

Book Excerpt

No Storm Lasts Forever

Transforming Suffering Into Insight

By Dr. Terry Gordon



"This book will rekindle your belief in the human spirit."

~ Kenny Loggins, Singer/Songwriter

Preface

"We are not what we know but what we are willing to learn."

~ Mary Catherine Bateson

My dear gentles,

Life is not a random set of experiences; it is a learning curve. At each level we are offered potential lessons. From the encounter, we may choose to gain insight and progress on to a higher path, or we may decide to ignore the experience and remain stagnant. Either way, we will be tested. If we fail to learn from the instruction provided, it will be offered to us in some fashion again and again until such time that we finally get it.

What we are to learn doesn't necessarily become fully apparent at first glance; it may take time and only be understood with clarity once more pieces are added to the puzzle.

I once held the belief that my spiritual development was something I could put on the back burner of life. I assumed that I would tap into it down the road, when I would have the luxury of more time. I looked forward to that, anticipating being able to nurture my spirituality once everything else in life settled in to a comfortable place. I have since changed my mind.

Recently, circumstances unfolding in my life have resulted in a shift in the paradigm of my thought. I now appreciate that my spiritual development is of critical importance. Its evolution is something not to be delayed until the tomorrows of life. The advancement of my spiritual awakening has become not only a desire, it has taken on the priority of being essential for my very survival.

As a physician who on a daily basis dealt with life- and-death circumstances, I understand that our existence in its present form is tenuous at best. Its course can be altered in an instant.

Having experienced firsthand such a dramatic change, I have been challenged to lead my family through a quagmire of immense suffering.

My wife, Angela, and I worked very hard to raise our four children, nurturing them in an environment cradled with love. Our hopes and dreams for them were what every parent wishes for their children: stability in their world, happiness in their lives, and most importantly, peace in their hearts.

Life was perfect! Our three daughters, Mattie-Rose, Laila, and Britt, had graduated from college with degrees in education. Our son, Tyler, was enrolled at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, having just completed his sophomore year studying business.

Then just when we thought we had it all figured out, we were thrown a curveball. Life as we knew it came crashing down.

The pages that follow offer a journaling of the experience. I have never kept a diary. I always thought it was silly to write something about myself that was so private and revealing. I assumed that the underlying reason others did catalog their feelings was the subconscious hope that someone else would discover their words.

When journaling was first suggested to me by my dear friend, Wayne Dyer, I quite frankly dismissed the idea. But I must share with you that when our tragic event occurred, I found it extremely difficult to talk about. I needed the time in order to allow the experience to be absorbed into the deepest recesses of my soul, where it would be pondered over and over again. It would be in that silent space that I would search for meaning.

No Storm Lasts Forever will offer you insight into my deepest thoughts as I navigated through this tumultuous trek. When I first began the process of expressing in words my journey, I soon found that one thought would trigger another. On occasion, they would lead me on a tangential path, only to find that I had been taken to a place I may not have found had I not placed my thoughts in written form.

Journaling also allowed me to distill my ideas down to the most elemental level, then to expand on them, exploring places deep within that I had never before recognized. It provided me with incredible clarity in the midst of the chaos I was experiencing. Once completed, the journal imparted to me an unencumbered view of the whole process, revealing the progress I had made along this, at times,

dreadful path. Writing enabled me to explore my thoughts and feelings in the pursuit of relieving the most profound pain and suffering I had ever experienced. I grew along the way—and for that, I am profoundly grateful.

The result of my self-exploration and the discoveries made along the way were nothing short of miraculous. The process turned out to be extremely therapeutic for me. And as an added bonus, journaling saved me a lot of money I would have wasted on expensive psychoanalysis!

When my journals were shared with a few of my closest friends, it was suggested that I share my inner thoughts with others, so that those in pain might benefit from my experience. As such, I humbly offer this to you.

The format of *No Storm Lasts Forever* is presented in three parts. “Part I: The Gathering Storm” will set the stage for the journal entries that will follow in “Part II: The Sky Is Crying” and “Part III: The Sunshine’s Dancing on the Clouds.”

If you are looking for a story with an ending in which everyone lives happily ever after, I would suggest that you close this book right away and try to get your money back. Because you see, our story is far from complete. If, on the other hand, you find yourself searching for hope in the midst of whatever tragedy you find yourself in, my sincere prayer is that *No Storm Lasts Forever* will help you discover what it is that we all seek: shalom, salaam, peace.

The pages that follow are not meant to imply that I am enlightened. The truth is quite the opposite. What I believe is that through the grace of God, I have been granted a glimpse of what that might be!

Namaste,
Dr. Terry Gordon

Clouds Across the Moon

It was early evening, and the sun had already set. I was upstairs in my office when my daughter Mattie-Rose arrived home from Chicago. She had been living there for a year or so teaching at an inner-city elementary school. We shared our usual reunion hugs and kisses, but something felt strangely hesitant about her embrace. As a parent, there is this sixth sense one gets when it comes to your children, and although she attempted to hide it, I could tell that something was amiss. I could feel she was weighed down by a heavy sadness.

"What's up, sweetie?" I asked as she sat down at my feet, her arms resting on my knees.

"Well, Da Da," she replied, "I always thought that the older I got, the more control I would gain over my life." Her eyes brimming with tears, she continued, "But it just seems like the farther along I go, the more difficult life is becoming for me." As a single tear trickled down her cheek, she sighed and said, "I just assumed it would get easier."

