

Freedom from Trauma through Spirituality

By Katja Rusanen



The question “why?” was an open wound that would not stop bleeding. I was just sixteen but felt my life had ended at the same moment my first boyfriend took his. I was left behind to make sense of it. I wasn't a survivor of suicide; I was a victim of life.

Undoubtedly, most of us suffer some type of traumatic event in our lives; even the everyday suffering of loneliness and insecurity can be traumatic. These events and their consequences need to be resolved; otherwise, they may potentially block our capacity to enjoy our normal life and negatively affect our well-being. Epstein (2014) explains that death and illness touch us all, and his conclusion is that the way out of pain is through it.

For many years my interpretation of reality was that my boyfriend's suicide shattered my life. I felt that a part of me died, too. What actually happened was that I left a soul fragment in the moment of time when I heard the news, which is why it felt as if a part of me was gone. This lost part became an anchor that kept me stuck in the past; I was not able to let go of the painful memory.

What consoled me most was a vivid dream, right after his transition. In that specific dream he apologized to me and explained what had happened. During the years since his death, I have grown to understand that it was indeed his soul communicating with me. This experience made me believe that our loved ones who have left this physical realm are still reachable in Spirit. No one is ever lost.

It was hard for me to accept his choice and forgive myself for not having been there in time to save him. I was full of self-blame and felt responsible for what had happened. This guilt made me feel that I was also judged socially. I quickly learned to hide my pain under a smiley mask and kept the pain trapped in my heart. It became a blockage that stopped me from giving or receiving love. I believed in my misinterpretation of this story, that love causes pain, and so it did, as we manifest what we believe.

Living in the Dark

The darkest moment can be seen as a

curse that ruins everything or as a seed of spiritual growth. When I had to face the vulnerability of human life and the power of free will, I felt permanently changed by the experience. The future had lost its meaning; I sensed a lack of purpose. Overnight, the traumatic event made me a Spiritual Warrior who started a journey through a lengthy period without light and hope. I experienced many symptoms listed under Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) according American Psychiatric Association (2013). I was resistant to talk about what happened and how I felt about it, but I had repeated memories. The distorted belief about myself that I was guilty caused self-destructive behavior; it mainly manifested itself in an active attempt to drive away other people as I didn't believe that anybody could love someone like me. I was close to ending my own life.

Fortunately, there was a little inner sparkle that kept me here. I had a strong feeling that I had a mission, but I had no idea what it was. I started searching for my life purpose, and I wanted to understand why human life was full of suffering. The Buddhist's teaching of the impermanence of everything in our life became a cornerstone for me. I had learned about it in the 7th grade at school. My Evangelical Lutheran upbringing had created a foundation where Buddhist teachings layered on and this opened my mind to see our everyday life differently. I started to awaken and became

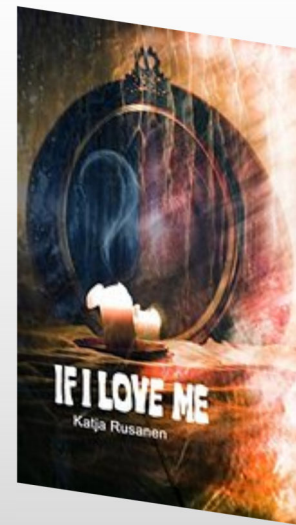
interested in learning more about souls, death, destiny and past lives.

Why Do You Stay in Prison When the Door is so Wide Open? (Rumi)

For many years, my thoughts created a dark prison cell that made me feel stuck in the past. One day I bought a book about palmistry (Rodriguez, 2006) as I wanted to find some direction in my life; I felt lost. This book had invitingly listed the author's contact details. Out of a sudden impulse I dialed his number and booked an appointment. With 30 years of experience Rodriguez gave me an accurate reading and at the end of the session he told me in Spanish, "You can keep looking for answers outside yourself, but you only find what you're looking for when you stop and look for the answer inside yourself." He even offered me a way how to start by simply asking me, "Why don't you write?"

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That night I started creative writing the first draft of what eventually became a novel. It was a scary thing to do, as I had kept the pain locked up inside me for so many years. I had wanted someone else to take away the pain and release me from the prison that I had created, but only I was able to walk through that door towards acceptance, forgiveness, and letting go. Twenty-two years after the traumatic event that changed my life, I completed a fictional young-adult trilogy that is loosely based on my own story. Expression is healing and through this process I recaptured the lost pieces of my soul.



I was finally able to leave the past behind. As one of my favorite characters, Mama Karima, says in my third novel (Rusanen, 2014), "I'm grateful for the lessons I learnt. Suffering and happiness are always in the world, they don't ever end, but you have to choose what you want to carry with you. Our life is a journey of lessons, but every situation has something to teach us."

I saw that one lesson in my spiritual curriculum was learning to Love. I gained an understanding of my life from my soul's perspective instead of only seeing the emotional pain, I could see how this experience accelerated my spiritual growth and taught me compassion and unconditional love. When I use the word spiritual, I mean an inner work to gain self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-love as well as connectedness with the oneness, which can be called many names like God, Goddess, Great Spirit, or Universe. I support this journey by reading spiritual literature, doing a daily meditation, loving affirmations and listening to my intuition.

Currently I am deepening my knowledge and awareness at the University of Santa Monica, California, where I'm studying for my Master's Degree in Spiritual Psychology. I am re-learning the truth that our essence is love.

For many years my essence was hidden under many layers of pain, but it was always there. I broke down the walls that I had built to protect my heart as I realized how my fear of love caused separation.

It took me more than 20 years to overcome my fear and admit that love can heal even the deepest cut. Slowly I opened those knots that bind hurt and love. I know now that love doesn't cause suffering, it was my attachments and expectations. Spirituality brought me answers that I could not otherwise find.

When I allowed unconditional love to fill every cell in my body, I healed my heart and soul. The traumatic event that I experienced broke my heart open so it could feel even more compassion, love and joy than before. From my deepest emotional pain rises my spiritual growth. I feel gratitude for this journey; I have stepped away from a victim's role. What happened to me doesn't define me. I am so much more than my story.

Every moment that we can share here is precious. We are here to learn and study lessons from our spiritual curriculum. Each and every experience has a teaching inside; we can always choose our reactions and thoughts. Each and every person in our lives

is a teacher as well, and we are also teachers for them. If we choose to shift our focus from pain to the lesson learned, we can free ourselves to move forward. We can seek support on our journey, but no one can give us freedom from the past except ourselves. The door to healing is not locked, everyone can access it. It is important to remember that by clearing the pain and hurt, you will let your true loving nature shine its light and you will see the beauty of life again. Freedom from trauma is not only possible, it's the great gift that you can give to yourself.

Katja Rusanen is a Spiritual Life Coach, Inspirational Speaker and Author. Her transformational coaching inspires and empowers people to move from fear to courage, from insecurity to confidence and from confusion to clarity. You can find more info about her work on her website: www.katjarusanen.com.

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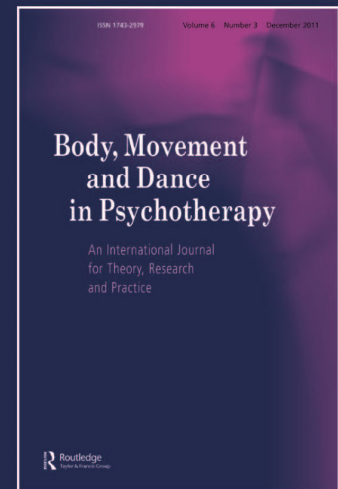
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