

Gifts of the Economic Downturn

By Jane Faulkner, Founder, Embodied Living, LLC

“What we can or cannot do, what we consider possible or impossible, is rarely a function of our true capability. It is more likely a function of our beliefs about who we are.”

--Anthony Robbins

Incoming ABA president Carolyn Lamm claims that the impact of the recession on the justice system will be at the top of her agenda. I ask, what gifts may come of this economic downturn?

It's hard to see the benefits if you have watched your job or your clients disappear. And this recession has affected us all. Yet a time like this offers the opportunity to take a hard look at our relationship to money and security, and to align our behavior with our values.

In *The Seven Stages of Money Maturity*, George Kinder compares our developmental process around money to the story of Humpty Dumpty. We start out round and whole, and then money and its contradictions enter our lives. Our parents tell us “time is money,” when we thought that time was for play. We hear from one parent that “money isn't everything,” and from another that “money makes the world go round.” In the face of these contradictions, Humpty Dumpty “suffers a great fall onto reality's hard surface and we shatter.” [pp. 42-43]

To stay safe, make sense of the world, and be part of our family's culture, we as children often adopt some version of our parents' beliefs. Or, we may reject those beliefs out of hand and rebel. But whether we embrace or react against our parents' beliefs, those early messages take root in our bodies and minds at the subconscious level and begin to drive our behavior. We operate based on someone else's belief system, and not from our own values, integrity and vision.

As Kinder notes in his book, each of our money beliefs contains some kernel of the truth, but not the whole. The whole truth always reflects both sides of the coin. Take “money isn't everything.” True in part, and yet, money can be the difference between meeting or not meeting your needs; money can empower you to live from your passions and values in the world.

So, how do you connect with the beliefs that drive your behavior? You might begin by writing down the family messages you received when you were young. I find that it helps to use the exact language your parents and caregivers used. What did they say? And how do you feel when you read those messages? Does your body contract or relax? Where do you sense the feelings in your body?

My family believed that “hard work is the key to success.” Another strong message was that “having fun” was something you do in your free time after your work is done. Following your heart and playing with your passion was not part of the program. When I am stuck in the old beliefs, I feel a sort of heavy dread in the pit of my stomach. When I am living from my heart, I feel clear, joyful and grounded—an open and soft feeling in my body.

So notice the feelings you have when you read your own early

messages. Do they remind you of feelings you've experienced in the past year? If so, our current economic climate is probably showing you an internal conflict about what is true and important to you right now.

If you can spend time feeling in your body and listening quietly, those feelings you will likely discover have information for you. Try a dialogue with your feelings on what they have to tell you. This is an opportunity to recognize your truth connects with your deepest values and the vision that grows from those values.

Now let's think about abundance. How does abundance show up in your life? Does your energy expand when you consider the abundance that you do have, whether it is in money, relationships, natural beauty, fresh food, fun, laughter, or imagination?

What happens to your energy when you feel fear about the economy or think your security is threatened? Does it contract and decrease?

Our truth, though grounded in reality, is not based in fear. My clients and I have learned that our passions, creativity and heart-centered desires are central to our success, and that true security lies in staying connected to those parts of ourselves. As with the successful women lawyers I've been profiling on my blog this year, when business is based on passion, we are willing to work hard to bring our vision into form in the world. (*Women Lawyers Thriving in Their Own Firms*)

I invite you to align with your truth, reconnect with your wholeness, and find abundance during this recession.

References

- Firm Hand for Hard Times* (ABA Journal Law News Now, August, 2009)
- The Seven Stages of Money Security* by George Kinder (NY, NY: Random House 1999).
- Women Lawyers Thriving in Their Own Firms* (series of 7 interviews found at <http://embodiedliving.typepad.com/>)

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