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Beyond “Wait and See” – An Invitation to “Live and Be Present”

by Alan Seale



My friend Sue Neville is a very wise woman. Recently she sent an email inquiring about my father whose very life at this point seems miraculous. He is 16 years into his walk with cancer, and in recent years has faced down what others would consider insurmountable odds. Yet his passion for living and service, as well as for

encouraging others in becoming all that they can be, continues to inspire and amaze all who are blessed to be in his presence.

That said, the last year has been particularly challenging, and around my birthday Sue was checking in. I wrote back that things had taken yet another turn and all we could do now was wait and see – wait and see whether he would rebound yet again after the latest infection, wait and see if he would be able to walk on his own again, wait and see how he responded to his first dose of the chemotherapy.

She wrote back to say that she completely understood the “wait and see” approach. Wait and see allows us to step out of the drama, avoid jumping to conclusions, and find a place within where there is at least some level of acceptance of our current circumstance. Yet she went on to say that she really didn’t think of me as a “wait and see” kind of guy. As Sue pondered the many times she had also adopted a wait and see attitude, she came to the words “live and be present.” Her invitation to me was to recognize that perhaps “live and be present” was a much more truthful statement of who I am and, if I am living in alignment with my core essence, who I am called to be, even in the face of big challenges.

What an enormous gift! Sue called me forth to what I know deep in my soul – indeed, what I live most

of the time – yet in that moment was not fully acknowledging. I was using the words “wait and see,” yet those words were not a true expression of what was happening inside of me. Most of the time, while being with my father’s challenges and how our lives as a family were changing, I have remained grounded in a very still place. Yet on the surface I had begun adopting a language that was not truly mine. I was allowing myself to be pulled into an energy that was not serving me, my father, or my other family members, and was beginning to put life on hold to “wait and see” what would happen. I was giving in to a circumstance and letting that circumstance dictate who I was, what I was doing, and the decisions I was or, more to the point, *was not* making. I was passively waiting, and it didn’t feel good. It felt very incongruent with who I am at my core, and it certainly was not the attitude that my father has lived by. Sue gave me a great wake-up call – a call to step into what I know in my heart – a call to step into a proactive way of living that truly serves me as well as those around me.

We all encounter big challenges in life – times when circumstances cause us to feel as if we can’t make a decision or take action. We don’t know who to be or what to do in the next moment, much less what our next big step should be. “Wait and see” can give us some breathing room, take away the stress or pressure of making decisions or taking action, and allow us to rest. At least that’s what we tell ourselves. Through this journey with my father and through Sue’s recognition and gentle reminder, I realize now that “wait and see” gets us off the hook in a way that is actually disempowering. We put ourselves in a position of passive surrender in which we tell ourselves we just have to accept whatever comes and then let that outcome dictate who we are or how we show up to the moment.

“Live and be present,” on the other hand, invites us

into *active* surrender – fully accepting the truth of our situation, being fully present to everything we are feeling and experiencing, and remaining fully engaged in life at the same time. “Live and be present” has a proactive feeling to it and keeps us engaged in the ongoing co-creation of our lives and experiences. The passive nature of “wait and see” disengages us from active participation in the co-creative process.

“Live and be present” invites us to remain fully engaged in the roles and responsibilities we consciously choose to accept, fully engaged in what we know in our hearts, even in the face of challenge and difficulty. “Live and be present” calls us to be fully present to whatever shows up. Rather than jumping back into the fray, it calls us to recognize that we can choose how we will engage whatever shows up. Will we treat it as our adversary or our next partner in co-creation.

We may not always have a conscious choice in what circumstances come our way. And because the situations involve people we love or things we care deeply about, we may not even feel that we have a choice about whether or not to engage – at least not if we are true to ourselves. Yet we do get to choose *how* we will engage, how we will view the situation, and what kind of relationship we will have with it. We do get to choose whether to fight against or resist this new partner or embrace it and work together for a greater good.

