

The Oil Depot Explosion That Rocked My Home And Brought Me Inner Peace

On Sunday morning, 11th December I got up early. I like sitting down to write when the house is still quiet, before day light glides over the hills and the silence of the night is chased away by the hectic activities of the day. There is something delightfully creative about those early hours for me and I was keen to finish another instalment of a piece I am writing called '7 Steps to Inner Peace and Personal Power in 2006'.

Although my daughter was staying at a friend's house at the other end of the country, through habit I sneaked quietly into the dark bathroom to get my dressing gown. Suddenly an unfamiliar, pink-coloured flicker lighted my way. I was startled for a moment; except for my sleeping dog I was alone in the house. Where could this eery glow come from? As I returned to the bedroom and looked out of the window, there was the loudest thunder roar I had ever heard, followed a split second later by a wave that shook the house as it sped right through, sweeping away the last trace of mellow sleepiness and leaving me stunned.

Some kind of explosion. The railway station, I thought - or maybe a large gas boiler in one of the shops or restaurants in the nearby town. And then I remembered the huge oil storage depot just 4 miles away and turned on the TV. It didn't take long for my suspicion to be confirmed as reports started to arrive with pictures of sky-high flames and huge volumes of deadly black smoke being thrown into the air. Now, we have the largest peace time incident of this kind in the UK, just a deep breath away.

And I was about to write about inner peace and personal power. How ironic. For a moment, my inner peace was diminished by thoughts of my own vulnerability and mortality; of concern for how it affected people who were even closer and ultimately the environmental impact this catastrophe would have.

But then came the determination to get my balance back and walk the talk and I asked myself, what are the conditions for true inner peace? How can anyone have personal power, when really we are mere pawns of the power of chance, of nature, of the whim of politicians and of the commercial interests of the high and mighty? How can we sleep at night and be happy by day if our lives can be changed with one spectacular blow of fate?

The answer I gave myself was the one that every spiritual leader, every guru or compassionate priest would have given me. It's the same answer that has come up to so many of my questions throughout the years of my own conscious journey to inner peace. The same simple truth that underlies all personal power and builds the foundation for inner peace, no matter what the external circumstances are.

True inner peace comes from within - from the power of our own minds. Viktor Frankl, the psychotherapist and author who survived the horrors of Nazi concentration camps by using the only thing he had left, his inner resources, put it like this:

'Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances; to choose one's own way.'

When something shakes our world to the core and throws us off course, even if we may think we don't, we still have the power of choice. We can choose how to react. The personal power that comes from this realisation is immense.

Wherever you look, you will see people who made the choice to let a crisis empower them rather than crush their confidence and break their spirit. People like the family of the murder victim Anthony Walker, who forgave the young men who so cruelly took their son and are not haunted by the poisonous power of hate, people who have courageously built a new life after the floods in New Orleans rather than wallow in self-pity and blame.

Those are the people who chose to take the path of inner peace and personal power. They are who I chose to use as my inspiration this morning, as I continued my writing under the ever-growing toxic black cloud.

I wish you inner peace and hope you find it easy to make that choice today. Greetings

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About the Author

Annett Tate helps people achieve ultimate wellness and health. She teaches Emotional Freedom in her EFT seminars and shares her thoughts, inspiration and advice at www.stress2bliss.com