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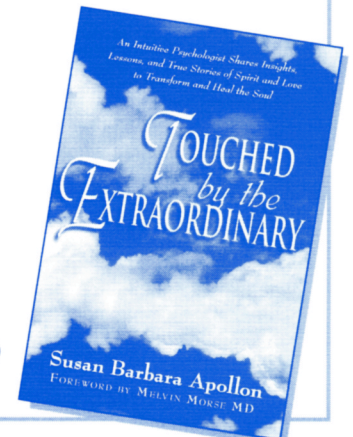
**Dealing with “Hurricane Pain”:
Six Ways to Face, Embrace, and Replace Your Hidden Fears**

*Susan Apollon, an intuitive psychologist and author, says that seeing
other people’s losses and tragedies evokes the fears associated with your own.
Here’s what you can do about it.*

Yardley, PA—The tumultuous human struggles that have held our national attention during recent natural disasters—namely, Katrina and Rita—probably have you feeling a little, well, under the weather. Lethargic. Moody. Anxious. Depressed. Frightened. Perhaps even agitated and angry. If you and your loved ones were safely inland during the hurricanes, you may wonder why you’re having such an intense emotional reaction to the plight of people you’ve never met. Is it simple human compassion? Or is something else going on?

Actually, yes, says Susan Apollon, author of *Touched by the Extraordinary: An Intuitive Psychologist Shares Insights, Lessons, and True Stories of Spirit and Love to Transform and Heal the Soul* (Matters of the Soul, 2005, ISBN: 0-9754036-4-8, \$19.95). Your “hurricane fears” feel so personal because, in a very real sense, they *are*. Research has shown that we can be traumatized by watching others who are experiencing trauma, especially those who are in danger of dying.

“Disasters affect most of us in a fairly predictable way,” she explains. “First, we feel intense curiosity: we stay glued to the TV, wondering what will happen to these people we see struggling to survive and sometimes not making it. Our curiosity quickly gives way to fear as the scenes trigger memories of experiences we’ve had that feel similar to those we are watching.



“Watching such scenes activates emotions like terror, sadness, grief, anxiety and a sense that we’re losing control. We identify with these people because there have been times in all of our lives when we’ve felt hurt, abandoned, powerless, perhaps even in mortal danger.”

In other words, your current malaise may be directly rooted in a childhood trauma or the death of a loved one or a miscarriage or an experience you had in Vietnam. We’ve all suffered losses in our lives, some severe, some less so. The disasters you view on TV become triggers evoking those uncomfortable memories and affecting you emotionally. Your present level of depression and/or anxiety will be influenced by the severity of your past losses—especially those in need of resolution.

Of course, no one wants to relive the pain of earlier traumas every time a disaster-ravaged or war-torn landscape is depicted on the evening news. But what can we do to change it? The answer, says Apollon, can be summed up in one word: *awareness*. Becoming aware that you’re not feeling good—whether you label that emotion as anxiety, fear, or sadness—is the first step in healing yourself.

As Apollon tells her patients, any time you notice a negative feeling stirring around, you must “face it, embrace it, and replace it.” She offers the following suggestions for doing just that:

- **Become aware of not feeling good.** Ask yourself some honest, soul-searching questions: *Why am I feeling so bad right now? What am I thinking? What do the images I’m seeing on TV bring to mind in regard to my own life? When have I felt this way before?* Apollon says this questioning is the hardest and most critical step, because part of you wishes to not deal with the issue. Your Higher Self is the part of you that strives for enlightenment, peace, and well-being, and it’s from that part of you that you need to be operating.

- **Find a way to explore and express your fear.** Just sitting in a quiet room and reflecting doesn’t always yield the answer you’re seeking. Sometimes, you have to explore in a more visceral way. Apollon says that exploration may take various forms—talking it out with a friend or psychologist (including replaying a troublesome event as you would like for it to have gone) or even intense, focused exercise—but one of her favorite techniques is journaling. “I suggest writing about your thoughts and feelings every day,” she says. “Write a letter to God, Jesus, Buddha, a deceased loved one, your inner child, or your Higher Self—whomever you feel comfortable addressing. Writing forces you to articulate what’s hidden inside, and profound insights may come pouring out. It provides a release of pain and enables a new clarity of thoughts and feelings.”

