



## **Who's Running Your Life?**

**By Ross Bishop**

This may surprise you, but you don't run your life. You might feel in control because you make the decisions, but what is it that guides and controls your decision making process? Where do all those different voices and influences come from? Are they all yours? And, in the larger view, who or what decides what's going to happen in a life in the first place?

For centuries we were taught that, it is our responsibility to manage our lives and that we will be held accountable for the things we do. Later science came along and taught that life was random and that we were free to do as we pleased without recrimination. Today some different ideas about life and who is in control of it are beginning to emerge. These are not new ideas; they've been around for a long time. But, with the changes that are occurring in the world today some people are beginning to look for other explanations.

According to one alternate view, you came to earth to learn to live from a place of compassion, and your experiences here are shaped and guided by the requirements of that process. This view holds that the Universe is giving you opportunity after opportunity to deepen your compassion and to bring to your attention the places where you close your heart.

Taking this perspective, all the things that have ever happened to you (we call them difficulties and problems) have actually been opportunities created for you to learn to live from a place of compassion. Whether to a former lover, your parents, a friend who hurt you or the jerk who cuts you off in traffic, all these situations have been created for the specific purpose of giving you the opportunity to be compassionate where you once were not. That view flies in the face of science's belief that life events are random, but today one finds fewer and fewer adherents to that philosophy, even in the scientific community.

Consider your own life. (And this is worth taking some time with pen and paper to do.) List the major situations you have experienced and look for the learning aspect contained for you in each instance. You will find every situation involved your learning to be more compassionate - often toward yourself, by the way. You will find this to be true IN EVERY CASE. That is way, way beyond simple coincidence. You do not have to like what other people do by the way, but that is

another discussion.

And, this brings up an important but related point: you are not going to like the process. None of us likes being pushed where our hearts are closed. It is threatening, and it hurts! We closed ourselves off out of fear and pain long ago and we don't want to get pushed back into that circumstance again! Guess what? What your ego wants doesn't really matter. That's what I mean about you not being in control of your life.

Down the road a bit this idea is going to come as a surprise to lot of people, especially here in the West where being the master of one's fate and being responsible for one's life is a big part of the culture. Believing that they are in control of their lives, when things fall apart, people condemn and criticize themselves unmercifully. After all, it's their fault, right? They're not smart enough, attractive enough, secure enough, worthy enough, etc., etc.

Many people despair that they aren't "where they should be" in life. Believe me, if you were supposed to be somewhere else, you would already be there. It's that simple. Like it or not, you are exactly where you need to be to learn what you have come here to get. But as a result, many people are frustrated or even angry with God for they way their lives have not developed. Things haven't gone as they desired. They have tried to be happy, they have been given problems, and it feels unfair. And, from that point of view, it is. Our prisons are full of desperate and angry people who feel that life has been unfair to them.

If you only look at life from the human perspective, it can be difficult to see the greater process at work. You pray for peace and The Universe reflects back to you the things you are doing to deny yourself the joys of life. Since we have free will, it's about all that it can do under the circumstances. This is the way The Universe works, this is the way life works, and we don't like it! It would be much easier if The Universe would just give us peace, but it can't and we wouldn't learn anything if It did, and that is a very important consideration.

If you look at any situation, you will see an opportunity for learning contained within it. The more powerful the situation, the more powerful the potential learning. It isn't that the Universe is being cruel or unkind (although it can certainly feel that way!), it's just that in your pain and your fear are contained a set of assumptions, implanted over many lifetimes that get in your way today. These are things like, "I can be hurt" or, "I am unworthy," or "God doesn't love me" or a dozen other beliefs that keep you from uniting with your core consciousness. You have returned here to dispel those falsehoods. That's why it is essential to understand what is really going on.

Changing the fundamental view that the life process is a grand learning opportunity profoundly changes the self-condemning burden we all carry regarding our "bad" decisions and "mistakes." These things suddenly become

necessary (painful but necessary) steps on our path to becoming more complete beings. Instead of being victimized by the vagaries of life and other people's peccadilloes, we can step back and see the larger process of human evolution at work.

Does that mean that we would end up with a world full of people not taking responsibility for their actions? No. We are not built that way. Actually, you could be irresponsible today if you really wanted to, but it's not our nature. What would change is that we would no longer have a massive part of society living in guilt, shame, and unworthiness and their offspring: alienation, despair, rebellion, and self-destructive behavior.

The Columbine Massacre was a terrible tragedy, and some people paid attention. The recent tsunamis in Southeast Asia touched a great many people's hearts. Was it worth 300,000 people's lives to bring the rest of humanity closer to their natural compassion? Yes. And, this is how it comes most of the time. If you look back over the whole of human history, the path of our existence has largely been a struggle against injustice. Whether they were economic, social, racial, religious, ethnic or gender based, most of our wars, and all of our revolutions and civil strife have been about inequalities of one sort or another. What's inequality? Not loving one another.