“Live and be present” invites us to be fully present with who we are called to be and what we are called to do in the bigger picture of our lives, while at the same time being fully present to “what is” in our current situation. Although it may not seem like it at the time, who we are called to be in life – who we are at the soul level – is much larger than any situation, even when that situation is life-changing. “Live and be present” calls us to remember that truth. It calls us to remember that every experience is a thread that, together with all of our other experience threads, weaves the fabric that is our lives. We may not always be able to consciously choose the threads, but we *can* choose what pattern or design we will weave.

Life flows in cycles and rhythms. Sometimes we are excited about the many opportunities coming our way while at other times it seems like one challenge is followed by another. There are times when we are running to keep up with all that is happening and other times when it seems we have reached a plateau or things are stuck and nothing is moving. When things

are moving fast, the momentum is often enough to keep us fully engaged and present to what is happening. Yet when we reach the plateau, there doesn't appear to be any movement, or we feel caught in the muck of our circumstances, we still have choice. We can choose to be in “wait and see” mode, giving in to whatever life brings us and waiting for something to happen. Or we can choose to be in “live and be present” mode, remaining fully engaged on all levels with what is or isn't happening in the moment – listening to it, tapping into what lies deep under the surface, and letting it inform who we are and what we do in those moments.

Pondering “live and be present” took me back to a poem from my first book, *Intuitive Living*. During a period of deep inner struggle in the mid-1990s, this poem came to me in meditation as an invitation to be present to the moment and to empty my heart. In times of challenge and uncertainty, “wait and see” can close the door to communication with our hearts and with the Greater Consciousness. When that happens, we tend to forget that we can, in fact, engage with the energy of what is happening and access the greater wisdom and truth that *are* present, even if they are not so obvious. “Live and be present” invites us to open our hearts and empty them of our fears, dreads, and doubts. “Live and be present” invites us to stand in the presence of Love and let that Love fill our empty hearts with greater understanding, compassion, and clarity around our being and doing.

My father is rather private about his deep thoughts and feelings. Yet from the way he has lived and continues to live his life, I'm quite sure that, in his own way, he has found his way to his empty heart. In our brief email exchange, Sue gave words to something I was feeling yet hadn't been able to articulate. She stood as a witness to a truth in my being that I was losing touch with. Her presence and witness was the invitation I needed to return to my empty heart, to live and be present, and for that I am very grateful.

I share the poem below and invite you to let it speak to you however it does. And when life brings either opportunities or challenges, I invite you to “live and be present,” to stand in your empty heart, partner with “what is,” and receive the blessings of the moment.

Many blessings,
Alan
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Soul Mission Profile—Bercedeh Stark Arasteh : Building a World of Happiness and Creativity

by Johnathon Pape



Bercedeh Stark Arasteh is a real “woman of the world” in the most globally conscious way. Bercedeh was born and raised in Teheran, Iran; her father was Iranian and her mother was from Romania. “At that time, Iran was quite liberal,” she explains. “My family was very educated and my grandfather was actually an Iranian Ambassador to other

countries.” Perhaps that is where Bercedeh inherited her internationalism. At age 15, she immigrated to Germany to attend school to become a psychologist. When her education was completed, Bercedeh started a psychology practice in Germany, married, had a son, and later divorced. She remarried in the early 1980s, and moved to the Far East with her second husband and son, living in Malaysia, Taiwan, Beijing, and mostly in Hong Kong. And now Bercedeh is back in Europe, living in Switzerland.

Bercedeh’s talents and interests are also quite eclectic. Both an artist and an entrepreneur, Bercedeh designed jewelry and created a successful, high-end custom apparel business with a Chinese woman who designed clothes. While living in the Far East, Bercedeh also became interested in coaching. She had started a psychology practice there, but found that many of the people she worked with had been relocated to the Far East and were having difficulty making the transition to a new culture. The psychology model didn’t seem to be as effective as coaching in working with these clients, so Bercedeh decided to study coaching in earnest. Bercedeh did her coach training with the International Coach Academy, and it was there, through the Spiritual Coaching Community of Practice, that she first met Alan.

