

A Different Kind of Emergency

As always, it begins on my yoga mat. From time-to-time, Denise will say “Now come out of the pose slowly, gracefully. There is no emergency.” This is how I found myself deeply contemplating the idea of emergency. I got to thinking about the word emergency and its relationship to the process of emerging. I began to think that there might be a different kind of emergency – a kind that was actually the antithesis of the traditional meaning of the word and was instead more like opening to grace.

My contemplation took me to the dictionary, which I will sheepishly admit is the most used bookmark on my iPhone. I experience words like “zip” files (or mantras) with the dictionary (and google) as the magic unzip utility that reveals a treasure chest of meanings, connections and histories for every word.

The official Merriam-Webster definition of emergency is “an unforeseen combination of circumstances that calls for immediate action”. One of the official definitions of emerge is “to come into being through evolution; to come out into view”. It turns out that these two words aren’t officially related. But that didn’t stop me from me thinking about them. I loved the play on words.

What first struck me was the idea of the unforeseen. I interpreted the word “unforeseen” as a reminder to not apply my mind or my intellect. My mind likes to look into the future, to see the answer, to know what to do. When I do or act from what I think I know, all I get is my past thrown forward and there is nothing unforeseen about that. If I truly want the unforeseen then I must *wait*. Not only must I wait, I must wait in a place of not knowing. *Oh god, not that, anything but that*. But as it turns out, oh god is exactly right because it’s in this place that my divine self and my divine wisdom can emerge. Thankfully, every yoga pose is an opportunity to practice this kind of waiting and not knowing.

I am discovering that waiting and not knowing form the foundation for my emergency practice as I need to go deeper into myself before anything can emerge. Wendy’s reminded me of this the other day in her beautiful and awesome class when she spoke about deepening our roots. As I was thinking about this, my dictionary travels had taken me from the word emerge to the word merge. It turns out that the word merge is related to the Sanskrit word *majjati*, for “he dives”. Aha! I was indeed onto something. It was an invitation to dive into myself, to deepen my roots, to return to my midline. From there, I can rest into the unforeseen combinations of circumstances with grace. I imagine myself a lotus – roots deep in the sweet mud of the divine core so that the divine heart can open to grace.

My emergency practice has also taught me that when I wait and dive into the “unforeseen”, I will indeed be called to immediate action. Though, not the kind of immediate that is related to time. That is actually the *fourth* definition of immediate (leave it to us westerners to focus on *that* one). The first definition of immediate is “acting or being without the intervention of another object, cause, or agency”. This is the kind of immediate I experience. It’s the immediacy of my deepest wisdom, my heart and my soul, *without the intervention* of my mind, my ego, my “shoulds”. For me, this kind of immediate action brings with it a stunning clarity – a “*know-it-in-my-bones*” kind

of clarity. This kind of clarity is powerful because it transcends the crazy suffering that comes from trying to push for action with my mind. Magically, my emergency practice puts me in the flow of grace.



I've discovered that my emergency practice is at the root of my ability to live authentically, to offer my deepest heart to the world. It reminds me of what Douglas Brooks, the philosophical father of Anusara Yoga has said about Shiva and Shakti. He says, "Shiva is about the mining of the core and Shakti is about the burnishing of the jewel." My emergency practice then is the process of living the energies of Shiva and Shakti. The burnishing of the jewel happens as my soul's call to action emerges from my core into view of others and into *interaction* with the world. Once there, the rubbing up against love or challenge polishes and evolves me. The images of Shiva and Shakti also remind me that my emergency practice is more of a dance than a process. And what is so delightful about dancing is that it is inherently non-linear. As the quantum physicists claim, *non-linearity is crucial to emergence*. I find that such a relief. I have never been able to think straight and I know my heart and soul care nothing for linearity. They are not logical. They do not always "make sense". They just are. All they need is a little emergency.