

AWAKENING

1 Spiritual awakening is the process of recognizing our essential goodness, our natural wisdom and compassion. **Tara Brach**

2 That is the real spiritual awakening, when something emerges from within you that is deeper than who you thought you were. So, the person is still there, but one could almost say that something more powerful shines through the person. **Eckhart Tolle**

3 The great pathfinders testify that the motive for the spiritual life is awakening desire rather than grim duty. **Sam Keen**

4 Man lives on earth not once, but three times: the first stage of his life is continual sleep; the second, sleeping and waking by turns; the third, waking forever. **Ken Wilber**

5 The willingness to let go of the known is the oil for the lamp of awakening . . . our readiness for the unexpected moment when the divine bridegroom will appear. Awakening can happen anytime. **Joan Borysenko**

6 Mystics from all traditions have the common aim of cultivating wakefulness, while the common aim of all mainstream religions is to offer consolation and psychological support. To use a medical analogy, while mystics try to heal themselves (that is, to transcend sleep), conventionally religious people simply try to manage the symptoms.
— **Steve Taylor, The Leap: The Psychology of Spiritual Awakening**

7 Reality

In love, nothing exists between heart and heart

Speech is born out of longing,

True description from the real taste

The one who tastes, knows;

The one who explains, lies.

How can you describe the true form of Something

In whose presence you are blotted out?
And in whose being, you still exist
And who lives as a sign for your journey?

--**Rabia**

Awakening and Social Action

8 It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; it can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful. **Adrienne Rich**

9 Racism has been for everyone like a horrible, tragic car crash, and we've all been heavily sedated from it. If we don't come into consciousness of this tragedy, there's going to be a violent awakening we don't want. The question is, can we wake up? **Anna Deavere Smith**

10 Of course, even when you see the world as a trap and posit a fundamental separation between liberation of self and transformation of society, you can still feel a compassionate impulse to help its suffering beings. In that case you tend to view the personal and the political in a sequential fashion. "I'll get enlightened first, and then I'll engage in social action." Those who are not engaged in spiritual pursuits put it differently: "I'll get my head straight first, I'll get psychoanalyzed, I'll overcome my inhibitions or neuroses or my hang-ups (whatever description you give to samsara) and then I'll wade into the fray." Presupposing that world and self are essentially separate, they imagine they can heal one before healing the other. This stance conveys the impression that human consciousness inhabits some haven, or locker-room, independent of the collective situation -- and then trots onto the playing field when it is geared up and ready.

It is my experience that the world itself has a role to play in our liberation. Its very pressures, pains, and risks can wake us up -- release us from the bonds of ego and guide us home to our vast, true nature. For some of us, our love of the world is so

passionate that we cannot ask it to wait until we are enlightened. **Joanna Macy, World as Lover, World as Self**

11 To awaken means to acknowledge our spiritual nature, to observe our behavior, and to bring ourselves into alignment with the Truth. This is a process involving many awarenesses, conversions, and painful confrontations. Hard work for sure, but in the end, nothing could be more valuable or worthwhile. By doing our life's work, we are making the best use of this very brief period of empowered sentient existence to advance the consciousness of ourselves and consequently, of all humankind. **Rae Nolan Martin**

Waiting

You keep waiting for something to happen,
the thing that lifts you out of yourself,

catapults you into doing all the things you've put off
the great things you're meant to do in your life,

but somehow never quite get to.
You keep waiting for the planets to shift

the new moon to bring news,
the universe to align, something to give.

Meanwhile, the piles of papers, the laundry, the dishes, the job --
it all stacks up while you keep hoping

for some miracle to blast down upon you,
scattering the piles to the winds.

Sometimes you lie in bed, terrified of your life.
Sometimes you laugh at the privilege of waking.

But all the while, life goes on in its messy way.
And then you turn forty. Or fifty. Or sixty. . .

and some part of you realizes you are not alone
and you find signs of this in the animal kingdom --

when a snake sheds its skin its eyes glaze over,
it slinks under a rock, not wanting to be touched,

and when caterpillar turns to butterfly
if the pupa is brushed, it will die --

and when the bird taps its beak hungrily against the egg
it's because the thing is too small, too small,

and it needs to break out.
And midlife walks you into that wisdom

that this is what transformation looks like --
the mess of it, the tapping at the walls of your life,

the yearning and writhing and pushing, until one day, one day

you emerge from the wreck
embracing both the immense dawn

and the dusk of the body,
glistening, beautiful

just as you are.

--Leza Lowitz, in the anthology Poems of Awakening, ed. Betsy Small

Resisting Awakening

13 I resist my own awakening. I push hard against that for which I most deeply long. I sense, deep within, that there is more: more to know, more to experience, more reality than my careful definitions of God. I intuit larger places, and a greater meaning to being 'born again' than only the assent of the heart.

But when the invitation comes to step past comfortable conclusions, my usual response is not to run toward this newness, but instead, to be afraid. In fact, to cling even harder

to the ideas that keep God a careful object of study, not a Subject who will totally change the way I experience my life.

To awaken is not about staying in the same place and seeing, from there, new vistas. Nor is it about having enlightened insights, or realizing new thoughts or ideas. It is to find myself in the new vista, looking back at my former life with an entirely new set of eyes. It is, literally, to be changed; the spirit within becomes my sight.

— **Paula D'Arcy, A New Set of Eyes**

For Reflection and Discussion

- 1 .Do you believe you have had a spiritual awakening? Are you thinking of a sudden awakening or a gradual awakening?
2. Has your moment or moments of awakening had a lasting effect on your spiritual or religious beliefs? How so?
3. Is there something you feel you need to be awake to? What do you need to wake from--a trance of some kind or what exactly?
- 4.How does your experience of All Souls relate to your experience of or understanding of awakening?

--**Mary Beth Hatem, All Souls Church, Unitarian**