

## **COURAGE: Love & Support**

Recently I've had several opportunities to look at my beliefs about love and support in my life. When do I feel loved and supported? To what degree? When am I aware of love and support? When does it feel lacking? Where does my support come from? And, what happens to my space and how do I use my tools during times of devastation that result in vulnerability?

Thinking about all of these aspects of love and support made me recall my third grade teacher. My family had moved from Chicago to a small suburb and, as a result, I transferred schools. I was feeling timid and very alone that first day of school as I knew no one in the classroom. I hadn't had time to develop any new relationships in or out of school and my friends were at my old school.

The one saving grace was Miss Strudaman, my third grade teacher. I was mesmerized by her gentleness and her beauty. She was tall and slender with flowing shoulder length, strawberry blonde hair and a light complexion with a smattering of freckles. Her eyes were as blue as the sky and her smile lit up the room. I couldn't help but smile back!

As we sat silently while she introduced herself, I felt very cold. My teeth started to chatter and I shivered from the chill. Eventually, she noticed and asked me if I was okay. Yes, I softly responded. She was very smart and then asked if I was cold. Yes, I softly responded. She told me to come up to her at her desk in the front of the class. OH NO! Had I done or said something wrong? Was I in trouble? Was she going to scold me in front of the whole class—the whole class I didn't even know? Like a death march, I approached her desk where she was sitting.

She turned toward me in her chair and gently took my hands in hers and started to rub them briskly, explaining that rubbing our skin made the blood flow better, which would have a warming effect. She smiled at me gently as she pushed up the arms of my sweater and started rubbing my arms, first one and then the other. My eyes never strayed from hers. She looked and felt like an angel to me. My arms and hands warmed as did my heart as she so gently and lovingly supported me in my process.

I went home that day and told my Mom all about Miss Strudaman, my gentle, beautiful third grade teacher who I loved and who is married to Elvis Presley. WHAT? Oh, yes, Mom, she is married to Elvis Presley. Honey, Miss Strudaman is a “Miss” because she’s not married, she explained. Oh! That’s okay, she is Miss Strudaman AND she is married to Elvis Presley.

Many years passed before I understood—or would accept—that Miss Strudaman was not, in fact, married to Elvis Presley. And why I thought that, I really never did understand except that perhaps Elvis Presley was the biggest thing around in 1961 and for me, Miss Strudman was right up there with Elvis so in my seven-year-old mind, they were together.

A more recent experience was the catalyst for looking more deeply at how, when and why I feel or do not feel loved and supported.

After Blake, my stepson, died March 5 during his second tour in Iraq, there was a lot of media involvement and publicity. Blake was the second young man from Pueblo to die in Iraq, but his remains were the first to come home. His picture, articles and interviews with family members appeared on the front page of the Pueblo Chieftan seven out of nine days; the Rocky Mountain News ran a half-page interview with John, Blake’s Dad; stories and interviews were run on TV channels in Pueblo, Colorado Springs and Denver.

There was a lot going on for me personally in terms of managing both my own grief and my minister’s space as I met with family and prepared to officiate Blake’s memorial service and funeral. I realized early on that the only energy I could manage was my own and then hold the space for Blake’s father, mother and wife to have their experience throughout this challenging process. The rest of the energy I kept at bay—out of my space—and consciously turned it over to angels, guides and God.

Hence, I stayed clear of the media and was repeatedly asked only one question: “What’s your last name?” If you have any idea how much energy there has been around NOT having a last name, you’d know I had to have amusement with that question!

I thought about how I had felt through most of the process that took place after his death: two day trips and now a three-day trip to Pueblo; meeting individually with Blake’s Mom, Dad and wife to plan the service and then a

group meeting for cohesiveness; numerous meetings and discussions with Blake's mother and wife with the goal of reaching consensus around the disposition of Blake's ashes; remaining neutral while assisting with family dynamics and trauma/drama; managing my space and being in a "ministerial" space at the airport Wed. a.m. when Blake's remains arrived; allowing myself to be Blake's step mom and have my own grief process as I attended the Thursday private visitation for family and friends and on and on and on. I was experiencing the role of "minister" while managing my own grief and I was doing it by using my tools and managing my space.

