

# Non-Coercive Self-Motivation

by Kelly Bryson, MA, MFT

Human souls come into this world full of passion and purpose. And then well-meaning parents and teachers start trying to motivate them.

Did you ever have to motivate yourself to go to recess or play your favorite game? Do you now have to motivate yourself to hike your favorite trail, read your favorite book or have sex? I hope not. Although there are people who have to, excuse the pun, pump themselves up psychologically to have sex because it has become an obligation that they feel duty bound to perform. It is a sad state of affairs, and perhaps the cause of many affairs, that something as alive and profound as erotic energy can become lifeless and mundane as study hall used to be.

In some ways it all comes from a basic distrust of human nature, that I believe began in the Dark Ages with the concept of Original Sin. (See Mathew Fox's book *Original Blessing*.) There is a great distrust in our culture that human beings will do what is needed for themselves or others unless they are threatened with punishment or coerced with rewards.

I wish there were more understanding that it is the very use of coercion, positive or negative, that breaks or deadens the spirit, which is the source of motivation. This is not only true between people, but within oneself. So the more I try to motivate myself to do whatever I think I 'should' do, the less energy I have to do it.

Rosemarie Anderson said, "Who would have thought that play could be turned into work by rewarding people for doing what they like to do?"

Educational geniuses, who have Ph.D.s and head our educational institutions, are forever coming up with new methods to coerce children into doing what would otherwise be intrinsically satisfying.

How about the pizza for books program in Georgia called "Book it." This is where teachers give out coupons, good for a free pizza, for every book a child reads. This was sponsored by that bastion of altruism Pizza Hut. And of course the children picked the thinnest books with the biggest print. Why? So they could get past that nasty hurdle called reading as quickly as possible, to get to that which is really valued, the goodie, the pizza. I think what you really ended up with was a bunch of fat kids with eating disorders who hate to read.

Then there is our old buddy Representative Newt Gingrich who would come to my alma mater, University of West Georgia, to praise the education department for paying third graders two dollars for each book they read. His motto was "Adults are motivated by money why not kids?" (Newt taught at the University of West Georgia and used to regularly debate Dr. Mike Aarons the head of my graduate humanistic psychology program. I of course think Mike won the debates but Newt definitely won the power struggle as he went on to become Speaker of the House.)

I start to wonder, "What's wrong with me, I never got paid to read." I used to read because it was fun. Maybe I got ripped off. Maybe I could get together with a bunch of other baby boomers that were abused in this way and file a huge class action suit against the federal government. We could get billions in back pay. Organizational development guru Douglas McGregor says that the answer to the question 'How do you



motivate people?' - is, "You don't." And of course we can motivate ourselves and others to do things through threat of punishment or promise of reward, but at the cost of our passion to do it. And it is this passion to do something that gives us the energy to produce excellence.

It's like a father teaching their child to ride a bike. Which is more important: The child learning to ride a bike or the father and child maintaining and developing a rich, loving connection? How tragic that so many children are afraid of their father's anger or disappointment. If their can be a focus maintained on keeping a certain quality of relationship between the two, then a creative learning can be created together. The child can learn how to learn and how to ride a bike and the father can learn how to teach in a way that keeps and enriches his relationship with his child.

This is the relationship I want with myself as I enter new realms and levels of creativity and self expression. I never want to achieve, learn or create at the expense of a kind, gentle, loving, supportive relationship with myself. It's so easy to fall into trying to coerce myself. I know of many a father who either cracks the whip or begs and pleads with their child to become great bicycle riders/achievers. I know many an individual who cruelly coerces themselves to achieve and develop in certain areas. And they do gain great mastery or achievement in an arena. In that sense "It works." But at what cost to their relationship to their inner child and self?

So as I am now teaching myself to be an author and write my first book, I am challenged to practice what I am preaching. Moment by moment I am choosing to monitor whether I am threatening myself with the stick of self harshness or holding out the carrot or extrinsic reward.

