

Be Inspired to Stretch Your Perceptual Edges

Lessons from a waterfall inspires

A WIDER LENS Blog by Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

Posted by Psychology Today on Dec. 30, 2019



The Great Falls Source: (c) Kenneth Silvestri

Being inspired fills you with the urge to be creative. It is a way to view the world as an interdependent aesthetic experience. Inspiration allows you to be mindful and see things in context rather than depending on content. It frees you from the constraints of

narrow cause-and-effect reasoning because beauty is more than the sum of its parts. Simple descriptions cannot suffice, since it is simultaneously connected to all artistic expression. When it occurs, you have a choice to take advantage of it, if you so desire. It appears in that space where transitions are possible. It is our emotional *edge*, the liminality that beckons us toward infinite possibilities. They may not always be predictable, but if you look closely you will see hints of how nature works.

I grew up Paterson, New Jersey, a famous red-brick, working-class factory city, surrounded by a river that manifests in a majestic waterfall. Its presence instilled in me a recognition of how things are interconnected. The Great Falls, as it is called, was used to create canal-like raceways that powered turbines. In turn, those turbines helped to produce locomotives, connected textiles mills, and created other industrial goods that were dispersed throughout the world. A result of this force of nature was also the coming together of various ethnic neighborhoods that merged into a collage of interconnected vibrancy. It was — and still is — a working ecology of humanity.

I crossed over the Falls each morning on my way to school and could feel its invariable spray and variable manifestations, be it icy landscapes, sparkling rays of light, raw roaring tremendous power— the essence of creativity. Each new encounter offered me a transitional mental *edge*, an opportunity to experience some ambiguity but much wonder! The day would unfold for me with choices amongst many possibilities. I became my own poet encouraged by the likes of William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg, and Maria Mazzotti Gillan, each of whom at one time utilized the Falls for their aesthetic inspiration. It was a daily satori of sorts that allowed me to make the best of my emerging self. I learned that even as life's hardships are unpredictable and can bring grief, they are at the same time grist for creativity.

Being at that *edge* is a way to be in the present, grounding yourself in whatever context you choose. Here you can use your distinct abilities to improvise and resolve obstacles to attain your expressiveness. This nurtures our potential to mutually learn from each other, recognizing our interdependence. It is the means to address the situations of what ails us beyond the limitation of words, such as poverty, discrimination, anxiety, depression, etc. It is in your best interest to take advantage of those ever-present opportunities to soothe your nervous system. Pause at those *edges* and simultaneously widen your lens. Be inspired to wisely choose supportive environments that benefit your sense of self, family, community, and beyond.

Steps to Stretch Your Edges:

- **Be present.** Widen your systemic lens, see in a peripheral manner, and love by recognizing our connections and wisdom to understand our connections. Mindfully volley with win-win communication, know your temperament and how it relates to what you need to change and make different, and avoid assumptions and taking things personally. Emphasize context over content.
- **Find a supportive environment.** Mutually learn, respect your self-esteem, create living and workplaces that resonate with your sense of beauty, use techniques/skills such as Coherent Breathing, Qigong, Aikido, Homeopathy, Yoga and Compassion.
- **Celebrate possibilities.** Explore your aesthetic energy and poetic expression, embrace interdependency, meditate, and sing.
- **Adjust.** Respect your fallibility, allow yourself to learn from your mistakes, be humble, and understand how systems are sustained and maintained)

Poem, "oh the zen-like great falls"

stepping out of my front door

the mist of the great falls caressed

my prelude

to the day to come.

its multi-appearances

dressed by seasonal nuances,

like ice coated cotton clouds.

also suds and old derelict debris

circling in whirlpools.

a gathering red brick history

of my grandparents soaked in its spray,

their tilting looms ten hours a day,

the churning turbines

of my parents' child labor.

near smoldering fire remnants

that found their way there.

a block down

steam locomotives were built with her power.

shinning unused trolley rails

peeking through cracks

on McBride Ave covered by her droplets.

the only all-the-way-onion-sauce-hot dog-stands

were always there.

as were the potential floods along her raceways.

she was part of my walk to school,

sitting at stationary wooden sepia coated desks,

looking out of windows covered with her grime.

she was always showing

either a drip

or thunderous pummeling

over the gray geology

where I found native arrow tips

and 19th century glass bottle pieces.

her persona wavering

her shadow side devastating

her rainbows soothing...

*Poem by Kenneth Silvestri, originally published in the *Great Falls: An Anthology of Poems about Paterson, New Jersey*, Edited by Maria Mazziotti Gillan, 2014