

Getting Out of the Box

By Liz Gibbons

For several years I received my health care advice from Dr. Chris Greene, a chiropractor/nutritionist in Atlanta. One day he was raving about a book he had just read, *Out of the Box for Life* by psychotherapist Dr. Warren Berland. The box is a metaphor for how most of us live our lives. In the box are our fears, doubts, insecurities, angers, resentments and our negative beliefs about ourselves. Our memories of our past and of what others have done to us are also in it. We are stuck in that box with all of those thoughts and feelings swirling around us. This represents how many people live their life. What is sad is that many do not know they are in a box. They feel helpless to do anything about what is going on and put on a facade to try to fit in and be considered normal. They respond to criticism or rude behavior from others by being defensive or feeling hurt or withdrawing.

So how do we crawl out of the box? Dr. Berland says you first have to realize that it is our ego that is operating. The ego is here to protect us from emotional pain and a feeling of vulnerability. It gives us an illusion of feeling protected, but what it really does is constrict us from our true self. The ego keeps us focused on what is wrong in our lives. In contrast, the true self is the source of our wisdom, love, and our sense of emotional well-being.

Dr. Berland claims that being out of the box is a choice that we make. Being out of the box we experience freedom and have options and possibilities. We are the one who decides that we want to be free from the doubts, fears, and limitations we impose upon ourselves. Sometimes it is fairly easy, and at other times it is difficult. If you are experiencing an intense emotional state it is necessary to put the issue on an imaginary shelf and deal with the issue from a different perspective once you are out of the box, for you can't be in the box and out of it at the same time. To help in the process, ask yourself, "If I were out of the box right now, how would I feel? What would I be doing? Thinking? What would my life look like?" When you can see yourself from that perspective, then you are able to respond to the issue at hand in a different manner.

Before he learned this technique, Dr. Berland had conducted his practice by digging into a patient's past to understand their psychological problem in order to solve it. Once he learned this technique he was able to help 90% of his patients learn how to deal with their issues within three weeks by focusing on what was positive about them and not on what was wrong. Knowing the origins of a problem does not solve it. Change does not have to take a lot of time or years in therapy. Woody Allen, are you listening?

We are not our thoughts and feelings. We are not our ego. That is not our true self. Our responsibility is to become aware of this. We can then respond to life from a new perspective, knowing that our true magnificent self has always been here waiting for us to unveil it, and that we are part of something larger. It is that simple, but it is also very challenging.