- **Allow yourself to feel fear or grief or terror, but don’t get mired in it.** This is the “embracing” portion of Apollon’s three-part formula. Yes, you have suffered losses in your life. They are painful. They deserve to be grieved. In the letters you write, in your talk therapy

sessions, or just in your mind, comfort yourself. Address your inner child—for that’s the part of you that’s come wailing to the surface—and assure him or her that you will take care of him or her. When you’re ready, release your feelings of fear or sadness. “Grieving is essential, but don’t grieve any more than you have to,” says Apollon. “Balance your grief with humor, levity, and/or joy. Realize that what you focus on is what you attract. By taking in a good movie, listening to music, or thinking about something that makes you laugh, you will create positive energetic vibrations that are very healing.”

- **Let your stored “feel good” moments come flooding in to replace your fear.** Just as your cells store fearful memories, they also store joyful ones. By deliberately reliving occasions in your past when you felt happiness, elation, and contentment, you also relive the well-being associated with them. “Breathe in slowly, then breathe out even more slowly,” advises Apollon. “Visualize your connection to whomever your Higher Power may be. Ask that Power to fill you with peaceful energy. Intend to gently push out everything negative as you fill up with love and peace.”

- **Focus on your intent to feel good and as though you are standing on solid ground.** The fears you have stored for so long have almost certainly affected your life in limiting ways. You have devoted so much energy to suppressing them that you’ve forgotten how to really live. Once you process these fears, you can take control of your life and shape it into whatever you *really* want it to be. “Be clear regarding your intent of achieving specific wishes, dreams, and goals,” Apollon urges. “When you intentionally replace your fear with love—and get excited, positive, and enthusiastic *in the moment* about what you want—you can literally create miracles. Visualize what you want: a new job, a new degree, more money flowing in, a renewed marriage. The secret is to feel excited and joyful about your visualized intention . . . and the rest will follow naturally.”

- **Pray. It can’t hurt.** “Always ask for help, verbally or nonverbally,” says Apollon. “I have done extensive research regarding the effectiveness of prayer. My research has shown me that prayer works. The shortest prayer is *Help me, please*. Why not go for it? You have nothing to lose by asking and possibly everything to gain.”

Of course, none of this is to suggest that we should focus solely on self in the midst of national tragedy. Apollon, who sent prayers and healing energy to victims for weeks after the hurricanes, says that helping others is a very valid way to help ourselves.

“What we forget is that we human beings are all connected,” says Apollon. “It is really, literally, true. It’s why the havoc wreaked on strangers is able to touch us in the first place. So do what you can to help those in need. Pray. Write a check. Go through your closet and find clothes to send. Take in a family who needs a home. Of course, you should always do these things, not just in the midst of disaster. Helping others may be the highest manifestation of love, and love always serves us—both the recipient and the giver—better than fear.”

Finally, it will come as a relief to realize that many of the people who survive disasters like Katrina will probably be stronger and healthier in the long run.

“We learn a lot about ourselves in times like these,” says Apollon. “We learn that we have the resources to survive experiences that we never thought we could. In some ways, a disaster is really a gift. It inspires us to take control of our lives and shows us that we have strength and potential to accomplish anything. It brings out our compassion. Much like a near-death experience, it teaches us what’s really important in life.”

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About the Author:

For close to twenty years, Susan Apollon has worked as a psychotherapist, psychologist, and healer, treating children and adults who are traumatized, diagnosed with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses, dealing with death and dying, and those who are grieving. She brings to her patients a gentle blend of warmth, compassion, and wisdom gained from surviving her own illnesses and losses; her expertise and training as a wife, mom, teacher, psychologist, researcher, and student of energy, mind, and consciousness; and finally, her own intuitive development.

Coming from a family of physicians (father, brothers, aunts and uncles, and daughter, Rebecca), Susan’s intent is to heal (emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually), but at the level of the soul—and always with love and compassion. Focusing on the many blessings each of us has, she guides her patients to the recognition that we are here to live life in joy and peace (to be happy) and that the resources for this are within each of us. “Intention is everything,” she often tells her patients. “With love, clear intent and choice, transformation, healing, and very often, spiritual awakening, become our reality. And when this occurs, everything feels wonderful.”

Among Susan’s most treasured blessings are her husband, best friend, and partner, Warren, a practicing orthodontist in Langhorne, PA, whom she has known and loved for more than forty years, and her two grown children whom she respects, honors, and adores—David, a marketing consultant, and Rebecca, a third-year resident in emergency medicine. She has been in private practice in Yardley, PA, since 1991.

About the Book:

Touched by the Extraordinary: An Intuitive Psychologist Shares Insights, Lessons, and True Stories of Spirit and Love to Transform and Heal the Soul (Matters of the Soul, 2005, ISBN: 0-9754036-4-8, \$19.95) is available at bookstores nationwide and from major online booksellers.

For more information, please visit www.touchedbytheextraordinary.com.