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Karma - Actions have consequences

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I have been reading about Karma and while I do not buy transmigration of the soul (Hinduism) or transfer of karma through multiple lifetimes (Buddhism). I do take think the idea of action (karma) having consequences (effects) is profoundly important. Within our own lifetimes my actions have effects that impact me and others. If you believe in interdependence of life then what happens has to impact others. This is a basic idea in both Unitarian-Universalism and Buddhism - interdependence of all life. So with a world that is knit together, I cannot act without cause effects for me and others.

I am in prison because of actions I took in the past. I have harmed others as a result of those actions and being placed in prison. I am responsible for the pain (and joy) I bring into the world. I should value my life energy and use it to produce joy and happiness not just for myself but to the other life energies connected to me.

Thich Nhat Hanh talks about intergenerational karma. That the actions of our grandparents and parents have impacts on us. I have thought a lot about the impact of having a Mom who is a paranoid schizophrenic. Mom who had severe boundary problems when she was unmedicated, was my whole world until I started elementary school. My own fear of my ability/inability to negotiate boundaries has been a constant ghostly companion, makes sense in this regard. Many others live with the impacts of the demons of their family members: alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual abuse, physical or psychological abuse. We have to deal with our families karma. They are the conditions within which we learn to become human.

My Mom's karma load for me seems pretty clear. But I had another family memory which floated to the surface recently. My Dad's relationship with his Mom. Dad was born to a very young woman. She was 18 when she married my granddad who was 40. After giving birth to dad, she did not stay long in the marriage. She left when dad was 7. She did not keep in touch with him. She did stay in the area, so Dad did know that she was alive. Then after he learned to drive, he found her address and went over to house. Went up to her door and knocked. She came to the door. She saw who it was and told my dad not to come back ever again. Then shut the door in his face.

So Dad's life provided an older Dad who has spent most his life alone and with only a brief unhappy marriage as an interruption. Whose mom runs out on him, not wanting anything to do with him. When he tries to contact her, she makes the point very clear. So my Dad's Karmic conditions was to grow up with these realities. His extreme resistance to deal with emotions and express feelings makes a lot of sense.

What was my Dad thinking as he left her house? What had he been telling himself since she left? What does he still hold on too from that time. What about my grandma? What was going on her head? Why did she end the marriage? Why did she not take Dad with her? Why did she not want to communicate with him? Did she think it would be best for her or him or both? In what way could it be best if she did not stay in his life?

I wonder if my granddad had anything to do with my grandma cutting Dad out of her life? I wonder if she fell in love with another woman. Grandpapa kicked her out and told her never to speak to them again. My grandpapa was a very religious man so lesbianism would not have been accepted. My grandma never married a man again. I wonder if she lived with a woman. Maybe another woman was in the house when she told Dad not to come back? Was she embarrassed by her love or was she keeping her secret from Dad or was it something my grandpapa wanted?

Did she ever regret telling my Dad to go and not come back?

Such pain. How could that not ripple out and influence others. Influence me.

The emphasis on karma is not predestination, so even if it does ripple to me I have the power to act now that makes new conditions for me to live in the future. While it may have conditioned my heart to be skeptical of love, I still have the freedom to act contrary to any tendency within my own psyche. That is what today is about. Acting to create the conditions of a new future tomorrow. Making my own Karma. Living on purpose, not letting life happen to me.

*Mindful Prisoner*