In the autumn of 2008, Bercedeh went to the Netherlands to participate in a *Soul Mission * Life Vision*

workshop that Alan was teaching there. Her soul mission – *I live happiness and creativity and bring it to those around me* – has become a touchstone in her life and in her coaching work with people in transition. “I experienced deep feelings of centeredness and an extraordinary level of awareness in the workshop. So I decided to organize a Manifestation workshop for Alan to lead in Oberwil, Switzerland in the autumn of 2009. And I participated in that workshop, too.” Now she is planning to bring Alan back to Switzerland in September for a 5-day intensive training in Coaching for Transformational Presence. It’s just another way that Bercedeh lives happiness and creativity and brings it to those around her.

Johnathon Pape: Thank you for being our Soul Mission Profile for May. You have lived so many wonderful places and have such a wealth of experience. Given your heritage and global perspective, how are you feeling about the state of the world?

Bercedeh Stark Arasteh: I think there is hope. There are many people seeking peaceful consciousness and a way of compassionately living together. This allows us to appreciate our differences even though we are also all the same. Whether black, yellow, Muslim, or Christian, the bottom line is we are all human beings. There is so much potential to be tapped in this feeling of being human first. It must be nourished, talked about more, and taught in our educational systems. The more people become conscious of this, the more we will evolve. I don’t know if I’ll experience it in my lifetime, but that doesn’t matter. When I have these feelings, this hope, I have to spread it – we all do – and that creates a better world to live in. The only thing I can do is to live that way.

JP: Live happiness and creativity and bring it to those around you?

BSA: Yes. I think that to a certain extent, the things that are happening in the world are forcing us to make changes. More and more people are unable to look at global problems and think “oh that’s someone else’s concern.”

JP: *It must be especially interesting for you with The Green Movement in Iran which calls the world to solidarity for freedom. And at the same time there was the recent vote in Switzerland banning the construction of new minarets.*

BSA: Yes. Both things are present in the world. It's all in how you choose to live, what you give energy to. The teachings of the Dalai Lama really speak to me here. I'm not a Buddhist. My roots are in Islam, but at the time I lived in Iran, the Muslim traditions were very liberal. So I guess on paper I'm a Muslim, but I'm not religious. I've been very impressed with what the Dalai Lama has to say on this topic. I try to hear him speak when he is here; he comes to Switzerland quite often. Switzerland actually has the largest community of Tibetans who live outside their home country or Northern India.

JP: *I had no idea...*

BSA: Switzerland took in a lot of young Tibetans when the country fell to China. They were very good workers, very enthusiastic, and maybe there was also a soul connection because of being from the mountains – the mountains here, the mountains there. So the Dalai Lama is here a lot. And for a long time he has been bringing together and encouraging quite a number of dialogues and exchanges with lots of people from different backgrounds – scientists, leaders, hands-on workers, etc. – for conferences with the Mind and Life Institute of which he is the honorary chair. I just attended a conference a little over a week ago called *Altruism and Compassion in Economic Systems: A Dialogue at the Interface of Economics, Neuroscience and Contemplative Sciences*. It was fascinating. A big question for the conference was whether there would ever be a way for altruism and business to work together or is that an innate contradiction? There has been a lot of research conducted on how meditation, compassion, and altruism actually changes brain connections – how satisfying it is to experience it. It is all very enlightening, and not so much about his teachings, but about the research that is being conducted. The website is www.mindandlife.org.

