Dancing In The Rain
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“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass. The great lesson is to learn to dance in the rain.”

Now that I have finally admitted I’m there, I have found only two good things about growing old: First, If you are still able to stand up in front of an audience without falling over you get extra applause. Second, If you have lived a long life, you gain a wider, deeper perspective of what life is all about.

The idea I just expressed is adapted from our most prolific author, Anonymous. But Dancing in the Rain expresses what I have gained during a couple of stormy times. In thinking about this, I remembered a poem from a fine contemporary poet, and a friend of 20 years ago, Ric Masten.

Let it be a dance we do
May I have this dance with you?
Through the good times
and the bad times too
Let it be a dance.
Let the sun shine, let it rain.
Share the laughter, bare the pain
and round and round we go again
so let it be a dance.

Dancing comes naturally to very few of us. Fred Astaire can teach you to dance on the dance floor, but I may be able to teach you to dance in the rain. Here are some steps I suggest for our dance: REACH OUT; REACH IN; DO WHATEVER YOU DO BEST & DO IT A LOT; LEARN TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT.

The First Step: Reach Out. You can be very good to yourself while you are being good to others. Ellen Dean, a colleague in speaking, heads Book Pals in Phoenix. It is an organization in which we read the best in Children’s Literature to elementary school children, especially in schools where parents are the least likely to read to the children at home. I joined because I had so much fun as a parent reading aloud to my children. I’m sure I have as much fun or more than the children I read to now. And there is nothing that boosts your ego like being a hero to a bunch of kindergartners!

Reach Out and Touch: Our minister told us the story of a 14 year old girl who had been blind almost since birth. Her sight was restored through an almost miraculous brain surgery. Of course she was asked what she appreciated most, but then she was asked if there was anything she missed. Can you guess what her answer was? She said she missed being touched. When she was blind, whenever someone came up to speak to her they touched her in some way, a clasp of the hand or maybe a hug. Remember the words of Lily Tomlin, “We are all in this alone— together.”
The Second Step: Reach In. Get to know yourself. Dump the guilt. Stop sabotaging yourself. This is especially important if there has been a tragedy with someone you love, perhaps your mate or your child. We tend to blame ourselves no matter how irrational this is (Somehow I should have protected my loved one from this).

Let your body learn to bend,
Like the willow in the wind. And let it be a dance.
A child is born. The old must die. A time for joy, a time to cry.
Take it as it passes by, and let it be a dance.

Reach in to find pockets of joy. I do believe we were meant to find joy in this life. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t feel pain, because if you don’t allow yourself to feel the pain, you can’t feel the joy.

The Third Step. Do whatever you do best, and do a lot of it. We all have something we’re very good at even if it’s whining. Just ignore the Puritan Prohibitions from your childhood.

“Never play till the work’s all done.” Instead, eat dessert first!

The Fourth Step: Learn to live in the moment — dancing is an “in the moment” activity. During these last few years my stormy weather has been watching my life partner succumb to the ravages of Alzheimers. We both learned to live in the moment, but now I have watched his brilliant mind crumble, and he is almost always comatose and incoherent. Nevertheless, just a while back he suddenly whispered to me, “I LOVE YOU.” A moment of joy.

Feel the joy! But allow the pain.
Next thing you know you’ll be dancing in the rain.