



From Trauma to Empowerment By Angel True

At first I just thought they were yelling at each other like they do so often. Then they got louder and then it started to sound like something was about to get dangerous. Growing increasingly annoyed and then concerned I finally looked out the window to see what my next-door neighbors were doing.

Smoke was billowing out of the back basement window. Their house was on fire!

My body and mind jumped into action. I grabbed the phone, called 911 and clearly and calmly communicated the emergency, stepped out onto my front porch to see if they were ok (which is surprisingly hard to determine when you don't speak the same language), panicked slightly when they started ripping something off the front of their house (ultimately to successfully rescue 15 birds they had as pets), tended to the safety of my house by letting my cats inside and closing the windows, moved my car out of the driveway which is right next to their house – and then stopped to watch in intellectual fascination as a process I had been trained to understand the progression of as well as be able to respond to unfolded in my next-door neighbor's house 20' away from mine.

When it was all over their house was destroyed. Much of the material objects and guts of the house now sits in burnt piles sprayed with foam in the driveway and yard. The windows are almost all broken and the entire interior of the house is coated in dark black soot.

The next day I awoke and realized almost immediately – I was in shock. I could feel the physical and emotional trauma reactions in my body and knew I needed to take care of myself. Over the next several days I did what I knew worked best for my body's physical care, I asked for and accepted the emotional support of my friends and family, and engaged with a colleague for a therapy session to work through the details.

I was clear and aware of what was happening and did everything I was supposed to do – and still I struggled with the entire process.

Trauma reactions can be subtle and deeply affecting – even hazardous. Fortunately I am well versed in the tools to identify them, have a strong body awareness to recognize the sensations and have the resources available to me to manage them. Not everyone is this lucky.

Emotional trauma can be one of the most invisible and devastating injuries, often lasting for years afterwards. It can also be an opportunity for incredible growth. I chose to take this option.

The experience of trauma gets deep into the emotional psyche and cuts a path that few other opportunities (or in this case injuries) provide. The opportunity is that of becoming opened up and receptive to attention and work. Trauma builds on the insecurities and fears we each carry around with us. It strikes us down in the places we are most vulnerable. Since these are typically difficult places in our emotional makeup to reach the freshly cut path gives us much easier access and opportunity for shift. As the trauma knocks us loose from the vice grip our mind creates we can reexamine and grow from this opportunity.

For me, I took the opportunity to identify and call out some latent fears and behaviors that I had struggled with in the past. These were fortunately the areas that had been taped into from the trauma. I took the opportunity to reinforce the strength of my convictions in ways that will continue to support and shift those latent beliefs and fears. With gentle examination I was able to see the opportunities and areas for growth and capitalize on this opportunity.

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By taking the direct approach with dealing with my trauma experience I was able to not only wash away the residual feelings but create a new association of the feelings and sensations. I was able to create an opportunity for empowerment around these core feelings. As a result I have turned what could have been a damaging and lasting event into a place of strength and power where I have learned new skills and created strength and clarity where previously there was weakness and blur.

Most people will need strong support during a process such as this – I certainly did. There is also a need for strong self-awareness or the support of someone trained to elicit the necessary information. Finally it helps to have a strong support network of friends and family who are available to give energy and time when needed.

What areas of your life are affected by trauma? What windows of opportunity might this create for you? How would shifting from trauma to empowerment change your life?

Are you ready to tackle life and live with empowerment?

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