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Fighting Terrorism With Enchantment – Part 2

By Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

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Last week we discovered how THE ENCHANTED SELF's first three of The Seven Portals to Enchantment, preserve us from disenchantment and even worse — terror. Let's look at some more ways that we can fight this madness and get back to a more positive way of life.

Let's enter the fourth portal: Making Ourselves the Hero or Heroine of Our Own Lives. Ah, this is such an essential step. And yet what does stress and terror do? They can make us feel meaningless, without purpose, again emotionally flattened. What is good mental health? It encompasses, for sure, a sense that my life not only has meaning but also was worth it. I not only came through difficulties, but the adventure was well worth it! I took the roller coaster ride of a lifetime and came out the winner.

Often times after a shocking event we don't know what role to play or feel extraneous to what is going on at 'ground zero'. These are normal feelings and we must realize that each of us has a unique role and purpose in life that no one else can fill.

Think about the story of your life. How did you get this far? How did your background end up working for you? What have been some of the highlights of your life? Look for the heroic even on a very small scale. I can guarantee that you will have plenty of opportunities to still use your unique strengths and talents.

I was the little girl who kept a secret Girl Scout diary with tons of misspelled words! I wrote every night not knowing exactly why and here I am now with a chance to write to you via the Internet. All that practice was part of my story. You have yours and never forget it!

Could you guess that the fifth portal is Belonging to Tribes, or communities? Often after a terrorist attack people are afraid to go out, join others, go about their business. This is exactly what the terrorists want and it interferes completely with our human needs to belong, to share, and to be part of something. What are some of your tribes special to you? I hope you make every effort to get out and stay connected to them. For me, one of my first steps was going to a local rally and crying, singing, holding hands with strangers and donating goods with lots of others.

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The sixth portal is Finding Mentors. When we are attacked, it is our hope and optimism that is often most attacked and in essence our future. What we need most is to get that back. This is where mentors help so much. We need to find positive mentors everywhere — the heroes on television, friends and positive e-letters on the web, loved ones, good books, fine music and even animals that teach us so much about love and connection. Don't laugh, but laughter is a mentor of sorts. Laughing takes us back to our positive center by teaching us how good it feels to feel good! Who are some of your mentors?

The last portal is the Gateway of Positive Action. Often, when terror strikes we feel helpless and in paralysis. Good mental health requires that we move beyond these feelings. Inactivity is not good for us. Positive action is the best antidote to mental 'poison.'

Why? Because we not only help ourselves but others in the process. We start the chain reaction that eventually sends a message that we will not be swamped by darkness. Remember how much darkness one little candle can get rid of? We are each potentially thousands of candles. What are some positive actions you can take over the next few weeks? Jot them down. These actions can feel good to do and also be good for you as well as others. For me, one of my positive actions is that I am writing to you and I hope that fits the above definition. I enjoy writing to you! I look forward to responses from you and most importantly I hope my message has been good for you!

Dr. Holstein is the originator of The Enchanted Self and a psychologist since 1981. She is the author of two books: The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy and Recipes for Enchantment, The Secret Ingredient is YOU! Dr. Holstein speaks on radio, and appears on television in NY and NJ. She gives lectures, seminars, retreats and audio interviews on LadybugLive.com and is in private practice in Long Branch, NJ with her husband, Dr. Russell Holstein.

Fighting Terrorism With Enchantment – Part 1

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This is the first of a two-part series dedicated to fighting the trauma of terrorism and getting back to a more positive way of life.

Many of you may look at my title and wonder if I have 'lost my marbles.' Let me explain. First let me quote from a wonderful article that was passed around on the web by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D. entitled: Healing From Terrorism Sickness. She states: "The main goal of terrorism is 'intentional trauma' to the living. The concept of doing ongoing psychic injury to thousands and millions 'all at the same time' is an important tactic of terrorists ... innocent persons becoming afraid of life ... (this) hurts the human spirit and heart."

Clarissa then shares many ways to fight this madness including refusing to dwell on what physically depletes us of hope; dwelling in what strengthens us; resting; refusing to think that one is less able

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than prior to the assault, and not stopping pleasures that are good for you.

I don't know if Clarissa realized that her suggestions fit perfectly into THE ENCHANTED SELF's Seven Portals to Enchantment, but they do! Let's go through these gateways and see how they preserve us from disenchantment and even worse --- terror.

The first gateway is the Gateway of Self-Esteem. When terror strikes it is very common to feel vulnerable, of little importance and perhaps even valueless. This is exactly the opposite of how we need to feel for good mental health. To function at my best I need to know on a daily basis that I am 'special'. I have traits, strengths and abilities that all come together, not only to help me lead a life of meaning, but help me feel proud and sure of myself. You do too! What are some of your strengths and/or coping skills? Work with me as you read this and list some. It will be beneficial as we come out of this terror! Perhaps you have stamina, compassion, and an ability to reinvent yourself. Perhaps you are a good at cheering others up or great at making fudge! All of these and thousands more qualify as pluses in living!

The second gateway is Meeting Our Needs. Again, when terror or severe stress hits we often stop doing what is good for ourselves. We feel weak and may let go of a growth experience or learning a new skill that is good for us. Even after the acute weakness passes we may feel unsure or no longer committed to our own goals for growth and development. Again, this is exactly the opposite of what is needed for good mental health. Did you let anything go as a result of September 11th? You might want to make a note about it and also a new start up date.

I did. I didn't do my television show in NYC that month, as we were asked not to come into the city and that was a big loss for me. I really enjoy teaching the public about positive thinking via television. My show, Recipes for Enchantment, not only meets many of my needs but it stretches me and makes me grow further. Yes, I look forward to doing the show this month on the 17th.

The third portal to Enchantment is Recognizing Pleasure and Joy. It is very normal after a shock, in this case terrorism, to feel not only emotionally flattened, but unable to experience joy. In fact, often the person doesn't feel entitled to laughter, a good time, etc. For some it is guilt, for others sorrow. Again, this is exactly the opposite of what we need for good mental health.

We are not only entitled to live lives of joy and happiness, we need too! Does this mean everything goes right? Absolutely not. What it does mean is that we permit ourselves to maintain an attitude that encourages the capacity to experience happiness and joy as often as possible. No one has a right to take that away from us! Now is the time to fight back! What is fun for you? What do you enjoy? What gives you pleasure? Write some of these things down and plan on doing at least three of them within a couple of weeks. For example, I love shopping and last week I really enjoyed buying a black skirt for fall. It was a small treat but it was getting back to business as usual and felt great!

Please stay with me, as next week we will look at portals four through seven. I hope that you will practice positive thinking and start enjoying your life more and more every day. It is our best defense.

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