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Subject: "The Pole In Middle Of The Room" (Winter 2011-2012)
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"The Pole In The Middle Of The Room."

"Living With Purpose And Passion"
The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Winter 2011-2012

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To view back issues of this newsletter, or to learn more about my work as a Psychotherapist, Speaker, and Workshop Leader, visit my web site, DanKeusal.com, by clicking [here](#).

Quotes for Inspiration And Reflection.

* * *

"Show me a sane man and I'll cure him for you."
(C.G. Jung)

* * *

"There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart."
(Jane Austen)

Dear Dan,



Even though the "weather app" on my new cell phone tells me that the sun didn't rise this morning until 7:57 AM and had already set this *afternoon* by 4:32 PM, I am joyously embracing the gradual return of the light and the start of another New Year, and everything in this edition of my newsletter is offered to help you do the same. My reflections on "The Pole In The Middle

Of The Room" help you navigate a frequently overlooked stumbling block on the way to realizing your goals. "Resources For A Richer Life" includes a book with simple meditations for each day of the year; there's also a link to an unexpectedly awe-inspiring photograph I shot on Christmas Eve. "3 Good Poems" points toward all sorts of possibilities, and the this issue's quotes range from the funny to the serious to the mischievously enigmatic. I hope, as always, you'll find something here that shines a little light into your life as the days grow longer and the potential of the year unfolds.

Peace,

-Dan

Reflections: "The Pole In The Middle Of The Room."

It's that time of year when many people are writing out intentions, making resolutions, setting goals--processes that often include a desire to get rid of things that no longer seem to fit: unwanted pounds, clutter around the home or office, even old beliefs and patterns of behavior. As part of supporting my clients in reaching their goals, I often ask them to consider "the pole in the middle of the room."

"Imagine that there's a pole," I tell them, "that stretches from floor to ceiling here in my office, and it's rusted and ugly and right in the line of sight between my chair and yours, so that every time we go to look at each other, the pole is in the way. Wouldn't it be tempting to just knock down that unwanted pole?"

"The problem," I continue, "is that the pole was originally put there

* * *
"How do you make
God laugh?
By making a plan!"
(Woody Allen)

* * *
*"As we heal the wounds
of the past, we carry
less pain into the world,
less confusion and
anger, and we bring
more clarity and peace.
Here our work is not
simply for personal gain;
it becomes our gift, our
offering to the human
family, to the earth,
and to the divine spirit
within us all."
(Wayne Muller)*

for some reason. Imagine that I check with the building engineers at my office at they tell me that the pole is, in fact, holding up the ceiling, that years ago when the suites on this floor were configured differently, there was a WALL around that pole (so at the time the pole didn't seem out of place)...and then when suites were reconfigured, the walls were moved, but the pole stayed."

See the dilemma? I don't want the pole there, but I also don't want the ceiling to come crashing down.

There are, of course, other ways to "hold up the ceiling"--in this example, perhaps the building engineers could install cross-beams that would distribute the weight of the ceiling out to the nearest load-bearing walls. Once they did that, the pole could safely be removed.

What are *your* "poles"? How did they get there? What purpose do they serve? Do those unwanted pounds "insulate" you from feeling uncomfortable feelings? Maybe your weight loss plan needs to include help with feeling those feelings. Does that clutter conceal the fact that you don't really know what you DO want in your life? Maybe your plan for "getting rid of all this junk" could include some help with identifying what you really want--or at least some help with tolerating what would seem like a relatively "empty" post-clutter life while you figure that out. Does your failure to confront protect you from dealing with other people's reactions when you do speak up? Maybe you need to get some help and support for hanging in there AFTER the initial confrontation.

Here are two more things to consider. First, while the "pole" in my fictitious office example was put there by someone else, many of the poles in your life, many of the things you now want to get rid of, may be things *you put there yourself*. And that's fine, because the second thing to consider is that those "poles" were, at the time, a solution to a problem--the best solution you could come up with back then. These solutions were often downright creative, even life-saving. For example, "failing to confront" may have been your solution to an abusive parent standing over you and screaming "One more word out of you and I'll GIVE you something to cry about!" Back then, shutting up kept you safe; now, years later, when circumstances have changed, it's getting in your way.

Today's problems were yesterday's solutions. Before you just go knocking down those old poles, spend a few moments considering how they got there in the first place, why they are still there, maybe even "honor" their years of "service"...and then consider what the alternatives might be. At THAT point, your attempts at change will have a greater chance to make your list of "Top 10 goals accomplished in 2012!"

-Dan

Upcoming workshops & lectures by Dan Keusal

I'm finalizing plans for workshops later this winter and spring; watch future editions of this newsletter for details.

If you would like me to come speak to your group, please call me at

(206) 523-1340, or [email](#) me.

On my web site, you can view a list of the [organizations](#) that have invited me to speak, and a list of my [recent workshops](#).

Resources for a Richer Life

More than just "self-help," Resources For A Richer Life is meant to bring you music, movies, books, magazines, web sites, events, videos and more that will stir your soul, and awaken the deepest, most alive parts of you.

(book) *The Book of Awakening* (Mark Nepo). A great way to start a regular, daily spiritual practice in the New Year, Mark Nepo's book offers a quote, a story or reflection, and a simple meditation for each day of the year. Drawing on a wide range of wisdom traditions, as well as his own experiences as a cancer survivor, a poet, and a teacher, Nepo's writing is easily accessible and richly rewarding. You can read the entries for the first few days of January by checking out [The Book of Awakening](#) on Amazon.com.

(photograph) "Sunset, Christmas Eve" (by Dan Keusal). I shot this photo less than two weeks ago, at the end of taking a long walk, just before heading off to Christmas Eve festivities with friends. The image is striking, and yet it came in the midst of my doing an ordinary thing (walking), in a place I visit frequently (a local park), using only what I had at hand (my cell phone camera). To view the photo on my web site, click [here](#).

3 Good Poems

In this edition of "3 Good Poems," Roseann Lloyd offers a few suggestions for engaging life after the winter's solstice, Tony Hoagland shows one woman's response to wind without a windchime (and his response to that woman), and George Bilgere hints at how subtly our old attitudes can follow us into "new" endeavors.

Click on the titles below to read the poems online; you can also access them by going to the "Writings" page of my web site, finding the link for my "e-newsletters," and then clicking on link for the Winter 2011-2012 edition:

1. ["What To Do The First Morning The Sun Comes Back"](#)
(Roseann Lloyd)
2. ["Windchime"](#) (Tony Hoagland)
3. ["Problem"](#) (George Bilgere)

Psychotherapy for Individuals & Couples

I offer Jungian-oriented psychotherapy for individuals and couples. Whether you come to me with a problem (like depression, stress, anxiety, relationship issues) or simply the sense that it's time for a change, I help you look at how that starting point is calling you to grow, and how you can respond with creativity, vitality, and hope.

To learn more, visit my web site by clicking [here](#).

To schedule an appointment,
or if you have questions,
call me at (206) 523-1340.

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That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an [email](#) or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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