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UNDERSTANDING AND IMAGINATION

By: Rosanne Crago

I UNDERSTAND. Think about how powerful it is to either say or hear those words. It's a point of connection for people. I feel comforted when someone says it to me. It washes over me like warm water. When I say it to someone else, it means I reach into experiences I have had or thoughts and have a feeling wash over me of connection. I remember reading the book, *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein when I was a teenager – the expression used in that book was to “grok” something – that was to understand it completely – physically, psychologically, emotionally, experientially – as fully as a human being could comprehend something. In order to say I understand, we must either have had a similar kind of experience or be able to imagine what the other person is going through. Understanding comes upon us in different levels. We can say, “I see,” and understand in our heads, on some level. Or we can really “get it.” fully and deeply. Sometimes understanding grows with us. When I was growing up, there was a sign we passed often on the side of the highway that said, “Mom, if we lived here, we’d be home now.” At age 6, I didn't understand what that meant at all. It took me years to figure out what it meant, and now it seems funny that I didn't get it the first time around.

In the thesaurus, understand can also mean appreciate, know, recognize, comprehend, realize, be aware of, value, identify with, empathize, grasp, get it. Those are some words to ponder as we think about understanding.

Physically, understanding is represented by the feet. Think about taking a step back so that you can see something more clearly, see the bigger picture. When you only look at one piece of a puzzle, you can only see that piece. When you step back, you can see the whole picture and then the single piece makes sense in a whole different way. Understanding, as all aspects of development, evolves continually. When we are young, we learn about everything and our understanding develops as we grow. As babies, we learn that when we cry, mom comes and picks us up and takes care of us. Eventually, we understand the concept of “mother” in many different ways.

When I was learning to dance, my understanding developed gradually. I learned how to move my body. I already understood how to listen to music. I learned the steps. Eventually, I understood about connection and following. That continues to grow all the time. When I was learning to do Reiki and healing, I learned to open myself up to the energy, learned how and where to place my hands on the person I was working on. I felt the flow of energy and it kind of unnerved me at first. As soon as I felt it, I would move my hands to another part of the person's body. Now, I understand much better about energy flow and what happens in my body and in the other person's body. I feel comfortable. I allow energy to flow easily and freely. I understand about getting out of the way and allowing the process to work. I understand the messages that come up for me on some level. As I share

them with the person I'm working on, they understand them for themselves.

Two of the things I've come to understand better and better since studying metaphysics are gratitude and forgiveness. They are both important components of every day for me. I am so grateful for so many things in my life. I give thanks every day for so many things. I can't IMAGINE my life without gratitude. I find ways to be grateful for everything. Even if I experience physical sensations that are less than pleasant, I am grateful for the things I am releasing and the ways in which I am moving forward on my path. Several months ago, a good friend of mine gave me a gratitude journal. I held on to it for a while, then finally opened it one day. It said a lot about the power of gratitude to transform our lives. It's easy to be grateful when our lives "hum", more challenging to be grateful when the road gets rocky. The suggestion is to use the journal to write down five things you're grateful for each day. I started doing that last summer, and it has made such a difference in my life. I notice that some days it's really hard to think about what I'm grateful for. Once I start, though – the energy starts flowing and I realize how many things I'm grateful for in the course of a day. Some days, I even write down more than five things. As I look back at the entries over time, some themes emerge. I'm always grateful for my amazing friends, who get me through the good times and the bad and who understand me even when I don't understand myself so well.

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful things in my life. It is especially important to remember to forgive myself, always for everything. "I forgive you" are three very powerful words to use and remember.

The mind powers are all connected. Wisdom and order come into play in understanding. You have to be wise enough to accept your understanding of a concept or situation. You have to understand that things unfold in divine order – in their own time and in the proper sequence. If you put your shoes on before you put your socks on, that's not going to work out very well for you.

Understanding involves paying attention – noticing when things come out and how they affect the way that you "get" things. Allowing is important in understanding also. Letting information come to you and allowing and accepting it is a gift to be appreciated. Understanding comes to us in many different ways. Sometimes the way someone says something just makes sense. Sometimes we have to be ready to hear and/or receive the information. Sometimes understanding is reflected back to us by people in our lives. A good friend of mine was talking about something she had bought in a Hallmark store, and I sarcastically remarked, "Oh, I don't go into Hallmark stores, they're too schmaltzy and sappy." She is my friend because she sees through to the center of me and she said – Oh, you mean it's really romantic and seeing those things reminds you of how much you want romance in your life. I really appreciate the ways in which she understands me and sees through the outer shell to the soft center.

