



I think we can be bridges and pathways for healing when our choices are more than just an either-or disconnecting or not.

Sometimes hanging in there with the discomfort gives me a chance to understand and transform my perception of what I am and what I'm not.

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In response to Janet, I wrote the following: For myself, the world brings such a nonstop flood of things that demean, shrink, and limit, I disconnect if I can from as many of them as possible. But of course it's not a practical option to disconnect from all of them.

And also: In disconnecting from them, I don't renounce the possibility of learning from them.

As an example, I just ceased any further link with a certain chronically crabby jerk. In the aftermath, I am mulling what I can learn from the crabby jerk and from the feelings and thoughts that have arisen in me in response to the crabby jerk.

But it would be an act of self-harm for me to continue being linked to this crabby jerk.

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Another reader, Linda Faye Carson, then wrote a wonderful amendment to my original statement. She wrote:

Allow me to make a positive spin on your statement about disconnecting:

Increase your connection with everything that lifts your Spirit, builds your lust for life, expands your freedom, nourishes your soul, supports your integrity, honors your reverence, expands your self-expressiveness and helps you keep in touch and harmonize with the things you love.

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#### MY YOUTUBE STATION

Here's my Youtube station: [www.youtube.com/user/SacredParty/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/SacredParty/videos)

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#### THE OUTLAW CATALOG OF CAGEY OPTIMISM

With the help of my readers, I compiled a compendium of healthy, exalted, positive states of being. Let me know if you have others to add

\* ACUTE FLUENCY. Happily immersed in artistic creation or scientific exploration; lost in a trance-like state of inventiveness that's both blissful and taxing; surrendered to a state of grace in which you're fully engaged in a productive, compelling, and delightful activity. The joy of this demanding, rewarding state is intensified by a sense that time has been suspended, and is rounder and deeper than usual. (Suggested by H. H. Holiday, who reports that extensive studies in this state have been done by Mihaly Csizszenmihalyi in his book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.)

\* AESTHETIC BLISS. Vividly experiencing the colors, textures, tones, scents, and rhythms of the world around you, creating a symbiotic intimacy that dissolves the psychological barriers between you and what you observe. (Suggested by Jeanne Grossetti.)

\* AGGRESSIVE SENSITIVITY. Animated by a strong determination to be receptive and empathetic.

\* ALIGNMENT WITH THE INFINITY OF THE MOMENT. Reveling in the liberating realization that we are all exactly where we need to be at all times, even if some of us are temporarily in the midst of trial or tribulation, and that human evolution is proceeding exactly as it should, even if we can't see the big picture of the puzzle that would clarify how all the pieces fit together perfectly. (Suggested by Meredith Jones.)

\* AUTONOMOUS NURTURING. Not waiting for someone to give you what you can give yourself. (Suggested by Shannen Davis.)

\* BASKING IN ELDER WISDOM. A state of expansive ripeness achieved through listening to the stories of elders. (Suggested by Annabelle Aavard.)

\* BIBLIOLISS. Transported into states of transcendent pleasure while immersed in reading a favorite book. (Suggested by Catherine Kaikowska.)

\* BLASPHEMOUS REVERENCE. Acting on the knowledge that the most efficacious form of devotion to the Divine Wow is tintured with playful or mischievous behavior that prevents the buildup of fanaticism.

\* BOO-DUH NATURE. Dwelling in the blithe understanding of the fact that worry is useless because most of what we worry about never happens. (Suggested by Timothy S. Wallace.)

\* COMIC INTROSPECTION. Being fully aware of your own foibles while still loving yourself tenderly and maintaining confidence in your ability to give your specific genius to the world. To paraphrase Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral: following the Byzantine ploys of your ego with compassion and humor as it tries to make itself the center of everything, even of its own suffering and struggle.

\* COMPASSIONATE DISCRIMINATION. Having astute judgment without being scornfully judgmental; seeing difficult truths about a situation or person without closing your heart or feeling superior. In the words of Alan Jones: having the ability "to smell a rat without allowing your ability to discern deception sour your vision of the glory and joy that is everyone's birthright."

\* CRAZED KINDNESS. Having frequent, overpowering urges to bestow gifts, disseminate inspiration, and perpetrate random acts of benevolence.

\* ECSTATIC GRATITUDE. Feeling genuine thankfulness with such resplendent intensity that you

generate a surge of endorphins in your body and slip into a full-scale outbreak of euphoria.

\* EMANCIPATED SURRENDER. Letting go of an attachment without harboring resentment toward the stimuli that led to the necessity of letting go. (Suggested by Timothy S. Wallace.)

\* FRIENDLY SHOCK. Welcoming a surprise that will ultimately have benevolent effects.

\* HIGHWAY EQUANIMITY. Feeling serene, polite, and benevolent while driving in heavy traffic. (Suggested by Shannen Davis.)

\* HOLY LISTENING. Hearing the words of another human being as if they were a direct communication from the Divine Wow to you.

