

New Waves of Learning

Dr. Sibis Mouton, motivational speaker, recently swam with dolphins. She found the adventure deeply moving and is using that inspiration to help others. Her mission is to inspire people to live a happy, fulfilled and purposeful life.

One of my all-time favourite novels is *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis. There was a movie made based on this book, and in a scene near the beginning, Zorba looks at his boss and says: “What kind of a man are you, that you don’t get excited when seeing a pair of dolphins?”

My excitement at the thought of having the privilege of swimming with dolphins led me in a completely new direction on my life’s journey. In April 2001 I went to the Art of Living Festival in Cape Town. One of the lectures I attended was by Sue Myers, a known spiritual healer, behavioural kinesiologist and founder of the Breakthru Institute in Florida, USA. During the course of her lecture she mentioned that swimming with dolphins was a part of the Freedom course offered at the institute. Had it not been for my fascination with the dolphin swim, I might well have left after the lecture. Instead I decided to set up a private appointment with Sue.

My appointment led me to attend the “Discovery Course” which the Breakthru Institute offered here in Cape Town in May 2001. It was then that I committed to attending the “Freedom Course” in Florida in January 2002. This course is a prerequisite on the road to qualification as a Behavioural Kinesiologist and then learn how to facilitate the “New Beginnings” workshop, a one-day transformational course run by the institute. Suffice to say, I have never learnt so much about my own behaviour and about living a victorious and powerful life as through the processes offered during this “Freedom Course.” On the last day of the six-day course our group of ten (five South Africans and five Americans) set off in a convoy for the four-hour drive to the Keys, where we would join the dolphins at the Theatre of the Sea in Islamorada.

My first observation was that these dolphins were inquisitive; they came really close to the rim of the lake to look at our group. They lay skew in the water and stared curiously at us with one eye, and we all immediately felt an affinity with them. I think that many of us lose our natural inquisitiveness during the course of our lives. Business Week reported that an adult of 40 years has approximately 2% of the creativity that is found in a child of five. Many of us no longer look for the surprises in life and we allow life’s wounds to get us down. The result is that we accept an existence inferior to one where we can have, without limitation, all the good that life has to offer. This acceptance of “less” is often driven by fear.

Our life can be a masterpiece of joy when we are aligned with what God wants us to do. Joy is possible where there is no fear, where there is a safe inner sanctuary. If one waters the seeds of negative emotions, one gets caught in habits that take one away from peace and love. The dolphins by contrast come from love; they were completely accepting of us and only wanted to bring us happiness.

The two dolphins assigned to our group were Twister and Sherman. Their understanding of fear can be illustrated in how they dealt with one of the members of our group, Sharon from Colorado. One of the highlights of the afternoon was to swim across the lagoon to the other side, to wait there with hands and arms outstretched, for the two dolphins to come from behind, and to grab onto their dorsal fins so that they could pull us through the water for a true joyride. Sharon was very hesitant and was afraid, as she was not a particularly strong swimmer. Here is where the intuition of the dolphins was so visibly demonstrated. They came behind Sharon and just gently pulled her through the water. It was amazing to see their empathy and how they tuned into her feelings. They immediately made her feel safe and she knew she could trust them. They respected her fear and gave her the assurance she needed.

My turn was after Sharon's. As a tri-athlete and scuba diver, I love the water, and was inwardly hoping that they would pull me really fast! They didn't disappoint me: my hands barely touched their fins when they shot away like two bullets and pulled me through the water like a speed-boat. It was the most exhilarating feeling. Big waves splashed onto the jetty when they dropped me off, so much so that the man taking the video for our group drawled (in typical American fashion): "Whaooo, thaaaaat is pretty special". What a lesson in the art of understanding these creatures showed, and how they use this gift to make people happy! I was deeply impressed by the respect the dolphins showed for each one of us. The Buddhist monk and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh expresses what we were experiencing when he writes: "Respect is the foundation of (all) true love.

It is only when we are happy with ourselves that we are able to act and behave as the dolphins did. A survey in the United States revealed that 80% of all people want to be somebody else! One of the greatest lessons I learnt during the course was that we must get back to our original self: The one without wounds and affected behaviour, the real person – the one God created and wants us to be. Our life's journey is to get our core values back: to love ourselves, to respect ourselves, to honour ourselves and then of course, to love others, and to respect others. And how can we not love ourselves? Each one of us is a magnificent creature with the spirit of God dynamically alive and throbbing within us. Like the dolphins, we should be bursting with the song of life.

The dolphins and their way of being playful and powerful in the water made me remember the old Zulu fable of the eagle and the crow. This fable illustrates very clearly the power of a positive attitude. When Umdall (the creator) made the birds, he decided to give them these heavy burdens on their backs that felt almost like two bricks. The crow sat under the tree in the heat and said: "Why did Umdall give me these heavy things on my back, I can hardly walk, and squeaked and moaned the whole day, sitting in the shade of the tree. The eagle said: "I wonder why Umdall gave me these heavy things on my back; maybe I can learn how to use them?" Every morning he tried to run and use the 'heavy things' to balance him. On the 14th day the crow was still sitting in the shade of the tree and moaning, when the eagle felt that he could flap his two 'burdens' and could actually stretch them out, and suddenly he soared up into the air and flew into the cool

blue sky, playing and floating on the west wind. Today the crow still has this squeaky voice with which he moans about his lot, but the eagle is the king of the sky, the strongest and freest bird of all.

The dolphins, epitomised for me that feeling of freedom; just like Zorba, who said: “Man needs a little madness or else he never dares cut the rope and be free.” Three centuries ago, the French revolutionist Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) was saying much the same thing: (Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains.) Even now, most of us still run after what the material world seems to be dictating to us, to the detriment of our personal freedom, our self-expression and our natural state of happiness.

In 1994, the artist, Jenny Holtzer exhibited in the famous Guggenheim Museum in New York. Her exhibition in this modern art gallery consisted entirely of quotes, some written on white canvas, others using light bulbs to form the words. The huge centerpiece, which followed the beautiful spiral lines of the museum’s central dome, read: ‘You are the victim of the rules you live by.’ The dolphins teach that coming from love is the only ‘rule’ worth obeying: love for God, love for self, and love for others. Then there are no ‘victims’, only ‘victories’, no suffering, only serenity.

On the same trip I was privileged to hear Don Miguel Ruiz (author of the best-sellers, the Four Agreements and The Mastery of Love) speak at the Unity Church in Naples on the Gulf of Mexico. (Incidentally, Anthony Quinn, who played the part of the unforgettable Zorba in the 1964 movie, had a house and a little art studio in Naples before he died in his eighties.) The church was packed for his evening talk. Miguel Ruiz believes that we are artists, we can each create our own dream and we are the painters who choose our own colours to paint a world of paradise or a world of darkness. It is simply a matter of interpretation and attitude.

My swim with the dolphins made an indelible impression on me. Now that I am running my own workshops, helping in the healing and guiding of people, I often think of the dolphins and of their incredible intuition. Once we realize that something is possible, it will manifest itself. Humans are blessed with the same powers of intuition, the same capacity for the enjoyment of life. We must start believing that we do have intuition; we must start believing that we too can play in the waves, like the dolphins through water, we too can soar like eagles in the sky and so bring honour to God for all the blessings we have.

Sibis Mouton is a motivational speaker who owns her company 'Zest 4 Life'. She gives lectures and offers New Beginnings workshops over the weekends.