

# Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter

## $E=MC^2$ \* by Mary Bast

\* $E=MC^2$  The amount of energy a mass would be equivalent to if turned into energy.

In March I introduced *alchemy* as a symbol for great coaching. In this and upcoming newsletters I'll give client examples for each alchemical practice. To add a new metaphor, imagine as a coach that you're inviting clients' symbolic change from the earth-bound mass of their habitual patterns into pure energy. Having the presence to encourage such a transformation requires that we...

...create the space for them to step into the fire (*calcinatio*), free buried and repressed emotions (*olutio*), discover and pursue an illuminated vision (*solificatio*), hold to the course when shaken by disorientation or despair (*nigredo*), dissolve negative beliefs (*separatio*), "kill" their ego attachments (*mortificatio*), find a new spiritual perspective (*sublimatio*) and soul power (*coagulatio*), and become more whole (*coniunctio*).

**Calcinatio**, purifying by fire, is the first of the alchemy procedures, subjecting the basic material to intense heat, driving away alien substances and leaving a pure, whitened ash. Psychologically, this is the burning away of the false self. The whitened ash represents release from our personality's fixated illusion of reality.

Whenever we are "consumed" by raging anger, this is the ego's habitual response to feeling threatened. In *The Nine Ways of Working*, Michael Goldberg uses the *calcinatio* metaphor with Ones, "fire-breathing dragons with very good manners. Their dragon fire can be a sanctifying, purifying fire—something to test your mettle and make you the best you can be—or it can be a punishing hellfire that will burn you to a crisp."

When we're angry and learn to stay *with* the fire, however, not reacting, not obsessing over how and who to burn to a crisp, we let the anger *go to ground*, finding and releasing the illusion that everyone *should* behave a certain way and it's our job to *fix* them. Here's how Jan. a One, described changes she experienced:

"I used to have the sense 'If I don't flog it and work really hard at it, it won't be enough.' I became aware of a pattern where a grievance with someone in a work situation would give me an excuse to get angry. My story was 'Unless I'm right and good, I cannot love or be loved,' and that's not true, of course. Since then I've learned ways to release anger so I don't devastate the countryside, no one dies, and no tragedy occurs. I've come to allow the lid to rest a little more lightly on the pot.

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**E=MC<sup>2</sup>** —the amount of energy a mass would be equivalent to if turned into energy (continued)

I'm not pushing it down so hard for fear the contents will explode. I'm more in touch with my anger, aware when it comes up, and find new ways to express it, often in creative efforts."

This burning through releases creative energy, passion, and grounded idealism that can change the world.

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Now we explore *solutio*, the second order of alchemical practices. Once our ego-based illusion of reality is burned away to whitened ash, the purifying and dissolving properties of water return the ash to its most basic state. This dissolution works on the heart to release buried emotions.

Some of your clients, especially if they're in helping professions, will find it particularly difficult to acknowledge and explore their own needs and emotions. All of us, though, have elements of self-image fed by pride that form barriers to self-knowledge.

As my Two client Doris said, "It's been tough for me to acknowledge behaviors I don't like about myself. I took a serious step away from trying to fix everybody's life around me. That was relatively easy. The hard part is taking charge of my own life, loving and accepting myself and other people for who we are. And it's O.K. if I'm screwed up. The way I'm most different is with my daughter. I used to fix everything because I didn't want her to hurt, I didn't want her or her kids to do without. I enabled her to avoid reality, and I've not done her a service. I've gently eased out of that, though it was a struggle. She'd say, 'Mom, my daughter forgot this, can you run it by her school,' and I'd say, 'No, honey, I'm sorry, I'm late for work.'"

"If something comes in my face a couple of times," she continued, "and I think I've dealt with it, but it keeps coming back, I know I *haven't* dealt with it! I've used journaling and meditating to help me get a clean slate, stay centered. It's a journey and I know I'll slip off the path, but not quite as deep anymore. Being able to recognize these patterns when they come up has been such a gift. I always know that no matter what happens, I'll get through it."

(Remaining alchemical practices and examples in future newsletters; also at Mary's Coach Mentor blog.)



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