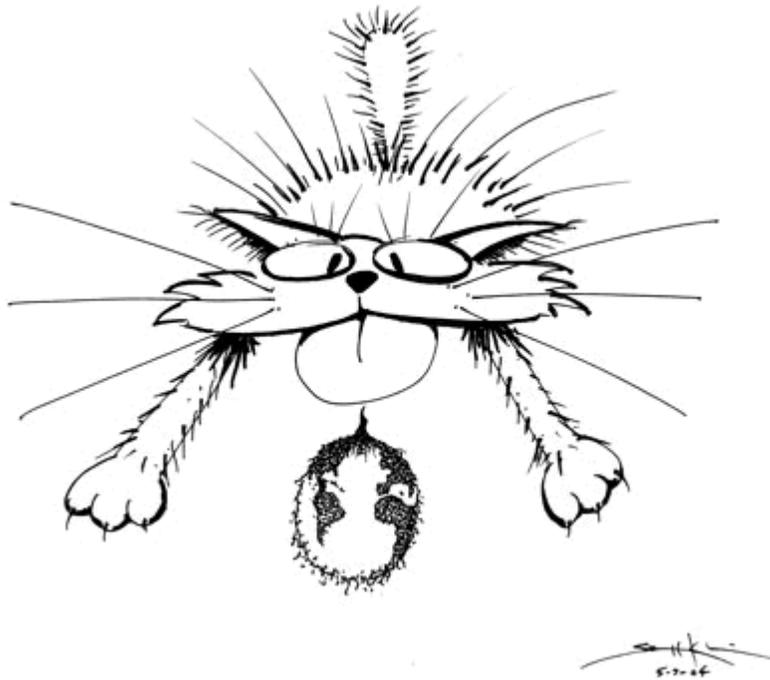


Getting Out The Hairball - Why? part2



"In general, cancer patients tend to bottle up their feelings because they don't let others know whether they feel hurt, angry, or sad. The world presents them as saint-like, long-suffering, almost too good to be true."

I write about the "hairball" because my cat gets out what's bothering him better than I do. I find that the more I talk about what's really going on, the more relief comes. The times that I didn't say what I felt, what bothered me, what mattered to me more than anything, the times that I held my breath, have affected my life and relationships greatly. When I didn't say what hurt me, what I craved, what I longed for, what I feared and needed so much, I lost a bit of my life-force, my soul and creativity, the umbilical cord to my belly that keeps me alive. Things unsaid can sever relationships. I think separation and war come from something deep inside that is unexpressed. The things I never said walk with me each day, like my shadow, wake me up at night, when I most want to forget.

Grabbing hold of my own power seems to come, eventually, from my writing. As I scribble down thoughts tonight, I am also full of feelings and a need to get out what is bothering me so that I can sort through it all, solidifying myself again. I feel like Humpty Dumpty who fell off the wall, putting the pieces together again through getting my hairball out on paper.

I am struck by the calm of my cat, Einstein, as he sits on top of my computer. I think it might help me to write tonight as if I were the cat -- imagining what he might say if he could speak. Maybe I can learn from this creature, so here goes Einstein getting out the ball of fur in his throat:

"I am a cat and I like comfort. I don't do well with cold weather, hard chairs and no social life. People think, just because I appear calm, that I do not have needs or moods. It isn't true. Cats have feelings too and today was a bad hairball day. I really need to get out what is bothering me.

"I did not do well today. For weeks people have been at home here with me, working in the garden, cooking, remodeling, visiting, talking on the phones or struggling with the computer. Today, everyone went back to work. I hated it. When my owner got home, I jumped on the computer keys immediately and she got a little impatient. It's not the same as it used to be. Both owners went back to work full time and I just feel disoriented. Isn't anybody home anymore?"

“She's even too tired to listen and let me get this hairball out. So, that's all I have to say today, I'm shutting down.”