As each day passed, I knew progress was being made AND I realized I felt alone on this journey. I thought about how, although my focus was on preparing the service and holding space for others, I consciously created space and found ways to take care of myself and my body so I would feel supported and well. Still, I felt alone and unsupported in this experience.

At the same time, I knew this was the role I chose to experience—the role of minister—and how much healing there was for me in doing that. It didn't matter if I felt alone; I was clear on why I was there and I was doing it, and there was healing for me—and for others, directly and indirectly—in that process.

While I was at the mortuary two hours prior to the service, my friend was at the Denver Fair getting me registered and setting up my reader's space for Sat. and Sun. She was also checking in with my cats, giving them treats, feeding them on their regular schedule, and even spending the night so they would not feel abandoned. I realized how much love and support I had as she managed and cared for things that mattered to me, but could not receive my attention.

I thought of her and my other friends who also had been affected in various ways by Blake's passing, and how they held the space for me to have this experience, and I felt and knew their love, their honor, their support.

At the mortuary, just one hour before the service, I started to read my notes one last time and, in spite of having gotten my space, I could not get past the first two sentences before bursting into tears. I decided to "push past it" and continue. More tears. I decided to start again. More tears. I checked in with my space—grounding, COH, E&C energy running, cleaned everyone else's energy out of my space, filled in with numerous gold suns—and sat for a

few moments running my energy. Ahhhh! Better. I began reading out loud. Tears began to flow. I sobbed. Okay. Maybe if I just sit here and sob, I can move on. A few minutes and lots of Kleenex later, I began reading the opening lines—the welcome—and again the tears flowed.

There was now only 45 minutes until the service began. I had received word that most of the 600 people in attendance had already been seated and they would definitely be ready to start at 11. And, I had earlier told the funeral director I intended to start on time—no later than 11:02!

What was happening? What did I need? I reached for the phone and then hesitated in asking for what I needed: HELP! I realized the urgency of the matter and called my friend. I explained that I felt certain I was not matching John or Blake’s Mom or his wife; I was sure I had cleaned out all the media, government and public energy. What was happening?

She got in her reading space and almost immediately noticed a hundred to two dead soldiers who were connected to my crown chakra—wanting an opportunity to speak or be honored or recognized or . . . WHATEVER! NOT NOW! They had to go and they had to go now. With assistance from her and her healing master and my healing master, I was able to clean out the foreign energy that was causing me to feel overwhelmed with sadness. In the very moment they left, I felt a huge shift in my space and knew I was on track again.

Now there was not enough time to rehearse as it would take 30 minutes to read through the service and I still needed to meet the governor, general and musicians prior to the service.

In a private room, I stood facing the governor’s back as he was introduced individually to Blake’s wife, mother and father. There were flashes as subtly posed for pictures where snapped by the photographer. I watched and listened as the governor expressed his condolences and spoke to John, “Please call me anytime if there is anything I can do. I want you to know that I’m not just saying that, I’m sincere and really mean it.” During my introduction, Governor Ritter appeared somewhat mechanical—dazed or stunned. I wondered about the sincerity of his words to John.

Out of curiosity, I took a moment to look at the level of his sincerity and saw that he was, in fact, 80% sincere—the other 20% of his energy was

chaotically jumpy and spikey and sounded/looked like: “Oh crap! What am I going to do if he calls? What if he says he wants something and I can’t give it to him? Why did I say that I would help him? What could he possibly want that I could give him? Oh, he won’t call. Oh, crap! He might call. Well, I have people who can handle that. But I said I would take care of it. Oh, crap!” I smiled. Thank you, Governor, for helping me find my amusement!

So, I headed to the podium feeling supported by my friend and amused by the Governor’s energy. And, although I was prepared for the possibility of a few tears during the service, I felt confident I could now hold my space and do what I came to do. And so I did.

After the service, we processed to the cemetery for the funeral. As the motorcade—led by 18 police cars—traveled from the mortuary chapel to the cemetery, we saw hundreds—maybe thousands—of people lining the streets. They held up signs with loving, honoring messages. They held up flags. We passed two schools where over three hundred children stood against the fence—the youngest and smallest in front with progressively older and taller children behind them—layers of young faces, flags and signs with loving, supportive messages.