\* IMAGINATIVE TRUTH-TELLING. Conveying the truth of any specific situation from multiple angles, thereby mitigating the distortions that result from assuming the truth can be told from a single viewpoint.

\* IMPULSIVE LOVE SPREADING. Characterized by a fierce determination to never withhold well-deserved praise, inspirational encouragement, positive feedback, or loving thoughts; often includes a tendency to write love letters on the spur of the moment and on any medium, including napkins, grocery bags, and skin. (Suggested by Laurie Burton.)

\* INADVERTENT NATURE WORSHIP. Experiencing the rapture that comes from being outside for extended periods of time. (Suggested by Sue Carol Robinson.)

\* INGENIOUS INTIMACY. Having an ability to consistently create deep connections with other human beings, and to use the lush, reverential excitement stimulated by such exchanges to further deepen the connections. A well-crafted talent for dissolving your sense of separateness and enjoying the innocent exultation that erupts in the wake of the dissolution. (Suggested by Sue Carol Robinson.)

\* JOYFUL POIGNANCE. Feeling buoyantly joyful about the beauty and mystery of life while remaining aware of the sadness, injustices, wounds, and future fears that form the challenges in an examined life. (Suggested by Alka Bhargava.)

\* LATE LATE-BLOOMING. Having a capacity for growth spurts well into old age, long past the time that conventional wisdom says they're possible.

\* LEARNING DELIGHT. Experiencing the brain-reeling pleasure that comes from learning something new. (Suggested by Sue Carol Robinson.)

\* LUCID DREAM PATRIOTISM. A love of country rooted in the fact that it provides the ideal conditions for learning lucid dreaming. (Suggested by Kenneth Kelzer, author of *The Sun and the Shadow: My Experiment With Lucid Dreaming*.)

\* LYRICAL CONSONANCE. Experiencing the visceral yet also cerebral excitement that comes from listening to live music played impeccably by skilled musicians. (Suggested by Susan E. Nace.)

TO SEE THE REST OF THE EXALTED, POSITIVE STATES, go here:

[bit.ly/CraftyOptimism](http://bit.ly/CraftyOptimism)

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#### SUBTERRANEAN PRONOIA THERAPY

1. The greatest gift you can give might be the gift that you yourself were never given. Give that gift.

The most valuable service you have to offer your fellow humans may be the service you have always wished were performed for you. Offer that service.

An experience that wounded you could move you to help people who've been similarly wounded. Heal yourself by healing others.

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2. Declare amnesty for the part of you that you don't love very well. Forgive that poor sucker. Hold its hand and take it out to dinner and a movie. Tactfully offer it a chance to make amends for the dumb things it has done.

And then do a dramatic reading of this proclamation by the playwright Theodore Rubin: "I must learn to love the fool in me -- the one who feels too much, talks too much, takes too many chances, wins sometimes and loses often, lacks self-control, loves and hates, hurts and gets hurt, promises and breaks promises, laughs and cries. It alone protects me against that utterly self-controlled, masterful tyrant whom I also harbor and who would rob me of human aliveness, humility, and dignity but for my fool."

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3. No matter how holy and good, everyone in the world has a portion of the world's sickness inside them. It's known by many names: neurosis, shadow, demon, devil. Many people try to deny that it inhabits them. Others acknowledge its power so readily that they allow themselves to be overwhelmed and distorted by it.

At the Beauty and Truth Lab, we take a position between those two positions. We accept the fact that the evil is part of us, but treat it with compassionate amusement and flexible vigilance. Our stance is partly that of loving parents and partly that of warriors.

Once you make a commitment to explore the mysteries of pronoia, your shadow will try to play tricks on you that it has never tried before. How will you respond? We recommend an aggressive, tender, improvisational approach. Be ready for anything. Avoid both blithe excesses of tolerance and grave fundamentalism.

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4. Philosopher William James proposed that if our culture ever hoped to shed the deeply



**CANCER (June 21-July 22):**

Cancerian author Franz Kafka put his characters into surreal dilemmas. In his novella *The Metamorphosis*, for example, the hero wakes up one day to find he has transformed into a giant insect. Despite his feral imagination, however, Kafka had a pragmatic relationship with consumerism. "I do not read advertisements," he said. "I would spend all of my time wanting things." In accordance with astrological omens, I invite you to adopt his earthy attitude for the next two weeks. Take a break from wanting things, period. Experiment with feeling free of all the yearnings that constantly demand your attention. Please note: This break in the action won't be forever. It's just a vacation. When you return to wanting things, your priorities will have been realigned and healed, and you'll feel refreshed.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):**

