hug more, too.

Or, as our dog friends would say: wag more, bark less. (Dogs are Zen masters. A lot of good can come from observing their behaviors.)

And limit the time you spend consuming -- and dwelling on -- bad news. A little goes a long way. No reason to buy scuba gear when you can have a better time snorkelling.

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There will be time later for action -- for volunteering, joining the fight, whatever you think is right. For the moment, though, it's OK to go inward for a little while, and rest. Trust me, the dragons will still be there when you come back. There are *always* dragons.

While you wait and rest, some advice: *As your mom said, stop messing with it -- give it time to heal.*

* * *

I've been launching my attention span between and among sites, watching the news, tracking down news and analysis vids, reading articles, frenetically jumping around websites, like a scalded frog leaping in search of safe, cool, green lily pads in this sudden hot springs of a pond. Finally, I force myself into doing favorite things I know I enjoy but have neglected doing these last 29 years -- that vague period of time between Tuesday and Today.

I've been looking around, during sanity breaks, on various websites for an old list I remember admiring hugely. (Sorry -- I've been trying to jettison that word, "hugely," lately.)

It was a list of ten or so bullet points, under a general heading of Let Your Dog Teach You How Best to Live Life or some such. I haven't been able to find the list online anywhere. The added frustration of such a small thing, I am finding, is not helping. My formerly, nearly-infallible memory -- normally helpful in squirrelling away any odd mental knick-knacks -- is no longer orderly, indexed, and well-maintained.

I imagine that past chemo and radiation treatments, and a prior brain seizure -- a literal one, a while back, not the most recently-performed figurative one on Brain Salad Surgery Tuesday, I mean -- have been selectively zapping memory cells in my head.

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There's no way to know what's missing until I reach for something. What used to be at the end of an instant search function of the mind is just Dead Space now, a black hole. Cards from the file are strewn around and missing. The tape has erasure spots. The showboxes are off the shelf. Something has cross-circuited to B, as it's been said. It's a failure of reach-and-grasp, to be sure.

For a language person to mentally cue up a certain word and find that cupboard not only bare, but no longer a cupboard, and no longer hanging on the wall -- and to find the wall itself missing, along with the house, with only deep space left in its place, is an unsatisfying IOU from the Universe...

So, yeah, these *other* frustrations, like *Zombie Election-geddon-opalypse* aren't helping.

My plan: I've been randomly running a lot of dog videos I happen to find. Old movies. New movies. Comedy albums and clips. Music and music and music. YouTube must be raking it in more than ever, between their new, ultra-frustrating and super-high-volume spot-loads -- pushing their paid service again, I see, as if Google doesn't already have most of the money on Earth that Apple and Microsoft couldn't gobble up or inhale fast enough.

So, here we are, millions of gobsmacked Americans clamoring for mental-health, trying to apply some jellied video salvation into our brain cells in an attempt to help absorb the physical shock of such a rapid, and no-notice, deceleration from Warp Bazillion to Planet Stoponnadime.

As they say in long freefalls, *it's not the drop, it's the stop.*

Thing is, the stop hasn't yet stopped. True, we are not where we thought we'd be now -- that's one thing. But having your stubbornly reliable transporter beam materialize you inside of solid rock, or within a steaming, 300-pound hillock of Yurmka-beast manure is another.

OK, time for more dog videos.

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I'm currently favoring ones in which dogs are shown howling with wolves they are hearing on TVs in the livingrooms of their households. *I understand, Buddy, I really do.* Sometimes, I join in. No police yet.

* * *

It's the little frustrations in life -- as always, but especially right now. Like: I broke my glasses. I was rubbing my face while walking away from the news feed, head reeling, trying to reboot my brain on Tuesday, and the glasses fell off, on the floor, in front of me. By the time the *STOP AND RETRIEVE* signal had gotten through the morass of brain-Drano fizzing away inside me, my foot found them on the floor for me.

Yes, the way a long freight train, all the way up to speed, *finds* a stalled VW on the tracks.

