

The Amazing Grace of Pain / The Power of a Smile

By Kimberly Wallis

I had tried to dodge it. For months, pain had hunted me, taunting. After having relatively no problems with my mouth, and blessed with beautifully white, straight teeth (the oldest child of an orthodontist who had no need of her father's skills), things began to change as I entered my twenties. Slowly, tooth decay, gum degeneration, and dental situations became more the norm.

I had, however, through life's experiences, become convinced that, somehow, I would find the path to healing my mouth's down-hill situation. Having proven to myself beyond debate, the certainty that I held within me all the answers to my life's questions, I clung to the hope that I would find this particular one in time. Realizing that few, if any, would understand my quest, especially any designated "expert," I could not shake my inner conviction that through a life of love and peaceful searching, I would find what I was looking for.

I dodged the dentist's promptings for surgery. I stopped going in for cleanings and checkups. Instead, I researched, pondered, and brought into my life the steps I could take personally in an effort to heal the situation of my mouth.

Notwithstanding my faith and determination, all the while putting into action the healing protocols I felt drawn to, the last four years has seen four teeth depart from my mouth; each one increasing my determination to find the way to regenerate its once pristine environment.

Saturday was the first day of my seminar on discovering and living a joyful life with children and the child inside each of us. I had woken up with a tooth situation that had become more and more intensely persistent. I realized that with my increased workload of the last few days (having additionally taken on one-year-old triplets beginning at 5:30 am), in addition to the stimulating thoughts and impressions in preparation for my seminar, I had neglected sleep—my powerful ally in health, thus creating imbalance in my body.

Resolving to put it all behind me through service, the pain quieted down somewhat. However, through a series of fortuitous events, the seminar was dismantled partway through day one.

Driving home, I returned a call to my oldest son, but was unable to participate much in the conversation because of the increasing distress of the entire left side of my jaw and face. Telling him we could talk at another time, I went home and did something I had hardly done for two decades: I took an extra strength "Tylenol." I was doggedly trying not to succumb to a degree of hopelessness that I had not allowed myself to feel.

After about thirty minutes, the edge of the pain had gone. I half-wondered if perhaps my attempts to avoid medication had been erroneous. Although I felt other effects as the drug made its way through my body, being highly aware and sensitive to any drug, I was grateful for the relief and told myself that only in a state of peaceful consideration would I be able to deduce the best path forward.

Calling my friend, Beth, she came over and administered three ear candles in my hopes to help the situation. Soon after she left, the pain descended again. More Tylenol helped me make it through the night.

The next morning, I could feel the waves of painful spasm increasing in both their intensity and their frequency. They seemed to resemble the contractions of labor I knew so very well. By now, two extra strength capsules were not doing anything. I was in such horrific, nearly constant pain that I wondered how I could deal with life, much less my three year old daughter who had no concept of what was happening to her mother nor how to help.

I found that by kneeling on the floor, leaning my head down, pulling out on my left ear canal, and blowing through my finger-plugged nose relieved some of the pressure inside. Deep breathing, rocking back and forth, swathed with essential oils, and searching inside for the “happy button” in my mind, I did all I knew to alleviate what I was experiencing.

I only had a few seconds between pain spasms that I was able to think clearly, yet, during those few moments, I left a message with my cousin, Tyler, a dentist in town. After surviving the next cycle, I tried to call Beth, only to get her answering machine. I wondered what more I could do. I decided to call my daughter, Alyssa. Fortuitously, she answered. She and her new husband had slept in and missed church, had just gotten ready and were walking out the door to their next meeting, otherwise, she would not have answered her phone. She said she’d be right over.

I continued my “attempts-to-diminish-the-pain-exercises” even after she came. Between the rippling waves, in short bursts I explained a bit of the situation. She was able to track down my cousin’s cell number and get through to him. Hearing the panic in her voice and words, he advised her to get me immediately on 8 milligrams of Motrin every six hours and bring me in the next day for some emergency treatment.

After Alyssa and Krystal arrived home from the store, I took the medication that had been prescribed. It was now 10 am. Enduring the next hour through clove oil reapplied to my gums and lavender oil on my neck and jaw and my continuing “alleviation exercises,” I waited in hope and anticipation of the Motrin clicking in. It wasn’t appearing to.

