

My Awakening

Letting Go of my Old Life and Creating a New One

By Jeff Fasano

It was about six weeks ago when I woke up on a Thursday morning with a loud, intense sound in my right ear that I have never experienced before. It was deafening! It was Tinnitus. During the last six weeks I have been to my doctor, an Ear Nose and Throat doctor who surmised that I had a virus in my ear that caused sudden hearing loss in my right ear. The virus he told me, causes the brain to defend and thus create tinnitus. Tinnitus is in your brain not your ears. It is how the brain interprets something that is foreign. He prescribed steroids and an antiviral medication and I just finished taking both one week ago. Needless to say, it has been an incredible journey up to now.

When this happened I immediately went into survival mode and right into my defense. I panicked. "Will I have to live the rest of my life like this?" Put it mildly I was freaked out. So much so after two days with no sleep because the sound in my ear was so loud, I went to the emergency room. They did an MRI that came up clean and gave me something to help me sleep. My anxiety was at an all time high and my stress level equaled it. Stress increases the level of Tinnitus and what I feel actually caused it. This went on for a while. The not knowing what was happening was excruciating. The sound? Just imagine the sound of cicadas in the summertime and amplify the volume. It is sort of a wooshing sound.

This all happened just a few days before I had to go to New Orleans to do a three day photo shoot at Folk Alliance 2020. I made that trip with a host of homeopathic sleep aids and a vile of Ativan that my doctor prescribed for me.

When I returned home from New Orleans I decided to take the month of February off to take care of myself. Yet, one of my biggest challenges is self nurturing. You see I haven't had a vacation in 20 years since quitting my job to live a life as a photographer.

I must add here that it was through the help and love of members of my soul family who supported and guided me through the thick and thin of this. . My lifeline through it all has been my dear friend Phillip Collins. Without his love and knowledge, I am not sure where I would be. He held space for me knowing that I would get through this and come out the other end a new person.

The most important part of this and the biggest shift, came when I began to look at what transpired as a gift. It was a huge wake up call. The universe had gotten my attention. Every underlying, latent, wound came to the surface. It all came out in my amazing men's group one Thursday night when I bared my soul to the guys and spoke about my fears, my distrust, my self judgment and almost anything that came pouring out of me. It was like I unloaded a lifetime of stuff that had been lying in the darkest parts of me. It was a purge. And after all the emotion and tears, the guys asked, "How can we help you, we love you?" I remember I looked around the room and said, "guys, I want to believe you love me but I just don't." They understood. I wondered why do you love me?

I realized that have been living a life of intense judgment and shame of self and intense stress. I would think that my success as a photographer was based on how much money I had in the bank. My abundance based on that as well. I couldn't trust and I couldn't let anyone get close to me. It frightened the hell out of me to let anyone get closer than arms length distance. I held everyone right there, as if to say, "stop you are not getting any closer." I also realized that what I really wanted was to be a "Rock Star" as a photographer, it had nothing to do with creating art. I needed to be seen and if I was that rock star then I would be respected and thus validated...and loved. I couldn't truly speak my truth for the fear of being unloved if I did. This especially applied to women. I realized my deep fear of getting close to a woman. My narrative was, if I only have X amount of money in my bank account, why would you not only love me, but want to be with me. How would I be able to take care of them? Take care of their needs. All the while not knowing my needs nor honoring what needs I did know. I would wake every morning with intense sadness and pondering thoughts of what I needed to do that day to survive life, to make money. I wasn't living life, I was surviving it. I could go on and on but everything came to the surface, I mean everything.

I am now coming to the other side of this.

When this all happened friends would tell me, take care of yourself. I had no idea what that meant nor how to do it. Well after six weeks, I am learning how. I realized that I was tired, mentally emotionally and physically. Twenty years of pushing and pulling, of doing, and going and coming with no real rest at all. My nervous system was frazzled. I now am taking this time for reflection and healing and know on the other side of this will be a brand new me. Well actually I am rediscovering and remembering who I really am. I have simplified. I have broken it all down. The interesting part of it is I never cared about how much money I made or had. Something shifted along the way to make me think otherwise.

I now know that I cannot and will not go back to my old life.

I now have realized that I am successful. That has a new definition. I now realize that I am abundant and that has a new definition as well. I now realize that I am loved and I am learning how to receive it.

I am looking at what I have accomplished in all areas of my life and that whatever I have done and wherever I have been it has always worked out.

Yet, this is just a new beginning. The universe has gotten my attention in a big way. I have seen where I have given my power away, even during this time of doctor visits and the world of medicine, a place where I have not ventured before.

It is time with the help of others to heal myself. Time to change my old behaviors. This has disrupted my routines and my comfort zones, an old way of living through my past that I was unconscious of. My life has been turned upside down, inside and out and all for the good. I was rooted in something so deep that I didn't even know it consciously. I perpetuated it every day. I did not know what joy was or meant. I was clueless. Yet I am learning. I was always comparing myself to others, especially to other photographers. I was in denial that I was being competitive. I forgot why I love photography and why I chose to do it. I am recapturing that.

There was so much endless shame and judgment that perpetuated striving to do more to prove to everyone that I was worthy to be loved. This has been going on a

good part of my life for that past twenty years that added amplified amounts of stress.

I have now pulled back, unplugged from the world outside, detached from the 3D if you will for much needed rest, relaxation and radical self care. This has been twenty years coming. My nervous system is tapped out and I need to regenerate and I am giving myself as long as it will take.

The tinnitus comes and goes but I am going to heal that. Though it has manifested and I acknowledge it, I do not accept it. I do accept with compassion where I am in this journey and all the feelings and wounds that have surfaced. I am regaining my self power, a new sense of who I am and want to be. And most of all the life I want to live. One of joy, peace, calm, intimacy and love.