JP: *How did you get into jewelry making?*

BSA: It started off as a hobby when I lived in Germany. I took some courses in working with silver and other metals. Then I had to put it aside, but one time when I was in Hong Kong, I happened to stumble upon a workshop with a Swiss jeweler. I asked him if

he would train me. He was surprised, but agreed. I got very good training from him. And from there I designed and made my own jewelry and sold them at galleries. Then I met the woman who became my business partner in the design company. It was a very successful venture, but unfortunately it is no longer in existence. My partner eventually moved to the United Kingdom and I came to Switzerland.

JP: *And how did you end up in Switzerland after so much time in the Far East?*

BSA: Most people come to another country either because of business or love. I came because of divorce! Not to get a divorce, but rather because I was getting a divorce. I moved to Switzerland when my husband and I separated. At that time you could only stay in Switzerland on a European Union passport for 6 months. So I had to go back to Germany for a time. But now there is a bilateral agreement and I was able to move back permanently. I had met several people from Switzerland while I was living in the Far East, so that was part of it. But another part is that it is a very soothing country – the people aren't pushy – and for me in my situation, being divorced, a single mom with a young daughter, starting over, it was a good place to be. I felt, and still feel, very good here.

JP: *So how has knowing your Soul Mission and living it changed your life?*

BSA: First of all, I had the "Aha! Moment," that what I had felt inside for a long time and what had made me happy in the past was actually my soul mission. And it is not only perfectly all right to live my soul mission, or to strive to live it, but that this is why I'm here on this planet. It is my duty. It was quite an amazing feeling of freedom and being whole which came with the "Aha!" And on a different level, the enthusiasm and reassurance which come from being aligned with my soul mission is the driving force that I rely on to stay within the flow of my life. Now life evolves for me with more freedom and joy. And by accepting my soul mission I seem to be less focused on the "how." How to get more happiness, how to be more creative is no longer the main focus. I have less need to plan, structure, or target the outcome. I am much more centered in my daily life, because a lot of self talk has stopped. I see myself being more in the flow with the river of my life, less struggling upstream. That has a very liberating effect on my daily life. It did not solve all the issues I face, but it has changed my approach, and has

opened my awareness to the choices I have. I feel less stressed, less exhausted, more happy and content with what is in my life. I can see the potential for learning and growing more clearly in all the little things of daily life. It brings me a strong sense of gratitude and acceptance for what has shown up in my life so far – the good and the not so good.

JP: *And how has your Life Vision evolved from the first time you wrote it?*

BSA: My vision is present in the background all the time. When I did the Manifestation Wheel workshop, it took the role of a gentle supporting force which is always present. It was like I had to bring it alive again by going deeper into what it really meant for me. From this source there is now a wonderful stream of energy flowing, which has brought new people and opportunities into my life. They all bring me closer to my vision of living happiness and creativity and giving it freely to the people around me. There is a lot I can give to make people happy, and that comes back to me and adds to my own feeling of happiness. I have always known this and have experienced it on many levels, but it has never been as present in my consciousness as it is now. The quality has changed, that's what it is.

JP: *What are you currently manifesting in your life and how does it relate to your Soul Mission?*

BSA: I'm working on a project with some other people, which is outside of my usual business of coaching people in transition. It has a lot of creative potential – a different level than coaching has for me. It involves a lot

of work, but still allows me to be playful with it. It gives me the space to explore different creative avenues, and at the same time help people to feel stronger and more involved in their new environment, in a new country.

And there is another project I am involved in with two friends of mine. This is about giving freely what we all have: human warmth, compassion, and a space for just being and listening – giving healing and soothing energy. We are based in a church in the center of town where we offer this opportunity to people from all walks of life, once a month with no obligations attached to it. Since we started six months ago, the number of people coming has steadily grown. This is the kind of work I love to do. It brings well-being, happiness, and caring for the people who come, but it also gives back to all of us in a big way. Souls are meeting souls and engaging at that level. It is beautiful work. I feel I'm going more and more in this direction. I don't know exactly how or when, but it is pulling me.