At 11 o'clock, it had now been an hour since I had taken the medication, with no lessening of symptoms. Hoping for some form of relief, I made my way into the shower, importuning the "heavens" for the help I knew it was trying to deliver to me. Stepping out, I realized that I had been training my children to get immediately back to their "balance" each time they were "de-railed" - through smiling and peace. I realized in that split second that I could at least try to smile.

In my initial attempt of a small smile, a portion of the pain was "pushed back." Oh, my Gosh! I smiled bigger. More pain diminished. I smiled in the most contorted huge grin I could muster. THE PAIN WAS GONE! COMPLETELY! No way! Really??? While getting dressed and combing my wet hair, I was able to waylay the pain for the next full two minutes!

As amazing as this discovering was, I also felt somewhat chagrined. Here, I had been teaching and training others to let everything go and to just "be happy!" I had known that it worked when in emotional pain of any kind, having proven that repeatedly through innumerable experiences in my life. I had taught my children to overcome their "owies" by "getting happy" and smiling. I had now proven the power of purposeful, intense smiling even in excruciating, debilitating pain.

I had long ago "remembered" to be at peace and happy no matter what my life's experiences happened to be. I had even managed to live in that state nearly always. Through the years, I had been led to utilize this belief and to experience some amazing discoveries. Now I was being offered an opportunity to take that understanding to a new level and power.

I beamed a huge, bizarre smile over my pain-blotched face as I made my way in to my daughters. Through squinty eyes, I relayed my discovery while we all, in baffled amazement, rejoiced.

Over the next while, I continued my face-filled grin. Although I was aware of the painful spasms attempting to make themselves known to me, they seemed as if in the far distance of my brain. There were a few minutes, however, when the pain reared its ugly head even as I was smiling. At this point, I broke out into a big chuckling laugh, entreating my daughter to join with me. Although she felt initially awkward about just laughing over nothing, it was hard for her to maintain a fearful, stoic attitude in the company of one so comical. My deep laughter further averted the pain.

I was performing a miracle on myself. I was raising my "near-dead" body.

Now, the songs, fingerplays and poems I teach to pre-schoolers take on even greater importance: "I AM Happy!" "If you chance to meet a frown, do not let

it stay, quickly turn it upside down and SMILE that frown away,” etc. There is awesome power in the smile!

I have continued to smile, play only happy thoughts in my mind, and seek reasons and non-reasons to laugh. It has now been two months. I have had many thoughts and impressions fill my mind and heart. I am grateful beyond expression for this latest experience and thrilled over the prospects it holds for helping others.

My friends and I had postulated that it would take a cataclysmic miracle of some kind to bring the attention and interest to the world of the simple, yet life-altering message of the power of happiness that I would love to share. Was this perfectly-timed lesson of mine what we have been seeking? Wowsie wow!

It is my belief, and the impetus to my newly embarked “grand experiment,” that a steady diet of the “fruit of joy” (a.k.a. happy laughter and joy-filled thoughts) will not only heal the situation in my mouth and sinus cavity/ ear canal, but, I believe with all my heart, will rejuvenate my entire body. I seek to bring forth the “fountain of youth” hidden from me all these forty-five years—right under my own nose.

After alleviating the pain, I have earnestly desired to never forget the magnitude of this powerful lesson. I pondered on how I wanted to keep a constant reminder to continue smiling—always. Then I realized: the “Grand Scientist” has created me with just this very opportunity! When my smile relaxes and should my spirit ever eventually “fall” again through fear of any kind, pain of some kind will slip in to guide me back to remembrance.

I now realize that the sensation of “pain,” in whatever form it may present itself, once viewed as a menacing enemy, can truly be an incredible gift. I have come to view discomfort as my soul’s awareness that I have lost my balance. The pain is instructing me that I must consciously bring into my heart and mind the “JOY” that I was created to experience. I have learned to do this through my pro-active smile and laughter. It is really so very, very simple.

I find it interesting that the “happy button” in the brain that I had been tutoring the children in my care to “push” when they had experienced times of emotional and physical distress is activated through the toggle switch of a huge smile. Bringing the outer edges of the lips up to hook on the cheek bones turns the light back on.

I now realize and fully accept that mortality holds no power over me. I have overcome PAIN! I have overcome FEAR! I am FREE!

PEACE, Laughter, non-judgment and allowance of others, while following the “voice within” are “the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE!”

What will a steady diet of this “fruit of true joy” bring? I can only take an educated guess.

Here’s to a miracle!