Several fire department stations had their fire trucks—lights flashing—parked on side streets, facing the street we traveled. ROTC students from Blake’s high school stood at attention and saluted as the procession rolled by. State Trooper Patrol cars were angled on the side streets, facing us. It was an endless stream of faces, signs, flags and city vehicles all the way to the fairgrounds where the casket was transferred to a horse drawn hearse.

John and I rode in a military vehicle driven by his Casualty Assistance Officer. I wondered why all these people came. What did they want? What was their motivation? What did they hope to see? Did they have ulterior motives? Was it a political statement? I wondered and, as I did, I felt their support.

I checked in empathically—I allowed myself to feel their energy—and was overwhelmed by the love, honor and support they offered. If there were ulterior motives, they were well masked. I could FEEL only compassion, caring and support.

John was in the back seat of the military van and the window did not open. I watched as he placed his hand on the window in an effort to make contact with the supporters. As tears rolled down his cheeks, he softly repeated, “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.” Their love and compassion touched him deeply; they made a difference.

As we walked behind the caisson the eight blocks from the fairgrounds to the cemetery, more people were there, respectfully holding space in their own way—offering the only thing they could at such a painful time—their love, honor and support. No words; no physical contact, yet it was so powerful; so healing for us, for them, for Blake, and, in the big picture, for the world.

At the cemetery, I stood at the head of the casket and waited as 1,000 people—give or take a few—gathered. Most kept a respectful distance, present to show the family that they cared. Blake’s father-in-law had written a beautiful prayer for me to read and, as I stood there waiting, I realized I wanted to say something prior to reading his prayer—an opening—something about why we were here—something that would connect us—something meaningful about saying goodbye.

I checked in with my guides and my angels—ALL the angels—and with Source. I knew I was NOT alone—I realized I was NEVER alone. All the love and support I could ever need or want was with me all along. It always has been; always will be.

I checked my tools and asked for precise words we all needed to hear right now. They came almost before I finished asking. They were simple yet eloquent and poignant, and I spoke them deliberately with certainty and clarity. It was a perfect closing to a perfect experience from which I will continue to learn and heal and grow.

I later realized that the times I have felt a lack of love and support are the times when I disconnected from my higher self and the truth of what is: That I am a precious child of God who is loved and supported simply because I AM.

And I thought about how every one is loved and supported because of their I AM and how, as we move forward on our paths—different as they may be—

every one of us is always creating the perfect experience to learn precisely what we came to learn so we can heal and grow as beings.

I invite you to create a gold sun above your head and throw a pinch of validation energy in there and as your gold sun grows, allow yourself to remember how you are always loved and supported on your path. When you're ready, validate yourself with that gold sun energy for all the amazing ways you create precisely what you need to keep moving forward on your spiritual path of evolution—always loved; always supported.

And so it is.

## BENEDICTION

Courage, as you may recall from my last message, comes when we recognize our fear and decide to step forward anyway. I had only one fear around officiating Blake's memorial service and funeral and it was huge in that I realized it could have obliterated the healing we all came to receive and needed from the service. My fear was that I would become very emotional and not be able to perform the service.

I also knew that the best insurance of that not happening was (1) being prepared (2) practicing out loud (3) taking care of my body and (4) using my tools. Using my tools. Using my tools. Using my tools.

Throughout my experiences around Blake's passing, numerous people commented that they would not have been able to do what I did. My consistent response was, "I could do it because it is the right thing for me to do—it's what I came to do—AND because I have tools to assist me in managing my space. Without them, I would not have been able to do it either!"

When we have courage and willingness to do what we came to do—regardless of what that might look like to others—we are always open to receiving that which is for our highest good and the healing that comes with learning and growing.

In his book *Courage: The Joy of Living Dangerously*, Osho states:

*Always remember, whenever there is a choice, choose the unknown, the risky, the dangerous, the insecure, and you will not be at a loss.*

*Courage will come to you. Just start with a simple formula: Never miss the unknown. Always chose the unknown and go headlong. Even if you suffer, it is worth it—it always pays. You always come out of it more grown up, more mature, more intelligent.*