I have been an abusive father with myself and now I am too often afraid of me. Most of my effort to teach or motivate myself has been of the "cracker or the smacker" variety, to use a British term. It has either been the cracker (an British word for cookie) of an extrinsic reward — money, sex, acknowledgement, or simply the relief from self hate and depression. Or the smacker — beating myself up with a barrage of self hating actions ranging from simple self derision/vindictive criticism to complex compulsions like alcohol/drugs/ food, relationship roulette, schoolaholism, guru submission, depression, accident proneness, exposure to danger, illnesses, boredom, depression and suicide attempts.

As with any abusive relationship it will take time to change the patterns of it and redevelop trust. I am reminded of a line from a song that Dr. Rosenberg wrote for his son Brett. It is written from the perspective of the son speaking to his father about their painful relationship:

And even if you should change your style  
It'll take me a little while,  
Before I can forgive and forget.  
Because it seemed to me that you,  
Didn't see me as human too,  
Not till all your standards were met.

I need liberation from the concept of self motivation. As long as I am trying to motivate myself I am caught in a catch-22. Immediately I am schizoid. There is one me that's trying to motivate another me. I feel a sense of the endless futile struggle to pick myself up by my own ankles.

Why do I even have to motivate myself? Do I have to motivate myself to have sex, play my guitar, or play my favorite game, basketball? No, because I am connected with the intrinsic reward for doing these things. Did it take hours of focused strenuous effort to get to an enjoyable level of mastery at these things? (The sex part wasn't so strenuous.) Of course. Did it take delayed gratification and discipline? That was not my inner phenomenological experience. If it had been I probably would have rebelled and not been able to focus enough to develop any skill.



Because I was raised by Calvinistic religious joy/life-haters, the idea of delaying gratification triggers my fear that we are talking repression again. I much prefer the concept of 'maximizing my pleasure' through strategic timing. I don't want to think in terms of delaying my gratification but planning to have it when it will have the maximum impact. A small example would be having a wonderful meal in a restaurant and getting close to being full. I like to stop before I get full and bring the rest home in a container, not because I am delaying gratification but because it will taste so much better in several hours when I am really hungry again.

I love to play basketball. I love the endorphin rush that the total immersion into the timelessness of the moment brings. Or the physical emotional tension release that comes from a hard workout. I can maximize all these effects if I do a few hours of writing before I go. The contrast between the sedentary activity of writing and physical endurance required on the court is sublime. It also increases the pleasure of the activity going to it with the sense of satisfaction that comes through productivity.

I am concerned that the concept of self motivation starts to stimulate images of struggle and inner conflict. I prefer something more like self-liberation, where I am liberating the trapped energy of the wild child that lives within. I remember as a kid I never had to motivate myself to go out and play. I suspect there is already a powerful creative/productive urge within me, and I need to learn how to get out of it's way. I chose to create an environment that makes it easy to develop a love for what I am doing and quit trying to coerce myself.

## Five steps to getting out of the way of your own Elan Vital (vital creative energy)

### Step 1: Self Empathy

I frequently have an inner jackal god that's commanding me to "get busy." When I try to appease this god by making sacrifices of my time or making myself do something that I think would fall within it's category of productive, I give my power to it and submit to its oppression. I then start to lose motivation to do anything. I find myself strangely compelled to sing under my breath old negro spirituals like "Old Black Joe" and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" as I drag one leg behind me, through my day.

What I am really needing to do is to give that "get busy" jackal empathy. Which might sound like this, if you could listen inside my head:

My inner jackal taskmaster: "What the hell are you doing? Get busy. Do something. You are wasting your life!"

My wise old giraffe higher self: "I sense fear, anxiety, old hurt around a need to be fully engaged in the joy of full creative self expression and a request to dive headlong into the middle of the rushing river of life."

### Step 2: Quit rewarding yourself

As I was starting to write my book I told myself I would buy myself a new car when I finished it. It took me months to figure out why it was so difficult to make much progress. The creative wild wonder child of my creativity did not want to be bought and sold and was unwilling to help me with my project.

Give yourself stuff because you want it and need it not because you have earned it or deserve it. Care for the many sides of your Self and creativity will follow, instead of trying to be productive so that you will earn your self acceptance. The creative writing guru Julia Cameron recommends we give ourselves 'artist dates' where we go out and romance and indulge ourselves in an experience of creative rejuvenation. This would include things like going to an art gallery, a walk in a Japanese garden, or for me a long talk with my zany writer friends.