* * *

I remember Doing The Right Thing during the Vietnam war era. I try not to feel like a sap, or invoke the No Good Deed Goes Unpunished mantra, especially when I see how little Veterans Day means to most people -- how the rich boys skated away on flimsiest of excuses, with deferments carved from the thinnest rationales and moral codes this side of self-interest, self-preservation, and the perpetuation of wealth.

Now, seeing one of these spoiled little rich brats also admit he's smart because he shovels his tax load to the backs of the poor to pack up the hillside for him...

But, then, this alleged human has said literally thousands of vile and objectionable things -- any one of which would have disqualified him from nomination, let alone victory?

I am no altar boy. But I object to having ANY altar made so retchedly unthinkable by such a

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hellish lout. You want to know America's future? Look at the past actions and speech of this man. ***And Be Not Surprised, no, not at any Thing Which is Done.***

I should have gone to Canada when I had a chance, when they still accepted American political refugees. You know, like America used to do, in the era Before Trump. (No more AD or BC, no more BCE or CE -- just Year Zero, and then, we start counting again, trying not to refer to 2016 BT or before.)

Commander in Chief? This jackal, this jackass, this horse's arse? He doesn't know his ass from a hole in the ground! (Or, as AP or UPI style guide once tried to make clear: *It is expected you will know your burro from a burrow -- your ass from a hole in ther ground.*)

But, I am housebroken. I konw well enough to respect the office if not the man. If I should meet King Donnie, Lord Donnie-Boy, I will address him properly. As a civilian again, I am free to ignore the directive to not criticize those in the chain of command, especially while in uniform. *And so, as a civilian, in my sweats, I hereby urge Herr Trump to go pound a few cement mixers' worth of sand.*

Happy Veterans Day, everyone. Enjoy your Big Veterans Day furniture store, car lot, and clothing outlet mall sales today -- you know, down at ConsumerLand Village, where all the little buildings look like Disneyland for the idle rich who aren't yet tired of going for, or being taken on, another ride...

BTW: Heavy leaning on the booze does you no favors. Almost forgot.

* * *

It's madness, all of it.

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But, then, I already knew that, even before I starting looking around for Clues On How Such A Thing Could Happen Here. I have stopped looking. There are both too many answers and no answers at all. There are excuses, I guess, but not answers -- not *reasons*.

Reason has nothing to do with any of this, of course -- not now, hasn't for decades. I know this, and have for decades, and I keep forgetting -- or am too stubborn to stop hoping and trying to break through those barricaded doors to the other side.

In the first place, each side is wired differently. It is like we have been invaded in the 1980s by an alien species. And now, their makeup has finally worn off -- or the brain-control rays used on us are no longer keeping us in line as they used to do.

One side, see, is mostly ruled by facts and logic. Another side is mostly ruled by feelings and emotions. One side keeps trying to argue the facts and logic of the matter -- to no avail. The other side fails to hear and/or interpret, instead moving on to wailing about how fearful they are, how they feel such-and-so is the way to go.

And so it goes, and has gone, for decades. The louder the facts and logic are argued, the louder the roar of fear and feelings. Noise: 89 quintillion and change; Communication: Zippo.

(People: As a favor, if you are talking about thinking something, please say "thinking," and stop saying "I feel..." □ You drop about 40 IQ points when you do that. □ Say "nuclear" and "nook-you-lure" and you can drop another 50 right there.)

The last 30-plus years of Electronic Toxic Media Mind Stew hasn't helped, since mindless, Rightwingnut Shriek Radio and TV have been jamming through the airwaves, sending out Hinky Insanity Mindscramble Waves instead of regular information and reports.

You can't argue with a sick mind. You also can't have a meaningful conversation with anyone not speaking a common language. Having long ago become a splintered, fractured society of a zillion selfish *ME!* groups, we all have increasingly less in common, surprisingly fewer channels to discover and exchange similarities.

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The Republican dream of *Let's Make America 'Leave it to Beaver' Again* ain't gonna happen. Just like reminding GOPpers that everything they came to love about America was pioneered, fought for, and put into place by *liberals*.

Back to dog videos. □ It's a process, it's a process.

