

Karma...You're Doing it Wrong

I have seen good and bad karma being assigned to everything from asking for a pay raise to finding a parking space and it makes me cringe every time. The words "good" and "bad" should be assigned to football teams and theater experiences, but not to the word "karma". In western culture, even if someone isn't a Christian per se, they are used to the spiritual idea of an omnipotent force passing judgment and doling out rewards and punishments accordingly. If you're good you're going to heaven. If you're bad you're going to hell. Karma isn't a cosmic Judge Judy in dignified pearls, nor is it a change machine where you insert a dollar and instantly receive four quarters. Don't get too excited, I'm not giving the green light to stop tipping your barista or to eat someone else's lunch out of the office fridge because it looks better than yours. What goes around definitely comes around at some point but in Buddhist and Hindu writings, karma is represented as a complex knot. It's not a simple circle and so much goes into the interpretation of one's karma it is an extreme oversimplification to say someone's karma is good or bad. No, karma isn't about judgment; it's about two things, learning and teaching.



Have I sat there before with this look on my face while a friend regaled me with a tale of some comeuppance that befell another that I had labeled an adversary or rival?Yes.....Yes, I



have. As much as I like to imagine the karma kops standing behind me saying, "That's what YOU GET for messing with our girl!" I'm sure that's not the case. We all know people who continually do selfish, mean spirited things, yet it appears they sail along with no repercussions. You've probably help elect a few of them, right? I know I have. Sometimes you sit there and think, "Someday karma's going to catch up to them." Maybe. But in reality the rest of us have no idea what karmic agreements they have made in other lifetimes, or even if reincarnation isn't part of your belief system, there is no way of

knowing what their intentions are. If they are acting in accordance with their agreement, that's great. If not, it's their knot, don't worry about it.

One of the hardest truths to accept is that we are judging ourselves by our intentions, while others are judging us by our actions. Intentions have to count for something right? I once

heard a story about an appointed official in ancient times who was in charge of collecting taxes and allocating food supplies in a small town. He was known for being a stickler and never giving anyone a break on the price and never letting anyone take, down to the smallest ounce, more than what they paid for, even in years of very abundant harvest. Everyone in the town disliked him for his miserly ways. Upon his death the people of that town were surprised to find the entirety of a nearby village in attendance at his funeral. When asked why they came to pay their respects, they explained that their village was prone to drought and during those years the official always let them have food out of the surplus food supply so that no one in their village starved and he let them payback the stores when they could. No matter how many years of drought they had in a row, the official always had staples to share with them and they said they were sure many would have starved to death if not for his assistance. It obviously gave everyone in the town a very different opinion of the man. If someone gets passionate about global warming and they print out 10,000 flyers that say, "Save Trees!" how does that all shake out in the karmic scheme of things?

Sometimes unintentional things happen as well. Say one day at work, in a tense moment, you say something unkind to a coworker. You can tell by the look on their face that it cut deep and though you apologize, there's no unsaying it. Maybe the person is so slighted that they feel that they have no choice but to tender their resignation. You feel terrible thinking about the hurt you caused and consider the karmic repercussions. Maybe it makes you a little more circumspect in the future and maybe that's a good thing. Maybe at some point you may need to learn a tougher karmic lesson about this subject. On the other hand, maybe that one harsh statement might have been exactly the catalyst that person might have needed to go find a job that was the perfect fit for them, or start their own business, or because they were unemployed they had time to assist a loved one with a health concern that came up. You could, "maybe" and "what if" all day long and never untie that karmic knot. If all the world is indeed a stage and we are merely players, you don't always get to play the one in the white hat. Sometimes you're the misunderstood antagonist, sometimes the champ that everyone is rooting for, and sometimes the one that everyone on the Facebook fan page wishes an ugly death. This doesn't even take into account that occasionally you're in the audience enjoying your popcorn or part of the chorus, knowing that you could perform the starring roll better.

When a stroke of luck comes your way, labeling it good karma robs you of the chance to give yourself some recognition for a job well done, even it was just for keeping your vibration high and in reception mode, not any feat of back breaking labor that you performed. When something challenging happens, shaking your head and chalking it up to a punishment of some kind may be robbing you of a valuable lesson and that kind of persecution complex doesn't help any situation. This past Spring I was lucky enough to be able to go to Hay House's, I Can Do It conference in Denver. At the end of three days I was home for about 20 minutes when I heard a loud crash outside. It was rather windy out and almost an entire side of my 6 foot wooden fence had blown down. It killed my Sonia Choquette buzz in a hurry. I could choose to look at it like a punishment for being one of the ram's horn players at Jericho or I could see it as the Universe saying, "OK kiddo, you've spent three days straight studying spiritual principles so I'm going to give you an opportunity to see if you can walk the walk, not just talk the talk." It also

presented an opportunity to literally and figuratively mend a fence with a neighbor whom I had a slight distaste for because of their lack of parking ability and the fact that their tree limb took out my garage gutter a few winters back. Either they took a parking class or I quit noticing how close they are to my driveway, either way, it's much friendlier on the block these days and it was a lot of fun watching their dog play with mine in the newly installed dog park until we went and ruined everything by fixing the fence.

This principle is illustrated in a Chinese fable in which a farmer is catching up with an old acquaintance. He tells the friend that his horse ran away. "That's terrible," says the friend.

"Not really," says the farmer. "The horse returned with a wild mare who was soon pregnant so I have three horses to work my fields.

"That's lucky," says his friend.

"Well, when my son was trying to break the mare, she threw him and he broke his leg."

"Oh no!"

"No that's ok because war broke out soon after that and when they came to take all the boys of the village to war, he couldn't go because he was injured."

And the story goes on and on like that. It's the perfect example of why you should leave "good" and "bad" out of your vocabulary when it comes to life experiences and your karma. Sit back and enjoy the show or play your part in any given situation to the best of your ability. Don't make your knot more complicated than it needs to be. Take the lessons, leave the judgment and enjoy life for the complex work of art that it is.