### Step 3: Interrupt all comparison thoughts

Comparison thoughts are like “Why am I just now getting my first book written when that little sissy man wimp Joe Smith has twenty best selling books out there?” Or “I know people tell me I look nice but I’m nothing compared to someone with real beauty.”

Dan Greenburg wrote a book called *How to Make Yourself Miserable*. One of his most powerful and ingenious techniques is comparing ourselves to others. He has drawings of the faces of a normal man and woman with little centimeter numbers inscribed on them. You are directed to measure your face or your prospective love mate, compare your measurements to these Olympic specimens and then meditate on the difference. He reminds us that any variation, no matter how slight, is a defect. And if you find no differences, you are referred to the section on *how to make yourself miserable if you are a beautiful person*.

But we all know beauty is only skin deep and that the measure of your worth comes from your soul’s expression in life. For this, Greenburg offers Fig. XIII: *Aid to Evaluating Your Accomplishments*. It’s a picture of what Greenburn calls four ordinary people who were chosen at random. The first one is a twenty-six-year-old patent office clerk, a.k.a. Albert Einstein, who formulated the theory of relativity. (What theories have you formulated?) Then, youthful piano player, W.A. Mozart, who composed his first symphony and three sets of sonatas by age eight. Next Abdullah al-Salim of Kuwait, who receives a salary of \$7,280,000 weekly. (What’s your salary?)

I recommend that as soon as you recognize a thought as being of the comparison variety, pull it out like a weed, because if you don’t it will multiply. **Here’s two ways to pull it out.**

- 1. Let it remind you that whatever you are jealous of or compare yourself to is a shadowy expression of your dream for yourself.** Take the time to write out what that desire or dream is, and then strategize how to move towards it.
- 2. Stop the thought.** Just refuse to keep thinking it. Tell yourself, “I have been there, done that and I am choosing to spend my energy on other things,” and then focus your attention into some medium like reading, writing or conversation. If the thought is persistent, you can get a “God Can.” Write out the thought and put it in the can, and then whenever the thought comes again tell yourself “Nope, I put that one in the ‘God Can’ and God can take care of it for me.”

Here’s a little poem to help you recognize and understand comparison Jackals (thoughts):

#### The Comparison Jackal

Jackals are creatures that live in my head.  
And whenever they speak I start feeling dread.  
There are many breeds from critic to “poor me”  
Forever diagnosing what is wrong with me.

They are comparison Jackals all ten feet tall,  
Pointing out to me that I’m relatively small.

They remind me I’m nobody, not famous like Amos.  
It’s not something I’m proud of, in fact I feel shamous.  
That I haven’t done more with the gifts I’ve been given.  
I’ve hardly done nothing, I’ve hardly been livin.’



And I don't have much money, not one share of stock.  
On Christmas I'll betcha I get rocks in my sock.

Now I'm not much to look at with a growing potbelly.  
And it's hard to be macho with a girl's name like Kelly.

Now comparison Jackals are a fast breeding lot  
They never get tired of pointing out what your not.  
Even if you've won an Olympic gold medal  
Will your Jackal be happy and finally settle?  
No, it will scream, "What's the matter with you?  
If you'd only tried harder you could have won two?"  
So whether you try your least or your most  
You can trust your Jackal to move the goal post.

So how do you win the comparison game?  
You are going to lose if to win is your aim.

You must lose to win which is simply done  
By refusing to play games that aren't fun.  
To lose the fear to appear second rate  
And be uniquely you is a new kind of great.  
To lose yourself into selfless esteem  
And think your own thoughts and dream your own dream.  
And always to ask for 100 percent  
Of what ever you want so you'll never resent.  
That way you'll never miss out on a chance  
To invite yourself to enter life's dance.

#### **Step 4 - Create collaborative community**

The great psychologist Alfred Adler identified the need for significance and belonging to be the primary psychological drives for the pack animals known as humans. These needs can be met so much better in the community of a workgroup which energizes the individual, creates synergy, and thereby increases output.

