

## MYSTICAL MATTERS

with Val Ryan

*Dear Val,*

*What in your experience is the relationship between mysticism and mental illness? I live a spiritually connected life, but this doesn't always coincide with society's definitions of success and sanity. For example, when I see certain birds, I feel they're giving me messages. The materialism, greed and anxiety in our culture seem to me to be what's crazy. What are your thoughts on the connections between mental health and alternative spirituality? – MS*

How wonderful for you that you're open to receiving messages from animal spirits. Anyone who has a pet knows the power of animal communication and the unconditional love they have to teach us. And while your concern about being labeled crazy is justified, at the same time it proves you're not. Usually, a mentally ill person doesn't ask this question, believing their reality to be the only truth. The real question is, how is what the individual is experiencing impacting them? If fear, anxiety or depression is causing

harm to them, their relationships or their work, then seeking therapy, medication or both is advisable.

That's what it was like for me in my twenties and still under the influence of my 1960's Catholic upbringing. This antiquated theology taught me that being able to see the future, feel and talk to spirits and read other people's energy is evil. Subsequently, I had difficulty holding down a 9 to 5 job, relating to others and was told among other things, that I "exhibited anti-social behavior." It was a tough time, but I persevered and found the right doctor, therapist and combination of drugs that allowed me to focus my mind and realize that these are gifts I'm meant to share.

In those days, I met quite a few people whose mental disease had religious fervor as a component. For some, it was obsessive to the exclusion of all other thoughts; constant prayer or an inability to converse on any subject other than speaking to or about Jesus. This is obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) manifesting as piousness. So there is a correlation between mental illness and spirituality,

whether one believes they're dealing with the devil or with God.

This brings me to the number one malady in our culture, duality. You're either with us or against us, a red state or blue state, black or white, rich or poor. Running a close second and perpetuated by the first is violence, our chief export. One need only watch television news to get a jolt of anxiety from stories filled with pain and suffering. If it bleeds, it leads. And commentary on countries having or acquiring nuclear weapons leaves most viewers fearful, yet unaware that it's our nation that makes and sells these weapons.

Another misunderstanding is the difference between mental and emotional instability. A person may function perfectly fine mentally and have a complete inability to understand or manage their emotions. In the book *Bringers of the Dawn: Teachings from the Pleadians*, Barbara Marciniak relates, "You need to access your emotional body in order to understand your spiritual body. As we have said,

the mental body and the physical body go hand in hand, while the emotional body and the spiritual body go hand in hand.” This makes perfect sense to me given my challenges with all four. Since I’ve accepted my feelings as valid, express them appropriately and respect those of others, I’m more in-touch with my spiritual self.

In the final analysis, the labels, mentally ill or societal norm don’t matter. What matters is quality of life. If your thoughts, emotions or environment are causing distress, seek help wherever you can. We all have an inner guidance system that helps us understand who we are. Listen and trust this voice. Whether God speaks to you through birds, the stars, in meditation or at church, all paths lead to the Light. May we all have peace of mind, a sense of community and be unified in our humanity. Perhaps these are lofty goals, but striving for anything less is just crazy.

*Val Ryan is a Spiritual Consultant and Psychic Medium who offers a variety of services including private and group readings. Check out her website at **www.RyanSpirit.com** and contact her at*

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