It's important to pay attention to the people and things in our lives that cause us challenge, irritation, frustration – what are we learning about ourselves in this process? If I'm constantly coming into contact with stupid, careless or inconsiderate drivers – what do I need to be looking at in my own choices and behaviors. What am I creating?

Another thing that helps with understanding is talking about what you learn. When you explain something to someone else, you acquire a much deeper understanding of it yourself. If someone asks you to define a word, even though it's a word you're accustomed to hearing – you have to think about it in a different way in order to explain it well to someone else. It's a growth process.

Change is something I've come to understand and appreciate. It used to be really hard for me to accept changes and sometimes hard for me to make changes. Today, I embrace and appreciate the opportunities that are presented to me to do things differently. Sometimes, I experiment with trying something new. I love to go out dancing and I want to dance a lot when I'm there. So, I often ask guys to dance. Some nights, I sit more quietly and wait to see who might ask me and what the experience is like. Some nights, I sit anxiously. Some nights, I'm able to sit and feel inviting. It's interesting to examine the results and increase my understanding.

As I grow in understanding, sometimes I'm able to look back at situations and experiences in the past and understand them in a different way. As I gain knowledge, sometimes I can look back and say – That's why I created that EFFECT. This behavior of mine was the CAUSE. I didn't make room for that person to give me anything – that's why I didn't get much from him.

If you can see it, you can be it. Our imagination is at work all the time, constantly. Every thought, every idea that comes into our minds uses our imagination. When we're getting ready to go out or go to work or do anything, we imagine the situation. When I think of my ideal partner, I am using my imagination.

When I want to try something new, I imagine it ahead of time. I've been working on a stand up comedy routine, so I imagine myself on stage, saying funny things and making people laugh. When I dance in a competition, I imagine connecting with my partner, really hearing and feeling the nuances in the music, and having lots of fun.

Something that is hard for me to imagine is what life will be like without my parents. I'm so lucky – my dad is 100 and my mom is 86. I really can't imagine what it's going to be like when I can't pick up the phone and talk to them every day and can't visit them frequently. I can only imagine that it will be very different. And I understand that it will open up new and different doorways that will bring different things into my life.

When I think about my dad and the things he's seen change in his lifetime, it's hard to imagine. He was born in 1908. So, I called him and asked him to tell me about some of the things he couldn't have imagined when he was young. Here are some of the things he shared with me.

TV, computers, atomic bombs, a country like Israel coming out of nowhere in 1948 - I never thought it was possible. Social security and unemployment insurance were things no one ever thought of. All the different types of automobiles – there were hardly any in my youth, and I knew all the names of all the makes and models – now, there are all kinds of beautiful vehicles, and there are no more horses or horse shit in the street. Coming out of the service (in WWII), and getting the right to get an education. Jet engines, going to the moon – that was un-thought of, unheard of, unimaginable in those days. The growth in population, the amount of homes that have been built, the number of people getting an education and the cost of getting an education – it's out of sight. Gambling and casinos. The world of clothing and fashion – the people who wear the type of clothing they do today. They are better groomed than they were in those days – the apparel, the shoes, everything connected with a person was unimaginable in my youth. Who would have thought that a transcontinental road from east to west and north to south would be built – those are real achievements. The prison system – they allow people - husband and wife - to meet and have a love feast. There are so many changes in the type of warfare today – they don't use people, they use robots and they use missiles. The strides they have made in medicine – in WWI, more people died of disease than any other war. Today, it's different, someone gets wounded and they fly them to a hospital a=2 0thousand miles away to get treated. The jet age – no one knew what it was to ride in an airplane, now there's hardly a person who hasn't been in an airplane. The roads and people who travel – there are hotels everywhere. Who ever thought of a United Nations – nations getting together once a year to discuss the problems of the world. Nations now talk to one another – in my day they went to war. How many people died from health reasons, not from ammunition – malaria was discovered during WWI.

Those are some of the things that were unimaginable in the last 50 to 100 years. Imagine what may happen in our lifetimes that we haven't even thought of yet. Let's let our consciousness be full and expansive. Entertain thoughts and ideas even if they seem preposterous at this moment. You can't imagine what might occur.