I only enjoy serious working for an hour or two before I start to feel sluggish. However I can play all day. I can play all night too if I have other people to play with me. I have noticed that when I go by myself to play basketball, I really only enjoy practicing my shooting for a few minutes. If someone comes and we can shoot together or play one on one I may last an hour. But as more and more people come, we sustain each other in an energy field that can soar for hours.

In case you already have too much motivation, here's some exhausting games you can play with yourself to depress yourself.

##### **Exhausting Game #1**

Remember the old Top Dog/Under Dog model of Fritz Perls'? Top Dog: "You should do your paperwork". Under Dog: "Yeah, but I don't feel like it." or "You can't make me!" Figure out what your number one 'should' is like: "I should do my taxes early" and then spend hours going back and forth demanding yourself to do it and then whining and making excuses about why you don't want to.



### **Exhausting Game #2:**

Screw up all your discipline and make yourself do those things you have been avoiding. You will then need several days to recover from the energy drain. And remember, the product — whatever you create from this kind of motivation — is low quality. It's like having one foot on the brake of your car and one on the gas and then stepping super hard on the gas. You will get somewhere but it will cost you. That's how I got through school.

If you are thinking you should get something done, you've made a choice that won't lead to fun.

If a friend gives you a big beautiful box of chocolates you have at least two choices about how you will receive them. One choice is to receive them hesitantly with fear about showing the proper amount of appreciation. You might start eating them with an attitude of guilt. "Oh I should eat these to show my appreciation." Or you can choose an attitude of "Yippee, chocolates!" I think life is like the giver of that box of chocolates and would probably prefer them received from an attitude of enjoyment not drudgery.

Before I open my box of chocolates in the morning, otherwise known as my life, I want to make sure I remember how to receive. I need to remember what it was like before I learned about the concept of sin, and being bad and undeserving. I need to remember what it was like when I was aware that everything was being given to me as a gift. This was before I started taking credit for everything.

I remember being only four years old, waking up just as the first rays of light slipped through the window of our house in the Valley of the Sun. I would sneak out of our house using a technique my sister taught me called "Indian feet." That's where you put the toes and ball of your foot down before you put down the heel to make less noise. Once outside I would hop on my little red foot push scooter with the handle that comes up (I am so excited that a new high tech version of these skate boards with handles are making a vicious comeback) and take off through the suburban streets of Phoenix, Arizona. I was bursting with joy, excitement and adventure. "Who's up?" I would be thinking. "Who wants to play with me?" I just knew that everyone wanted to see me and play with me.

I would roll up to the first house where I saw or heard any signs of life and simply present myself. "Hi, I'm Kelly. I live down the street. What are you doing?" And often the answer would be, "Well, we are fixing breakfast." "I haven't eaten yet, what are you having?" I would inquire. And of course my innocent self invitation worked like magic. No it *was* magic. And when I had finished my waffles I would be off to the next house and the next house. It was a wonderful way to start my day, just to present myself and let people nurture me.

I like to think of it as my Garden of Eden Days. It's like in the Bible where Adam and Eve just live in Paradise and they don't have to work or do anything. All they know how to do is enjoy the garden, eat, play, etc. Then they learned about concepts like good and bad. Then they were able to be doing one thing and thinking they should be doing another. This was the beginning of the fall. After this they had to toil the soil, otherwise known as getting a job. Before I do anything I want to remember that I can choose to remember that I am still in paradise, that there is nothing I should do or have to do. I can choose to just start opening up the chocolates de jure.

There's a part of me that wants to see progress, the sweet fulfilling feeling of accomplishment and creative pride. Other parts of me just enjoys the process of creation. I also enjoy the effect of creation on my being. Sometimes when writing or talking I discover and clarify an understanding that now becomes a new part of conscious me. There is also the relief of being swept away on the currents of creativity's river. Sometimes when I first put my little raft in the relatively calm waters of the rivers side eddies, my pen to paper, fingers to the keyboard, it can almost feel like effort. But as I push my way further into the river the strength of the current kicks in and then my effort is simply to hang on and try to keep up with where I am being taken.

