Healing through the Cold of Water

Description

Warleigh Weir, Bath, UK

Whether you were allowed to see your family this past Christmas and New Year or got to be close to some of your friends, it won't change the fact that the turning of the year was and continues to be anything but normal for any of us. As temperatures drop even further, and a little promise of snow reaches London, the immediate state of confinement within our homes and our minds (in yet another lockdown), once again leaves you with a choice either to weep or change the mindset within.

Across England, you could only celebrate Christmas within your own household, and since all my immediate family are in the US (and I alongside my kids reside in London), this situation made me rethink the significance of a family reunion, far beyond tradition and banal expectation. I've lived on distant shores far from my family for the majority of my life, yet New Years is when we would always regroup somewhere amongst snowy tops of Colorado, or soak in the wintery LA sun in the Topanga hills, eat delicious mountains of food, laugh, hug, annoy each other, be… together. I underestimated the colossal importance this time with family brought to me and my children until we were no longer allowed to fly across the Atlantic. In the mids of darker, colder, shorter days, seeing family becomes a source of vital energy to recharge, reset, get filled up with love, hope and a knowing we belong to a bigger clan of people who care for us.

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After a considerable amount of weeping, I had to turn to something other in order to fill my soul with a sense of fullness. I turned to cold swimming. Since summer, I simply decided not to stop swimming in the wild, so every weekend, whenever possible I would dip myself into lakes, rivers, lidos, and the sea. At first a minute at a time, slowly progressing to fifteen minutes and back to about ten in the last couple of weeks when the temperature dropped to 4C.

Constant overcoming of fear and a sense of aliveness dominate this pastime. I am scared every time I am to step into the cold, wild water, I am scared of the river swelling high with strong currents, I am scared of being swept away, I am scared of the unknown. Yet every time I am immersed in the pure cold, I feel closest to some core part of my memory that's connected to my childhood where I felt safest and loved by a huge clan of a family I grew up with in Russia. Whilst my limbs burn and slowly get numb, I feel most content, as if my spirit found its home. For a few minutes, there are no thoughts, just a pure state of being for no other reason than life itself. You are in all the trees, in the majestic sky, in all the drops of rain, in the mist above water. For something so physical, I am slowly learning that the cold water, in the wild of nature, is a spiritual teacher.

We are all so much stronger than we may believe ourselves to be for we all have resources known and unknown, which may guide us through harder, darker times, and bring us into light. Whether you swim, run, or sew.. it matters not.

CATEGORY

1. COMMUNITY
2. WELLNESS

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