JP: *As you have encountered challenges, doubts, or setbacks, how has knowing who you are at the soul level gotten you back on track?*

BSA: When I understand and align with the energy of this knowing, it allows me to have doubts and experience setbacks without the fear I had before. That fear was a lot about losing – losing money, losing relationships, losing myself. I can now accept doubts, challenges, and setbacks as part of my learning and growing process. They don't



Bercedeh visits Brigit's Garden in Western Ireland (on the left) and Colmar in the Alsace region of France, bordering Germany (on the right). She says that Western Ireland is "one of the most magical places I have been," and Colmar is "a fantastic old city famous for its food, wine, and atmosphere."

make me feel miserable or out of balance as much as they did previously. Accepting them as necessary, or as a learning opportunity within the context of how life evolves, makes them loosen their grip and power. So, in this sense it has gotten easier to get back on track when encountering obstacles. I'm not saying I can do it easily all the time, but there is definitely a huge change compared to earlier times.

JP: *What is the most important thing you've learned about yourself since claiming your Soul Mission?*

BSA: I have started to meet and accept myself in a way I never did before. I had lots of introspective knowledge before, but not so much acceptance of who I really am, or love for myself. For a long time I tried to change everything that I did not like or accept. But now, I don't feel that I have to change this or that part of myself. More and more I have started to accept all the different and contradicting parts of me. They belong to me and make me who I am. I give myself the chance to be compassionate with myself and with others. I don't have the urge to be perfect anymore; I can have and live with imperfection in my actions, thoughts, or personality. I am OK the way I am, and living my soul mission will only add to this feeling, which comes from a deep place. I hope it makes others feel they are accepted as they are too. This is how I can live my soul mission every day.

JP: *What has been your greatest challenge to living your Soul Mission?*

BSA: Eliminating old beliefs and attitudes. Things like: "as long as I am not perfect, I had better not think, say, or do." Also it is challenging to cultivate the attitude that things happen at the right time, and I can allow for them to happen and make space so they can happen, instead of putting so much effort into *making* them happen. This has been a radical change in approach, since in the past (and still sometimes now) I seem to have needed to be the one who plans, acts, or organizes frantically, just to be on the "safe" side. At certain times in my life that secured my survival, and therefore I needed to hold on to it, or rather I took on this perspective. To transform the energy that goes with this perspective has been, and at times still is, a big challenge.

JP: *How have you worked to find the gift in that scenario and transformed the energy around it?*

BSA: I have worked and still do work with Alan on this. I see it now as a means of necessity in my past, which has made me very resilient in many ways and circumstances. This is beneficial on one hand, and on the other hand can make my life difficult at times. It is about finding the balance between how much doing is needed and where I can trust that things will show themselves, and I will know what to do when the time is right. The transformation of the "captive" energy into a free flowing, creative and happy energy, happens when my soul and ego are having a conversation about how ego can be safe and soul can be free. When the two come to a mutual agreement, this is a great moment of transformation!

JP: *What would you say to someone who is considering doing Soul Mission * Life Vision and/or Manifestation?*

BSA: No matter which one you do or start with, it will definitely change your perspective and your life. Be prepared for groundbreaking changes coming your way! It is like finally coming home to where you always wanted to be – to yourself! It is a very touching moment on a deep level inside. This profound experience fills your heart with gratitude and makes you find the answers to many questions you may have. You begin to discover and understand the purpose in all you do. It all makes sense. The flow of energy you experience is taking you on a beautiful journey of discovery and action.

It has been an extremely rewarding journey for me. I have learned so much, and so much has happened in a relatively short time with this process. Both *Soul Mission * Life Vision* and *The Manifestation Wheel* are very powerful and empowering tools. And the atmosphere in the workshops with Alan creates huge space, allowing so many things to happen for every one of the participants in an amazingly short time. The caring support from all involved is of immeasurable value, and it carries on after the workshops. I am grateful and happy to have been there at the right time, at the right place. It had to happen!

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