

Change

Everything changes. Nothing lasts. As the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki put it: the whole of our life can be summed up in the simple words *not always so*.

At the close of 2013, I will step down from running the Personal Excellence Program (PEP.) PEP will become its own brand, distinct from Appropriate Response.

I will continue in an advisory role as Chief Wisdom Officer for PEP, but am delighted to be leaving it in the enormously capable hands of Robin Rorex (President), Ruben Rodriguez (Chief PEP Officer), Renee Bastet (Director of Operations), and the fabulous team of PEP coaches who bring so much heart to the work they do.

It's an exciting time for me, ripe with possibility. While I imagine there is a next chapter somewhere on the horizon, I can't see from here what that might be or how it may unfold.

For the first quarter of 2014, I will take a sabbatical. For the remainder of the year, I will focus on teaching dharma classes and retreats.

Beyond that, I don't know.

Buddhism holds not-knowing in a highly positive light. Buddhist teaching proposes that our effort to cling to the fluid river of experience is precisely the source of our fundamental suffering; a process one of my teachers graphically describes as "rope burn." But it is one thing to understand that clinging causes suffering, and another thing entirely to actually let go-of security, of habits and patterns, and of our roles and the familiar sense of self that comes with them.

The past eight years I've been engaged with PEP full-throttle. It has been a wild and wonderful ride. As I inch toward stepping away, I see how easy it is to take on the belief that what I do is who I am. And how naked and exposed it feels to shed that layer of identity.

At the same time, there is a clarity and happiness that arises from listening to the stirrings deep inside, beckoning me into the unknown. And I rest in the faith that braving the free-fall of letting go will bring something fresh and new; some yet unforeseen expression of this luminous, dynamic process of being human.

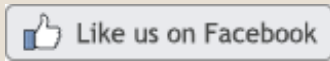
In closing, I offer two poem fragments that capture these intertwined themes: one on the poignancy and mystery of impermanence; and the second, a rich, evocative tribute to true happiness.

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*Everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side
is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.*

~ Mary Oliver

*Since there is no place large enough
to contain so much happiness,
you shrug, you raise your hands, and it flows out of you
into everything you touch. You are not responsible.
You take no credit, as the night sky takes no credit
for the moon, but continues to hold it, and share it
and in that way, be known.*

~ Naomi Shihab Nye

Wishing you happiness and peace in the New Year.

With love and appreciation,
Pam

Pamela Weiss is the founder of Appropriate Response. She is a coach, meditation teacher and recognized pioneer in integrating the principles and practices of mindfulness into leadership development and organizational transformation