Author Umberto Eco declared that beauty is boring because it "must always follow certain rules." A beautiful nose has to be just the right shape and size, he said, while an "ugly nose" can be ugly in a million different unpredictable ways. I find his definition narrow and boring, and prefer that of philosopher Francis Bacon, who wrote, "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion." Poet Charles Baudelaire agreed, saying, "That which is not slightly distorted lacks sensible appeal: from which it follows that irregularity—that is to say, the unexpected, surprise and astonishment—is an essential part and characteristic of beauty." Then there's the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi, which reveres beauty that's imperfect, transitory, and incomplete. Beginning now, and for the rest of 2021, Leo, I encourage you to ignore Eco's dull beauty and cultivate your relationship with the more interesting kind.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):**

One of the more evocative passages in J. R. R. Tolkien's novel *The Return of the King* is about the warrior Éowyn. It says, "Then the heart of Éowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her." I'm predicting a comparable transformation for you in the near future, Virgo. There'll be some fundamental shift in the way your heart comprehends life. When that happens, you will clearly fathom some secrets about your heart that have previously been vague or inaccessible. And then the sun will shine upon you with extra brilliance.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):**

Libran actor and author Carrie Fisher had more than the average number of inner demons. Yet she accomplished a lot, and was nominated for and won many professional awards. Here's the advice she gave: "Stay afraid, but do it anyway. What's important is the action. You don't have to wait to be confident." I hope you'll employ that strategy in the coming weeks, dear Libra. The time is favorable for you to work hard on your number one goal no matter what your emotions might be at any particular moment.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):**

Scorpio author Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) had a gambling addiction for many years. At one point, he lost so much money betting on roulette that he had to take drastic measures. He wrote a novella in record time—just 16 days—so as to raise money to pay his debt. The story was titled *The Gambler*. Its hero was a not-very-successful gambler. Is there a comparable antidote in your future, Scorpio? A gambit that somehow makes use of the problem to generate the cure? I suspect there is.

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**ARE YOU THE HERO OF YOUR OWN LIFE?**

"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." So begins Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*.

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—M. Tennenbaum, New York

"No one knows more about me than me. But you're right up there near the top of the list of people who do understand something about how I tick. How is that possible?"

—R. Goren, Albuquerque

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**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):**

In her poem "Escape," Michelle Tudor addresses a lover: "Inside of you: a dream raging to be set free." She implies that she would like to be a collaborator who provides assistance and inspiration in liberating her companion's dream. The coming weeks will be an excellent time for you to make a similar offer to an ally you care for—and to ask that ally to do the same for you. And by the way: What is the dream inside you that's raging to be set free? And what's the dream inside your comrade?

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):**

Author Martha Beck has helpful counsel for you to keep returning to during the coming weeks. "It isn't necessary to know exactly how your ideal life will look," she writes. "You only have to know what feels better and what feels worse. Begin making choices based on what makes you feel freer and happier, rather than on how you think an ideal life should look. It's the process of feeling our way toward happiness, not the realization of the Platonic ideal, that creates our best lives."

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):**

Aquarian author James Dickey celebrated "the holy secret of flowing." But he added, "You must be made for it." In other words, he implied that the secret of flowing is a luxury only some of us have access to. And because we "must be made for it," he seemed to suggest that being in possession of the secret of flowing is due to luck or genetics or privilege. But I reject that theory. I think anyone can tap into the secret of flowing if they have the desire and intention to do so. Like you! Right now! You're primed to cultivate a robust relationship with the holy flow.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):**

Why do humans enjoy much longer life spans than other higher primates? Here's one reason: grandmothers. Anthropologists propose that earlier in our evolution, families with elder females especially thrived. The grandmothers helped care for children, ensuring greater health for everyone as well as a higher rate of reproduction than grandmother-less broods. Their longevity genes got passed on, creating more grandmothers. Lucky! Having older women around while growing up has been key to the success of many of us. In accordance with astrological omens, I invite you to celebrate and honor the role your own grandmothers and female elders have played in your life. And if you're a grandmother, celebrate and honor yourself!

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):**

Aries actor Leonard Nimoy became mega-famous by playing the role of Spock, an alien from the planet Vulcan in the *Star Trek* franchise. He always enjoyed the role, but in 1975 he wrote an autobiography called *I Am Not Spock*. In it, he clarified how different he was from the character he performed. In 1995, Nimoy published a follow-up autobiography, *I Am Spock*, in which he described the ways in which he was similar to the fictional alien. In the spirit of Nimoy's expansive self-definition, Aries, and in accordance with current astrological potentials, I invite you to make it clear to people exactly who you and who you aren't.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):**

The poet Rumi declared, "A lover has four streams inside, of water, wine, honey, and milk." With that in mind, Taurus, I will recommend that you seek a boost in the honey department. Your passions and feelings have been flowing along fairly well, but lately they've lacked some sweetness. As a result, you're not receiving as much of the sweetness you need from the world around you. So your assignment is to intensify the honey stream within you! Remember the principle, "Like attracts like."

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**HOMEWORK:**

Send word of your latest victory. Write to: [newsletter@freewillastrology.com](mailto:newsletter@freewillastrology.com)

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