

10 Steps For Healing From Public Tragedy

By Sheridan Hill

Healing from tragedy depends on asking the right questions. Start with: *What is this doing?*

During this time of grief-upon-grief, aside from what must be done with emergency plans and hospital procedures and public and private safety, you must take care to ask the right questions at deeper levels.

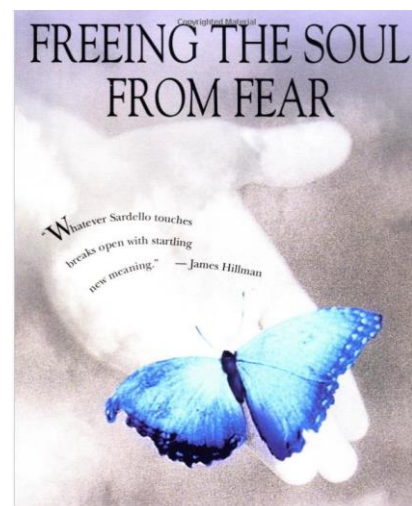
One of the smartest men I know, spiritual psychologist Robert Sardello, has a gift of asking the right question. I was lucky enough to work with him in the 1990s, when his school was centered in North Carolina. He often said, regarding a disturbance of any kind, "The question is not, 'Why did this happen?' nor 'How did this happen?' The question, at the soul level, is '*What is this doing?*'"

We are living in the illusion of the opened Pandora's box, with horrible things flying out in the form of man-made and nature-made violence. What these tragedies are doing, each one coming so quickly after the other, is torquing up fear at the individual and collective level. And there is only one force strong enough to combat fear, and that is the force of love.

It must be said that what this is doing at the soul level, all this violence of every kind, is asking us to generate more love in the face of fear. I know this seems like a high-minded ideal, but if you will stop and breathe into it, make yourself sit down and allow the possibility of "love defeats fear" to descend into your body, you will feel the natural truth of it.

However, it's a bit more nuanced than that.

In "[Freeing the Soul From Fear](#)," Sardello writes that fear has much to teach us about love. "Fear can sharpen our alertness, and we can utilize this quickening of consciousness to become more perceptive of the varieties of love."



He cautions against over-sentimentalizing love. "The notion that fear can do no harm if I just love more intensely and continuously is quite egotistical, not to mention naive. Love is really very little under our control. At best, we can work to make ourselves adequate vessels of love so that it can flow through us and, ultimately, into the wider world."

Ten Steps for Healing From Public Tragedy

1. Do not watch videos of the tragedy, not a single one. Because it wrenches out your soul and replaces trust with fear while increasing your tolerance to violence.
2. Do not search out photographs of the tragedy, not a single one. Same reason. If you want the news, listen to the news one time, and the next time you find yourself exposed to it, pray for the dead. Pray for the living. Remain in a prayerful state.
3. Refuse to chime in about how bad the world is or how bad people are now, as opposed to...whenever.
4. Take time today to acknowledge, in one small way, that you are sad. That all of these people being out of control makes you afraid. Makes you want to hide.
5. Make one small gesture of healing for yourself. Light a candle and give thanks for one thing. Smell a flower and take in, fully take in, its beauty. Stop when you hear birdsong and let that sound bring healing to your deepest layers. Smile at a baby, and receive what comes next.
6. Physically shake the fear out of your body; do yoga, dance, jog, swim, walk. Move it out, press it out, at the cellular, physical level.
7. Rather than judge the shooter, take time to search your own conscience and see if there is someone in your life who needs more love from you now. Who needs an apology from you now? Follow Ben Franklin's advice and, "Never ruin an apology with an excuse." A proper and perfect apology is simply: "I understand. I'm sorry." Repeat.
8. Refuse to hide. Go to where people are gathered in a place of love and trust and prayer, and sit with them. Even if you don't say anything.
9. Keep believing in your fellow human.
10. Hold onto hope. Believe what Emily Dickenson said, that Hope is the thing with feathers / that perches in the soul / and sings the tune without the words / And never stops at all.

P.S. Repeat.

(C) 2017 Sheridan Hill. The contents of this blog are protected and are part of an upcoming book on grief. Sheridan Hill hosts a monthly [healing circle](#) in Black Mountain, NC.

Learn More About Pandora's Box

The Greeks had much to teach us about the intersection between what is human and what is divine, about what we think is "evil" and what we think is "good."

Although Greek mythology can be difficult to read, and the characters so numerous that they're hard to keep track of, one wonderful website I found this morning has pared down some of the myths to an understandable skeleton that still reflects the deeper meanings. The below version of Pandora's Box was taken from *Greek Boston*, <http://www.greekboston.com/culture/mythology/pandoras-box/>

The story of Pandora's box begins with the story of Zeus, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus were Titans but pledged their loyalty to Zeus and the Olympians, since Prometheus was born with the special power of prophecy and knew that Zeus would defeat the Titans. Zeus rewarded Prometheus and Epimetheus for their loyalty and gave them the job of creating the first creatures to live on Earth. Epimetheus formed the animals and gave each a special skill and form of protection.

Prometheus took his time molding man, and was left with no forms of protection since Epimetheus had already given them all away. Prometheus knew man needed some form of protection and asked Zeus if he could let man have fire. Zeus refused. Fire was only for the gods. Prometheus ignored Zeus and gave man fire anyway. For this, Prometheus was punished. Zeus tied him with chains to a rock far away in the Caucasus Mountains where nobody would find him.

Every day Zeus sent an eagle to feast upon Prometheus' liver, which grew back every day so that Prometheus would have to endure this torture daily until Heracles found Prometheus and killed the eagle and let Prometheus go.

This torture wasn't enough of a punishment for Zeus who also believed that humans should be punished for accepting the gift of fire from Prometheus. To punish man, Zeus created a woman named Pandora. She was molded to look like the beautiful goddess Aphrodite. She received the gifts of wisdom, beauty, kindness, peace, generosity, and health from the gods.

Zeus brought her to Earth to be Epimetheus' wife. Even though Epimetheus' brother, Prometheus, had warned him of Zeus' trickery and told him not to accept gifts from the gods, Epimetheus was too taken with her beauty and wanted to marry her anyway.

As a wedding present, Zeus gave Pandora a box (in ancient Greece this was called a jar) but warned her never to open it. Pandora, who was created to be curious, couldn't stay away from the box and the urge to open the box overcame her.

Horrible things flew out of the box including greed, envy, hatred, pain, disease, hunger, poverty, war, and death. All of life's miseries had been let out into the world. Pandora slammed the lid of the box back down. The last thing remaining inside of the box was hope. Ever since, humans have been able to hold onto this hope in order to survive the wickedness that Pandora had let out.