

ANYTHING DOES HAPPEN (IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN)

Anything does happen; it is true. Recently I was saying 'anything can happen any time' – and then something did happen. A Wednesday morning. I was in the middle of teaching a five day Yin yoga course at home. Life is constantly surprising with its swerve balls and sudden shifts.

Feeling a bit faint, I thought to stick my legs up the wall rather than the morning meditating. I stand up...next thing is that I am lying on the 1st floor landing, curled into ball, bleeding, confused, whimpering. I had fainted at the top of the stairs – it happened very suddenly because I had fallen headfirst down the stairs. 14 stairs from top to bottom. En route I banged into a sizeable crystal, breaking it into two with my head. I think that I have a thick skull!

It could have been much worse. I could have fractured my neck. I did lacerate my head on that crystal (or maybe the crystal slowed down my slide and prevented me from breaking something more precious – who knows).

Strange how these things happen. I have fainted before – the last time was at a meditation retreat: one moment attentively sitting, then feelings of faintness, then prostrating myself in front of the teacher. Maybe meditation is bad for me.

It has taken longer than I expected to begin feeling brighter and more in body. At the actual time of the accident, I did not even think that I would have to go to hospital. How good I can be at pretending that it is all going to be ok. Instead there was an ambulance and at hospital thirty plus stitches and various tests.

For about ten days it was hard to read and I felt stunned. And I had all these plans! I was in the middle of teaching this intensive (fortunately friends stepped in to make sure that it continued relatively smoothly). It took about two weeks after the accident before I felt energy coming back. Three weeks later I continue to have issues with my left arm.

The osteopath says there is some nerve irritation at C5/C6. I cannot do chaturanga dandasana. When I try to do this press-up posture, there is limited strength in that upper left arm. I literally collapse to the ground. What a blow to my ego! I must have done this posture more than 100,000 times in my yoga practice – and right now it is beyond the boundaries of being possible. I know this will change.

I am very grateful to the NHS. To the ambulance crew. To my friend who was staying here when the accident happened. He held my head and made the necessary calls. To the skilful stitches that were woven into my head and eye. For several days I looked a bit like Frankenstein. I am also grateful for the wonderful aftercare that I received from friends and my wife. The oils and ointments that salved my wounds, the massage treatments, the Reiki, the rescue remedy, the acupuncturist, the deep healing of resting that can arise from restorative yoga, the amazing support and love received. An insight: I measure more what I give to other than what I receive from other. A practice: to consciously appreciate all that I receive in this web of life.

I have been trying to observe pain and discomfort as sensations. Notice that – and notice what happens next. Such clear teaching. And so difficult. I took the painkillers. I got

deeply frustrated, ending up watching funniest cat clips on youtube – which were not really that funny. There were definite feelings of dispiritedness, the grey clouds were rolling in. A crucial difference is that I am able to see them. That they are less sticky than in the past. It has been tough. The sharp sensations of vulnerability. Post-fall feelings of hurt and restrictions, soreness and wounded.

I teach about the preciousness of life and the precariousness life. I have been reminded of the abrupt truth of those words. A good lesson. A great teaching of the uncertainties and unpredictability of life. My plans were put on pause. More good lessons. Who knows what can happen? This is the collective experience of life.

A learning – again! – that I am dependent. That things continue even if I am not in charge. I surrender to the fall: it was a long way down.

A friend recently sent me this poem about the Japanese artist, Hokusai:

*Hokusai says look carefully.
He says pay attention, notice.
He says keep looking, stay curious.
He says there is no end to seeing...*

*He says everything is alive –
Shells, buildings, people, fish
Mountains, trees. Wood is alive.
Water is alive.*

*Everything has its own life.
Everything lives inside us.
He says live with the world inside you...*

*It matters that you care.
It matters that you feel.
It matters that you notice.
It matters that life lives through you...*

*Look, feel, let life take you by the hand.
Let life live through you.*

(by Roger Keyes)

How well can we bounce? What do we learn?

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18 June 2016