I am afraid that even holding out the carrot of "a satisfying sense of accomplishment" is an attempt to coerce myself in the same way all my teachers and parents did. It begins to create a split within myself. I have never had to give myself a pep talk to get me to load up all my fishing gear, and drive all the way up the



mountain, and climb through the bushes to go fishing. I have friends who are rock climbers. They don't have to tell themselves, "Think of how beautiful it will be once you get to the top." They know that beauty is awaiting them, but if they held that out like a carrot and tried to motivate themselves with it in the same coercive fashion their parents and teachers tried to control their behavior they would resist. Or even if they did coerce themselves to climb one mountain, the next one would feel like all the more work. So I want to be very careful about forcing myself to do something that I might potentially love doing, or something I might want to be doing a lot of.

My rock climbing friends enjoy the struggle of the climb partly because they don't split the activity into "the work" and "the reward." For them it is all one thing.

## Additions

Work is not an activity, it is an attitude based on fear.

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I want to stay in touch with life's sweet flow,  
And spread loving waves wherever I go.  
I like being aware that there's nothing to achieve.  
Life's a gift I have only to receive.

I want to escape wimp consciousness when motivating my self. I worry about motivating myself with the "wimp whip." In other words telling myself I am a wimp if I don't take at least six classes this quarter from the community college.

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There's not enough pleasure in the world to balance the pain of being a human being, only purpose and love can tip the scale and make it worth it.

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Everything I do with the intention of motivating myself, backfires. Just within the intention to motivate myself there lies an implicit should. I should be doing a certain thing, and how can I motivate myself to do it? Even if I put up little pieces of paper with phrases on the wall to remind me of the reasons why I want to do certain projects, it doesn't help. For example with my book project, I put up on the wall a piece of paper with: "Writing the book will provide me with more ways to connect with more people" and "It will help me discover more of myself" and "It will provide insights and tools to help people relieve their suffering."

If I am coming from the self-conflicted attitude of trying to motivate myself my mind will respond with "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're right — I really should be doing something to connect with more people and provide tools and knowledge to relieve their suffering. And God knows I could use more insight into myself, so maybe I could be a little more motivated." Each well-intentioned, inspirational nudge becomes the image of my Aunt Willie, shaking her finger at me saying, "You're not going to get any supper unless you finish your homework!"



There is a difference between documenting moments of clarity about what I want to create in my life, and trying to make myself do what I think I should. If the intention is to remind myself of a moment of inspiration I had about what would be fun to create, wonderful. If I take the moment of inspiration and try to turn it into a cattle prod, woe is me.

I really am longing for a return to the experience of my work being like reading those adventure books like *Silver Chief* that I used to read. *Silver Chief* is about this very loyal, intelligent German Shepherd. Every afternoon in the summer when there was no school, I used to climb the stylus to get over the barbed wire fence, walk through the tall fennel weeds, to get to Dave's house. Dave's house was a shack on my Uncle Jake's property that was abandoned, but had a small, creaky porch with a cot on it, just right for reading and napping. I couldn't wait to get a few hundred yards away from my Aunt's anxiety. And then I would escape several centuries and thousands of miles away as I joined the Mongol hordes with heroic passion in *The Golden Hawks of Ghingas Kahn*. Or I found a way to my own grief and self compassion as I read about *Greyfriar's Bobby*, a scottish terrier whose master died and then dug his paws raw trying to get under the cemetery wall to be with him. I didn't know till this moment why that had moved me so. I was a 10-year-old boy at the time who had been forcibly removed from his mother and this image helped me feel what my puppy dog heart was feeling. So whether I was feeling grief or grandiose, each entry into that world was an adventure in aliveness.

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Do I want to think about the "whys," like why am I so resistant to writing my book? Or do I want to do the writing? I can't do both at the same time.

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### **The Self Abuse of Self Coercion**

I hate being motivated by the fear of missing out.  
I want to only be driven by the excitement of tuning in.

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Sometimes the thing getting in the way of me going toward what I want to go toward is asking myself "What's in the way of me moving forward?" Instead of better questions like "What might I be needing right now?" or "Would it give me satisfaction to take action towards my goals? And if the answer is yes, then what would help me take the action?"

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I chose to make a compassionate relationship with me my first priority, and achieving outer goals, second. Many times it is the greatest act of compassion for myself to strive with great drive and passion towards some goal. At times it would be an act of self hate to be forcing myself to keep working out of fear. I need to listen to myself and my body to know the difference. I want to quit forcing myself to fulfill an agenda. I want the agenda to be developing a caring, loving, nurturing, accepting connection with me, and *then* take action.