Pulling her up from the floor and onto my lap, we embraced. I began slowly rocking her back and forth as I had done so many times when she was younger. Silence intervened as I began to gather my thoughts. I knew that my response would be an important one for her. As I pondered her comments, I looked out the window of my office and saw a half-moon chiseled into the darkness of night, noticing a small sliver of it obstructed from view by a lone cloud.

"You know, darling," I began, "I don't think that's how it's supposed to be. If we are to progress in life, likely it will get more difficult. But the more daunting the challenges and the greater the apparent obstacles, the more potential there is for personal growth. There is an ancient mystical text of

Judaism called the Kabbalah, which tells us that the falls of our life provide us the energy to propel ourselves to a much higher level.

It would be wonderful if we could pass through this life without any problems. It would be nice to avoid sorrow, sadness, disease, and even death, but we can't. Such is life honey, none of us is immune. At some time or another, we will all endure seemingly negative experiences. The question becomes, are they really negative experiences?

When adversity comes our way, it's how we respond to that difficulty that determines who we are. Our life experiences become calamities only if we make the conscious decision to make tragedies out of them. We might just as easily choose to view them as opportunities for personal growth. The difficulties we experience can become the driving force of change.

Rather than lamenting so-called adversities, we can choose to be *grateful* for them. We can embrace them and accept them as gifts from the Divine, knowing that within them lie the lessons that can promote our development and maturation. By being grateful for adversity, we can use it as an opportunity to transform turmoil, disappointment, or suffering into understanding, insight, or resolve."

I left her with that thought as I gently kissed her forehead.

The Thunder Rolls

(the following morning . . .)

One of the worst phone calls a parent could imagine awakened me. A grave voice on the other end of the line informed me that our son, Tyler, had been involved in an automobile accident. He was in the Mercy Regional Medical Center emergency room in Durango, Colorado, and had sustained a significant neck injury that had damaged his spinal cord. Then the dreaded words were hesitantly spoken: "Your son is quadriplegic."

As the impact of the words sank in, the physician and the objective scientist in me kicked into gear. I knew Ty would require emergency surgery to stabilize his fractured neck to prevent any further damage to his spinal cord. The medical flight was already on its way to Durango to pick up its precious cargo and transfer him to Swedish Medical Center in Denver.

I must get to our son! Within an hour of the shocking news, I had hurriedly packed a bag and bolted from our home. Ten minutes down the road, it hit me that I had just left my wife wailing. Wailing! Tears welled up in my eyes as I thought, *Angela, I am so sorry.* In my haste, I didn't take the time to comfort my beloved partner at a time when she needed me the most. I had to get to Denver to be with our son, but oh how I wish I could relive that moment of departure. How I wish I could have a second chance to comfort my wife. *Angela, please forgive me.*

The next flight to Denver was overbooked, yet miraculously, I ended up with a seat. In three hours, I'd be there. Seated by a window, I felt caged and helpless. My mind was crazed. The chaotic frenzy of thoughts banging inside my head was almost unbearable. Now incommunicado, I didn't know if our son was alive or dead, brain damaged or hemorrhaging from multiple injuries. Where was he? Had the helicopter made it to Durango? Did the life

flight make the trip to Denver safely? I thought: *Tyler, son, are you okay? Pops will be there as soon as he can.*

As I peered out the window, I saw muted gray clouds. While staring into the murky sky, dark speckles appeared. At first I assumed it was an optical illusion, but the black speckles persisted and steadily increased in number, coalescing into small clumps. I rubbed my eyes, but the spots wouldn't go away. I closed my eyes, but they still remained in view.

My mind reeled with horrible projections of Tyler's condition. What would I find when I finally got to the hospital? Would I make it there in time to see him before they rushed him into surgery? Would he recognize me? I needed to see him, to tell him how very much I love him. I wanted him to see me, to know that I was there with him and that he would be okay. *Would he be okay? Please God; help me get there in time, I begged. Help me help my son. Help me help my family. Help me be strong. Help me. . . Help.*

I prayed. I prayed deeper than ever before. I felt myself falling from a high jagged cliff and my descent rapidly accelerating. The loud rush of the cold wind was deafening. I looked down, frightened by a sinking feeling and the darkness below. *God, please help. I ask this not for me, but for those I love.*

It was subtle when it occurred. The sound of the whooshing wind came to a gentle halt as a protective cocoon of white noise surrounded me, strand by strand.

I found myself in a place of unfathomable peace. I felt the Presence. I cannot recall if I actually heard the message in words or if I perceived them from deep within, but the meaning was clear when it said: "Terry, just yesterday you gave your daughter soothing counsel. You shared your truth with her. You can talk the talk. But now, you must live it. Know that there are no mistakes. Everything is in perfect order . . . even this."

I remember questioning whether I had the strength to do this. The answer was clear: "You can do this."

But, dear God, how?

By Divine inspiration, the way became clear as God said: "Treat this as if it was something you had chosen."

I repeated aloud, "As if it was something I had chosen. . ."

I was being offered a choice. I could continue on the same familiar path I had walked for years, or I could choose a new way of seeing experiences, a different way of interpreting adversity. A gift had been offered. Placed before me was a tool I could use to transform suffering into insight. I didn't quite understand it, but I felt a strange sense that I had just been blessed.

—end—

To purchase a copy of *No Storm Lasts Forever* by Dr. Terry Gordon please visit: DrTerryGordon.com