

By Mary Woznysmith, LCSW-C
January 20, 2009

*I don't know why the rivers overflow their banks.
I don't know why the snow falls and covers the ground.
I don't know why the hurricane sweeps through the land every now and then.
Standing in a rainstorm, I believe.*

- from the song I Remember, I Believe by Bernice Johnson Reagon

At times a divorce or separation feels like a natural disaster: an avalanche of unforeseen problems; a flood of unwanted feelings; a hurricane changing the landscape of one's life. Cataclysmic events create complications to say the least. And yet, I am inspired by what people speak of when the flood waters first recede: their faith in our creator; their love for their families and communities; their desire to get back to the simple joys of life. They pull themselves together and begin again by connecting to their deepest held values. We call these folks heroes – bravely moving forward, helping themselves and helping others. In moments of crisis and the aftermath, values and actions are as one.

Thank goodness, every day is not the day after a natural disaster. Most of us are not called upon to act as heroes all that often. Few would call getting a divorce an act of heroism. And yet, maybe surviving the divorce process can be heroic. We struggle to clean up the legal mess of un-coupling. We try to resist sinking into anger and despair as we work through our emotional divorce. We work to maintain our daily responsibilities of family and career with as little disturbance as possible. We seek to rebuild our community, post-breakup.

Surviving a divorce calls upon us to look at ourselves in ways we may never have done before. And, as we pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off at the end of a relationship, we are given the opportunity to begin again. In some sense, we may reinvent ourselves. Letting go of the expectations and projections of your former partner, your former relationship, other people, ask yourself, "What matters most to me? In this moment, what are my highest priorities?"

How often do your daily activities reflect your deepest held values and priorities? How would your life be different if you spent more time doing the things that are most important to you? If tackling life's challenges and hardships does anything, it entitles us to live life the way we want to, according to our own best values and beliefs. If not now, then when?

*I don't know why the angels woke me up this morning soon
I don't know why the blood still runs through my veins
I don't know how I rate to run another day
I am here still running, I believe.*