* * *

I see California and Oregon are each thinking of seceding. Hell, a petition has already been filed in Oregon. I admire their gusto. Hell-squared, California alone has the world's 5th largest economy. I wonder if they are out of room there yet -- if it's as hard to get residence there as it is Canada?

Oh, wait -- Michael Moore says we have our to-do list, and going to Canada is not an option. (It never was. Most Americans are stunningly unaware of the long, expensive path to Canadian citizenship.)

I wonder if the immigration lines are long for Norway? New Zealand? Iceland? Tasmania? (Sorry, Michael -- you're right. It's just my pain and fear talking.)

* * *

Early on Election Day, aka *Ashen Tuesday in the Year of the Scorched Earth and Scalded Sanity*, I ran across the 50-billionth GOP rumor of the week -- that there were busloads of Mexicans coming across the border at San Diego, in order to illegally vote for Hillary, and rig the elections.

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I laughed aloud in a festive manner, not yet being acquainted with *The Doom Befalling All Humanity*, arriving as it was at Spaceport 9 later on that news cycle, and thought at the time about starting an amusing rabble-rouser of my own, in which I would say millions of Canadians are streaming across the border, voting illegally, in order to dilute the GOP vote.

I should have done it. I should have begged and pleaded. *Maybe if I had eaten all my vegetables as a kid...*

* * *

I'm thinking about Trump's ghost writer's observation, that everything Squire Trump says is projection -- that it's basically a stream of confessions about something him, about something he has done.

Explains all the babbling, dribbling drivel about rigged elections.

I know: *dog videos*.

* * *

- You can't bargain with insanity, a voice told me, in my head.
- I know that, I said, irritably.
- Hey, pipe down, we're watching something over here, a third voice objected.
- This neighborhood is way too noisy now, a fourth complained.
- A fifth grumbled something unintelligible, looking around in the cluttered and unkempt livingroom, trash and food containers everywhere, trying to locate a new fifth.
- I'd like to take the fifth in more than one way, said a sixth.

(I never get any decent sleep any more for some reason, I heard myself wondering aloud.)

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Sometimes, there are so many answers there is no one real answer.

This is entirely unsatisfying, but it does not make it less true.

* * *

I wonder why there is no Naderesque hue and cry about spoiler votes this time around? I might have to look into state-by-state stats, to see if it would have made any difference. Just curious, I mean.

See, I *get* the aspect of casting a protest vote -- but Trump was bad enough. Going for *Shoe-Si ze-IQ Gary*

or
No-Thinking-Inside Jill
was just pouring liquified bacon fat, and napalm, on an already-raging grease fire of a protest vote.

You wanted things shaken up? You got it. But, you forgot to ask Bad Santa for the defanged version of your toys. You forgot to ask your Fairy Godfather for the non-lethal version of your gifts -- complete with fast-acting antidotes.

Merry Electioncide, all, and a Happy Meltdown!

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It's the little frustrations that really add up. The big ones are just the triggers, the ones testing out the broke-back camels for good measure and good luck.

I think this house here (an early, 1930s experimental statement in the *American Nothing-Special school of DIY architecture*

) may have been built on a ancient burial mound. Or the real-life set of *Poltergeis*

t. Certainly, it was built on ant-hills and spider-mounds going back to the Cretaceous Period.

Haven't got my shoe back yet from that really big one I tried to stomp in the bathroom. And the ants keep nudging the fridge closer to the side door. The cat looks at me with a "Hey, how come *they* can be all over the counters, and *I* can't?" look. The cat has no idea a plague is again upon us.

I shrug, and refer the cat to the dog, chilled, Zen, and sleeping, out by the pellet stove, trying to stay warm. [pause for doubletake] OK, had to check. For a sec, I thought it was Looney Tunes time, and the ants were being dog-bed bearers, and easing *him* off to the side door, too. Nope. Good so far.

Right now, *Good So Far* sounds like the best we're gonna do.

Remember to breathe, the pamphlet said...

Land o' Links:

Trust Trump?

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http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/can-us-intelligence-trust-donald-trump-806337603729?cid=eml_mra_20161111

Light reading:

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/511928.html>

Howl with me, won't you?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdQJVGZmp-E>