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You must give up 'must', and learn to trust if you're going to motivate yourself compassionately.

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Determination comes from having made a decision. But you can't fake yourself out about it, hoping that determination will come if you tell yourself you have made a decision.

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When we are extrinsically motivated, i.e. coerced by reward and punishment, we lose touch with why we might hate to do something. We lose touch with our own needs.

We're all like rats in an experiment. We've learned our behavior — pressing the bar — being cooperative, pleasing our boss/spouse, etc. and have lost connection with our instincts to scavenge for food, nest and all other activities that would nourish our whole being.

I'm reminded of one of the treatments for alcoholics called antibuse. Antibuse is a drug that some alcoholics take that makes them feel sick if they taste alcohol.

I feel like I've taken a large dose of anti-productivity/creativity/dream. So that anytime I think of making effort to fulfill my dreams, do something creative that is not directly linked to a reward like money for survival, I start to feel that old familiar sickening fear arise.

Good job culture, good job schools. Your use of reward and punishment (pop behaviorism) has effectively crippled my autonomy, entrepreneurial spirit and any intrinsic motivation to make anything out of my life. For many years my spirit was so broken and confused that all I could do was work in the factories that need docile subservient extrinsically motivated robots. I've even become institutionalized myself. That is I became one of the spirit/autonomy breakers. I came to work for adolescent treatment centers. Treatment center isn't that sweet name a for it. As if these adolescents had developed tuberculosis and had to be sent away to a treatment center. Most of them were there because they hated how they were treated at school and/or home. Most were there because they had more spunk and/or smarts than their more obedient/cooperative peers. My job, and by the way I hated it, became to get the little tykes to do what their teachers and parents told them to. We used techniques like stars and candy bars for rewards. We used punishments like solitary confinement, increasing the medications and not letting them see their families to coerce them into attending their boring classes in their dehumanizing schools. All the while the therapists and social workers and administration needed to constantly reassure themselves that they were doing it all "for the good of the kids."

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It takes a lot of energy to motivate myself from pushing (pursuing) or fear. If I'm to get done all I want to, I'll need to learn to follow my bliss.

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The idea that manifestation is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration depresses my inner child and has prevented him from writing or creating in other ways. I now choose to believe that if your creation is taking 99% perspiration you need more inspiration. If that's true, your work stinks and no wonder you don't want to do it. It's time for 'Secret' — remember that deodorant ad? And the 'secret' is that it doesn't have to be that hard. With more inspiration, more breathing in of life, you let your spirit do the work. Find a balance between inspiration and perspiration. If you're stuck on doing a lot of perspiration then you need more inspiration. A better balance would be 50/50.

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I reject motivation  
And instead chose inspiration  
Send my mind on a vacation  
To a more playful paradigm

## Creativity

Keeping creativity flowing may be similar to breathing in that we need to balance inspiration with creative expiration. Sometimes my own expiration is also an inspiration. I need to expose myself to people who are on fire with the same passion I have. If it's writing, then inspired writers. To let some of the embers of their fires spark my soul, to catch a glimpse of their vision. And then I want to let that spark set fire to my soul's work, keeping my eye in the plan vital of my vision and my soul's stepping one step in from of the other down the path of my passion. In with inspiring art, scenery, music, oratory, out with poems, songs, books, letters. In with great sex out with great sex. In with provocative movies out with screenplays. In with soulful speakers out with soulful speech. In with soul food, out with creative cookery for all my friends. In with powerful musical, theatrical, dance, comedy, sports performances and out with the same. So many intoxicants to imbibe, so much disorderly, crazy behavior to express.

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If one only drinks in inspiration and never expresses a creation, a flow does not go. The answer to creative constipation is spiritual inspiration.

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Creatively the soul aches, like the child who watches other children playing on the playground from the window of the detention hall. And if the soul stays obedient to internalized authorities, it slips into the self motivation maze.

Come out of the haze and amaze yourself, above the box of paradoxical intentions.  
Having these two intentions create great tensions, to be both "good" and feel alive.  
So go beyond survive and into thrive, the land of spiritual milk and honey.  
The soul knows the way to save the day, past fears of having enough money.