You don't have to volunteer to go rebuild Indonesia, although some people will be drawn to that. Nor do you have to rush out and volunteer for Habitat For Humanity, unless your heart moves you to do so. So what should you do? Sit on the couch, turn on Oprah, and wait for enlightenment? No. Life does not work that way. What is being asked of you is to open your heart to your neighbors, your partner, and your kids and mostly to yourself. The question is, how close to home is it going to have to hit before you get it? And, the challenge is going to grow, because The Push is beginning. What's The Push? The Push is to get you and everyone around you to learn to live in harmony with the Universal Principle to:

#### **LOVE EVERYTHING**

Good, bad, scary, sweet, disruptive, or harmonious, the goal is to learn to love the process. No ifs, ands or butts, just simply love everything and everyone. That is not a new principle. People have been preaching it for centuries. What has changed is that the energy behind that message is being ramped up dramatically even as I write this to you. Most of you already feel it.

You don't have to like what is happening, but if you work at it, you can come to see and appreciate the powerful opportunity for change contained in even the most difficult and trying of circumstances. If you will conscientiously practice *Loving Everything*, you will make major steps in your journey home. We generally think of closing our hearts in relation to other people, but the person you close your heart the most to is yourself.

There are very important things that you do need to do. And, you do control that part of the process. You may not be able to direct your life, but you do get to decide how you will feel about the experience. And, this is the secret: **The quality of your life experience is not determined by what happens, but by how you respond to it.** Life does not change; we change our relationship to it. You don't have to like what's going on, in fact, much of the time you are not going to like what is happening, but the challenge is to remain open-hearted and at peace, regardless of what comes your way. As Aldous Huxley wrote, "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."

You are going to have feelings. We all do. But, feelings come and then move on like a bird outside the window. You can hold inner peace while having feelings. You can be angry and still be in your heart – if your anger is sincere and clean. (By the way, this is one place where a meditation practice helps a great deal.) So, hold compassion for others as they struggle through their learning processes, no matter how dysfunctional it may seem to you. Speak your truth and hold your ground, but do it with love.

The problem is that most people go beyond their feelings into emotion. They move out of the immediate situation and into fears created by their past. You chose your emotions. Events don't come with a script that says, "You must have this emotion in response to this event." In fact, your reactions have much more to do with your past conditioning than with what is happening to you in the moment. The trick is to choose compassion in every situation. Yes, it can be difficult. But, no one ever said that this was an easy process. Actually, it is easy, but we make it much more difficult than it needs to be.

I want you to try something. As you read these words, get in touch with who or what you are you not loving right now. Just take a minute and allow yourself to feel compassion for the other, especially if it is yourself. Notice how you change. This isn't about them and it isn't about the relationship. It's about you feeling better in your life. It is simply not worth being invested in all the tension and anxiety we create for ourselves.

People are always looking for simple spiritual exercises they can practice; well, you are at ground zero. Take any legitimate spiritual teaching of the last 5,000 years and there will be one message to it – "Love others and love yourself." Jesus, Buddha, The Bhagavad-Gita, or the shamanic traditions of a thousand tribal cultures all urge people to do that one simple thing.

If you will begin to practice moving to a loving space with each and every breath, I will guarantee that your life will change. There it is – you now have a guarantee. So ask yourself, "What is it that I am hanging on to, anyway?" It's an interesting question. So, the next time you feel yourself getting upset, angry, scared or up tight, just take a moment and move to a more loving space. Love them, love the situation, and especially, love yourself for whatever you are feeling. This is

especially important if you are not pleased with what you are feeling. Change your feelings if you can, but allow yourself to be where you are, even if you don't like it, free from condemnation and judgment. By the way, how much good has all that condemnation and judgment done you over all these years, anyway?

The other person may still be a jerk, and you may not get what your ego wants, but you will feel differently about what happens in your life; and for a whole host of reasons, that is a very important thing to do. The most important immediate reason for doing this is that it changes your life. (And, it is surprising how many people resist doing that.) The thing is, as you become more loving and compassionate, The Universe "backs off" your lessons. The Universe is here to teach you to love, and as you get the lesson and start living more in harmony with life and other people, you don't need as much "training."

I'll make you a deal. If you earnestly practice loving others and yourself, and if your life doesn't change, I'll come over to your house and wash your car. How's that for a deal? What you are going to have to eventually look at is why you resist making the changes that you know will bring you the peace that you say you desire.

Today from where I sit, I know that everything that happens in the world does so for the mutual learning of everyone involved. Holding that perspective requires faith, which I have gained from years of banging my head against an immovable wall. And, to many of you that will sound familiar. Yes? I didn't always feel this way, but I now know that what's going on in Rwanda, the tsunamis in Southeast Asia and the kid in Baltimore who gets hooked on heroin are all doing exactly what they need - for their own learning and for mine (for ours), regardless of how we feel about it. And yes, you and I are an important part of that process because our response determines the quality of our experience. So, if you are not happy about your life or the state of the world, go out and hug somebody. Hug them in a hundred different ways, but do it. Do you want to world to change? Do your part. The world will take care of itself. Do you want to change? Do your part. And remember, anything that you do not love will turn into a lesson.

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There are a few longer articles that address parts of this subject that are available on my web site [www.rossbishop.com](http://www.rossbishop.com). You might want to read: "Why Can't I Heal?", "Why Is Life So Difficult?", "Are You Happy?" and "Opening The Heart." As always, I welcome your thoughts, questions and comments. Just write [uncleross@qwest.net](mailto:uncleross@qwest.net)