

CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



“There's nothing you can do that's more important than being fulfilled. You become a sign, you become a signal, transparent to transcendence; in this way, you will find, live, and become a realization of your own personal myth.”

Joseph Campbell

Missing the Signs

Michele's twenty-year marriage ended abruptly with the sudden death of her husband from a heart attack. She saw no warning signs.

After years mourning the loss of her beloved, Michele still found herself bouncing about in a sea of uncertainty and pain. She felt she needed a sign — an omen of some kind — indicating that it was really okay to let go and move on with her life. One day as she was driving she heard the old song “Release Me” on her car radio. She pulled over and wept tears of joy. The lyrics, “*Oh, please release me, let me go,*” struck a chord with her. It was the sign she needed giving her permission to let go of hanging on to her late husband and telling her that it was okay to move on. She heard those words as an *omen*. They meant more to her than any song of sorrow and loss. She sat frozen, her eyes swelled with tears, as she drank in what was to her a sign of the possibility of a bountiful second chapter.

We all experience “signs,” or omens, but too often we ignore them or misread them. People in ancient times tried to decode these non-verbal messages. They believed that omens were a divine message from their gods. The ancients observed the stars, read the changes in the seasons, and even listened to bodily symptoms to discover where the soul needed healing. Today, we tend to dismiss these valuable messages or we have forgotten (if we ever knew in the first place) how to decode the signs that hide a wealth of buried gold. Modern man is always on the go, so we don't stop to look for signs, or pause to read between the lines, or listen for the meaning beneath the surface. As an example, a friend told his pastor how he'd gotten a traffic ticket for an illegal right turn. He said he'd come to a red light, stopped, and then safely turned right on the red light. He was immediately visited by a motorcycle officer who informed him that he'd disobeyed the sign prohibiting right turns on the red light at that intersection. “Didn't you see the sign?” asked the officer. Befuddled, the friend insisted that he'd never seen any such sign.



“I had the occasion to come to that same intersection,” the pastor had told him after he'd related the incident. “I saw not one or two but *three* signs prohibiting a right turn on red! How could you have missed them? The reason I immediately spotted the signs was because I was looking for them. I had an expectation and a sense of how they'd appear and I had no trouble seeing all three of them. Apparently, my friend had approached that intersection without such an expectation.”

In our women's group we reflect on the stepping stones of our lives, and revisit the signs and omens we may have missed along the way. What “signs” or “omens” might Michele’s husband have noticed about his health condition? What might have given him a warning of a potential problem that he might be a candidate for a heart attack?

Today, we are learning to "read" the signs for an omen signifying the advent of change. As one member of the women’s group mentioned: “One Friday morning after meditation and yoga I looked over at my purple orchids. One had dropped all of its flowers and the stem seemed dead. I felt it signaled the next phase of ending my marriage. I felt released to begin a new phase of my life.”

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