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Neither writing nor creating is miserable. Thinking I should write or create and then resisting is miserable.

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Now that I have discovered that I actually love to write I need to be a little careful not to make myself sick of it again. One way I made myself sick of it was by forcing it down my throat when I was in college and graduate school. It's just like with food. If you really love butter pecan ice-cream as I do, two surefire ways to make yourself sick of it is to force it down your throat when your not hungry and to make yourself eat too much of it. When we are coerced by rewards and punishment we lose awareness of what we really love and how much of it we really want to imbibe.

I was at the pediatrician's office today, taking in our six day old daughter. There was a nutrition poster in the doctor's office giving new parents basic advice about how and what to feed their children. It said never make you child eat anything, because first of all you can't and secondly it will damage their ability to notice when and how hungry they are. This is what happen to me with respect to my creativity and productivity. I was coerced by rewards and punishment to the point that I was no longer connected to my own need to be creatively productive. Now sometimes when I get a little taste of my own creativity and notice how delicious it is and how starved I have been for it, I pig out. This once again leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth, which sometimes makes me doubt that I really enjoy creating at all. It's almost like restimulating the original allergic reaction that my teachers and schools created to my creative expression in the first place.

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It can be helpful to understand how we came to enter this coercive relationship with ourselves. Dr. Marshall Rosenberg once told me that if a culture can convince its members of the following three things they will become "good slaves" of the culture:

1. There are some things you have to do whether you like to or not.
2. There are these people called authorities that will tell you what these things are.
3. If these authorities punish you for disobeying, it is for your own good.

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Sometimes when I am feeling discouraged a little sports trivia helps. Like who holds the record for the most strikeouts in baseball? Babe Ruth!

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I can't write from the consciousness I want to write from when I am making myself write. And besides I feel very hypocritical forcing myself to write about how to get free from "coercive forces." I may be preaching self determination but I'm still practicing self subjugation. So how do I motivate myself to write? I don't. Although I may do some journaling until the part of me that's trying to motivate me merges with its evil inner twin — "resistance." Then what emerges is playful productivity. Because these two parts of me are just two needs that need to find a way to cooperate. One need is to give to myself, another is to give to others. One need is for a sense of



satisfaction, another is to have fun. Someone once said that they wake up every morning torn between two wonderful urges. One to enjoy the world and the other to contribute to it. May I always trust that there is a way to do both, even at the same time.

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It's like my uncle Jake used to explain. "Them cows need to give their milk or they get sick." Maybe people would find more cow-like contentment if they could find the balance between giving their gift and grazing in the green grass of whatever restores their soul's energy.

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God is not easily coerced into giving us stuff. She has already heard all the guilt trips, sob stories, and demands that humans know how to manufacture. So I'm sure your's is not going to get to her.

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"Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly" will free up your creativity better than the motto, "You can't fall out of bed if you sleep on the floor."

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Children are motivation until you start trying to motivate them.

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**Kelly Bryson MA, MFT**, author of the best selling book, *Don't be Nice, Be Real - Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others (COVER TEXT: A Handbook to Nonviolent Communication™)*, has been featured in Elle and Shape magazines, appeared on many TV and radio shows, lived in an ashram many years, is a humorist, singer and licensed therapist in private practice. He keynotes conventions (national Montessori), is an inspirational speaker and has been an authorized trainer for the international Center for Nonviolent Communication for over 20 years, and has trained thousands in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East. He trains, presents and consults with groups, corporations (Tony Robbins, Paul Mitchell Salons), churches (all flavors), schools (U.Cal.L.B, Body/Mind College), clubs and all types of organizations. He also studied with E. Stanley Jones, Gandhi's concierge and friend. Learn more about his work or information about his private or phone-based sessions, visit his website at [www.LanguageOfCompassion.com](http://www.LanguageOfCompassion.com) or contact him directly at 831-462-EARS (3277) (most insurance accepted). To purchase Kelly's book *Don't be Nice, Be Real* or other related CD's, audio tapes & books, or to read chapters from his book click <http://www.languageofcompassion.com/Publications.htm>

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