

## TIDES

There is an ebb and flow to my healing process. I have been aware of this for some time now, but the acceptance of it is new. I love the sea. There is something so reassuring about the rhythm of the tides. Like the rising and setting of the sun and moon, they are the Earth's breathing. God's constant breath in our midst. The breath of life itself.



Yet, I didn't allow God into the metaphor. I excluded the Divine by placing a seal of human conditions and judgment around my sea. Incoming tides were good. They meant fullness, moving toward joy, coming into wholeness, healing. Ebb tides were bad. They meant loss and estrangement, regression and new pain. They angered me. They signified a washing away of all that I'd gained, a withdrawal from the flow, the separation of me from my healing process, a loss of what had come in with the tide.

Back and forth, back and forth I'd go, just like the tide coming in and going out, and how frustrating it was not to be able to stop that motion! At the low tides I'd picture them and see the gleaming sand stretching out for miles to the tiny breakers. I'd see all that open space as loss because I hadn't managed to keep the waters high. I'd punish myself with self-recriminations because I'd abandoned the journey, and in doing so had let all that bountiful water slip away. Or so I thought.

A spiritual teacher told me to "love everything as it is". I didn't know how to do that. How do you love the bad things? The things that irritate you, frustrate you, exhaust you, scare you? I notice my distillation process is quite organic when it comes to learning what life has to teach me. I don't try to force much. Eventually though, things have a way of filtering into my consciousness if I sit with them long enough and give them space to be there. Sometime, I don't know exactly when, I decided to try to do what she said. I decided to try it with my tides. I would try to love them just as they were. I would take my healing process just as it came, and love it as it was.

When I accepted my tides as they were, I realized that I had overlooked a few things. I had left a few details out of my metaphor. Ebb tides are one half of a perfect, harmonious cycle. Ebb and flow cannot exist one without the other. They are one thing; the ocean's natural movement. They each play a vital role in the life of this entire planet. They are part of a natural balance.

With this realization came an insight that I had moved on from a process of healing into something else. What were once the ups and downs of the healing journey had simply become the natural ebb and flow of my continuing growth.

There was nothing wrong from this perspective; nothing to feel frustrated or dejected about. All is well and as it should be at ebb tide. When the tide goes out, it reveals hidden treasures. It gives me a chance to walk on ground I can't usually touch. It takes away the roar and lets me contemplate seashells in quietness. It gives me time to build a sand castle.

My ebb tides are not the drained waters of defeat I once believed in. They are a restful time of curiosity, exploration, and joy. They are a time of reflection and conscious appreciation. They are a necessary part of my natural balance, a vital part of my life. My ebb tides are the counterpart to my flow, one part of the whole me, accepted and loved as they are

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