A lot of us, people, children, and animals, feel fragmented and alone these days. Many of my friends seem to be especially "disempowered" because we cannot connect with each other (either because of time or fatigue), in order to get in the same canoe and move forward. People feel isolated, overwhelmed with technology and other issues; they feel as though they're hanging onto a rock or a life raft, floating.

Nobody prepared us for these pioneering times: two or three divorces, single parenting, sexless relationships, open marriages, Viagra, technology, or whatever. Unless you're in a twelve-step program, parenting group, or a church, there's no real community connection. It's ironic that we have more vehicles for communication, through technology, but deep connection is harder to come by. Everything is very fast and throw-away. How can we contain or direct our conversations in order to create meaningful change in ourselves, our world and for the children and the animals?

What I notice nowadays is a lot of unfinished business with one's ex, the kids, former bosses, friends and family. It's a relief to clear up communications with old friends and foes, but it's very brave. People want it but don't know how clearing out old cupboards is easier than clearing up our verbal hairballs.

I called an old boyfriend the other day, who had refused to speak to me for two years. It ended up that he thought I had quit calling him. My mouth fell open. How could our memories be so different? I guess you never really know what people are thinking, especially under stress, unless you have the guts to ask them. Trauma affects everyone differently; in my mind, he had quit speaking to me. We both admitted we had disassociated, had selective memory, were mixed up. Anyway, the reviving of our friendship has been great. We both admitted it felt so good. He helped me buy a car after that, which is not my strength at all, and now I am advising him on anti-depressants. That took nerve: phoning someone who had refused to speak to me.

Then, last night I went to visit my second husband and his wife. It was not easy. There were a lot of buried feelings that came rising up out of the smoldering coals that I did not know were there. The vibes were tense. I am still in the thick of thinking about it. As though I were pulling the threads from a ball of yarn, like a cat, I keep toying with the threads. They're difficult to pull apart. What all happened? How to heal this?

It takes a lot of guts to look at my own part in it all. Why have I held on? Why did I never let go of him? I never remarried. I never forgave myself for my part in screwing that up.

It's like cleaning out the storage room: if only I could get the way cleared, like feng shui, then my life would work. I mean, it is like blocked energy in my soul. I cannot move on if I am walking around a bunch of boxes and old photographs; I just can't move. So, that's why the hairball seems so important. Things unsaid stay in the body, like constipation.

I remember my mother hanging onto the fantasy of an old boyfriend during the entire time of her marriage to my dad. It wasn't until the very end of their lives that she saw Alder Gravel once again, and finally completed the cycle. She realized, 53 years later, that he was not as great as she had remembered. But, she carried the longing for him through most of her life. There were always three in the bed, in her heart. She finally met him again, in her 60s; she got the hook out, just by seeing him and telling him the truth. So, getting the hairball out opens the way to forward movement. What makes it so difficult?

It is hard to be fully alive, to plunge forward, to risk, to stand up for things. It takes balls to get my hairball out! It's an act of courage. It is noble to tell the truth before we die but not heroic to create a chronic, slow death of depression. It is the ultimate act to reveal oneself to others, to clear old held-in hurts and resentments from around and in us in the face of challenge and fear -- to have courageous conversations.

For me, the biggest block to speaking out loud is my sensitivity to rejection, which quickly rolls into self-criticism; it is a killer. For me, the voices in my head that stop me from being real are: "Don't bring it up; you're too sensitive; you're making a mountain out of a mole hill, etc.

It has taken the most courage of all for me to let go of shame and self-doubt, to shake it off and just be myself completely, to say what I feel and what is on my mind, to keep the ball bouncing instead of sitting alone, shut down and balling.

Suggested Hairballs:

1. Which relationships in your life seem like congestion in your body and soul?
2. Which memories linger and haunt you, seem incomplete from your past? (jobs, relationships, death, etc.)
3. What would you wish for in each of these?
4. What needs and requests might be spoken, if you had the nerve to ask for what you want?
5. What would enable you to move on?