

There came a letter...

EDITOR'S NOTE: We seldom use this headline in Hypnos. But the column is intended for items of special value and interest for other readers.

Some days after the Twin Tower Disaster in New York I sent letters to members and friends to find out about their wellness and tried to share their trauma and worries. We got responses back filled with thoughts and warmth. And some described their unique situations as therapists. This letter speaks for itself..

Peo Wikström, Associate Editor



Dear Peo,

Thank you for writing to me. It feels good to hear from friends in this time of crisis. In New York City every conversation seems to center around the World Trade Center. I talk with friends and family. I seek out strangers on the subway, in the bank, in the store, or they seek me out, to talk about the trauma and share in warmth and affection as we process it together... It is also very special to write to people in other countries and feel the bridge of friendship help us through this horrible time.

Thank you also for your thoughts about my paper last year. Your response was very sweet when you had to turn it down and although I was very disappointed, I did not feel badly about myself or my writing ability – or about you and HYPNOS

At the moment I can't think of anything new to submit to HYPNOS. We have not published any articles in the NYSCH Newsletter for a long time. Now, my thoughts are full of the World Trade Center. I need to write letters about what is happening, but I cannot discipline myself at the moment to write an article. However, I am working with persons who escaped from the WTC as well as with persons grieving the loss of those killed using both hypnosis and EMDR and surely something will come from that to write about.

It is true, however, that I gave a talk in May on "Cats in Hypnotherapy: Utilization, Metaphor and Ego-States" and will be presenting a second talk entitled "Pet-Facilitated Therapy with Cats" in January. It is in a casual form right now suitable for the informal talks I am giving, but if you think HYPNOS might be interested I could write up something from my January talk for the Anecdote section Here's an interesting note. This past summer I was away a lot on vacation and when I returned both cats were cool towards me. They wouldn't sit in my lap, or my patients' laps nearly as much as before. However ever since the World Trade Center bombing, both Boots and Tiger have been especially affectionate. On one night when I was very upset both of them crawled into bed with me at the same time. Tiger curled up against me and Boots lay across my body. That has never happened before, with two cats sleeping with me. Usually they will be competitive and one will chase the other away. And they have been very outgoing with patients, often sitting in their lap and my lap during session.

Patients comment on how much it calms them down to see and to hold the cats during these terrible times.

I was at a professional meeting in Manhattan the morning of September 11 about 6 or 7 miles away from the World Trade Center. Buses, subways, road ways were all shut down and I couldn't get back home to Brooklyn. Phones wouldn't work so I couldn't call friends and family to find out if they were OK and to tell them I was safe. The streets were teeming with people talking to each other, watching the TV's shopkeepers had put out on the sidewalk or trudging all the way home from the World Trade Center. I felt extraordinarily lonely. I had no idea how I would get home or where I would spend the night and I kept walking up and down the street, up and down the street. I thought to myself "Perhaps I'll sleep in Central Park tonight," since I couldn't get hold of friends to ask to stay over.

Then I got lucky. I saw a sign saying that the Red Cross was looking for health care professionals to volunteer in their relief efforts and I walked to their offices. The place was teeming with people volunteering to give blood and to offer their services. It

felt very calming to be with a group of colleagues. Eventually I was assigned to work overnight at a shelter in Chinatown. I talked with two 93 year old women whose homes had been destroyed and I helped them locate family. I saw a man who had barely escaped from the crumbling tower and who then helped a young girl whose legs had been so mangled by the falling debris they will probably have to be amputated. I talked with a couple who left their home, on the verge of collapse and then wandered the streets of New York from 9 AM to 2:30 AM until they found the shelter.

I arrived home in Brooklyn at 2 PM the next day. I sat down at my computer to answer e-mail from friends when the police knocked at my door. There was a bomb threat in my building – one of over 90 bomb threats in the city that day and the cops said to leave immediately. I refused to leave without my cats, however. Tiger was frightened and ran all over the house.. My heart was pounding as I finally grabbed him and dragged him out from under the bed and shoved him and Boots into a carrier and left the building.

We (New Yorkers) have all been numb for the past few weeks and now the sadness and the shock and the rage is beginning to set in. I go to many meditation groups, religious services, to pray for peace and for transformation in the world. I go to support groups for therapists to help me handle my own feelings, as well as those of my patients. I've been to the vigil at the Brooklyn Promenade to protect Arab-Americans and the gatherings at Union Square to honour those who died. Next week I will visit "Ground Zero" to see what is left of the old World Trade Center.

The work with patients is intense. I see several people who watched the actual bombings. Another person was on the 102 floor of the second tower and made it down to safety during a horrifying hour and a half of the building shaking, and fire licking the windows. Then there is the woman who witnessed the first bombing from her seat in a bus just before the bus went under the river into a tunnel. She and 35 other passengers in the bus were stuck under the river for 45 minutes while the earth shook around them, not knowing what was happening. I'm seeing the in-laws of a fireman who was killed trying to assist others, And I'm seeing a woman whose best friend is the sister of one of the passengers in a hijacked plane. She said he talked with his father by cell phone.

Each story is more dramatic than the next one. Many persons escaped injury by a twist of fate. My sister, for example, is a professional Storyteller. You would not expect her to be anywhere near the World Trade Center in the usual course of events. However, as fate would have it, she had a meeting at a restaurant right across the street from Tower One. at 9 AM that morning! There was a major subway delay a half hour before and thus she couldn't get there in time!

Even more dramatic is the story of a patient I have been seeing for over a year who has been having pre-cognitive dreams throughout his life. About two months ago he dreamed he would have an automobile accident and two days later he did. The damage to his car was exactly as he saw it in the dream!. My patient went to his doctor to check for physical injuries. He was in good health from the accident, except that the MRI picked up a brain tumour that had been previously undetected. He spoke about the accident as a blessing from God so that he might know about this problem and catch it in time to get well.

And it was, even more than he knew because his next doctor's appointment was scheduled for Tuesday morning, September 11th and that's why he wasn't at his job on the 87th floor of the World Trade Center when the plane went through on the 86th!

Even as I write it is hard to believe this has happened and even as I write my mind is trying to put all this in perspective. I sit on the subway to go into Manhattan reading the newspaper and crying at the horror of it all. For New York, the country, the world. I want to leave the city for a break, but I belong here. I have work to do here. It feels funny to write this, but it feels to me that it is an honour to be in the city at this moment in history, playing a role in the healing process both through my work as a therapist and through my participation in vigils, rallies and spiritual gatherings. And just by being here with other New Yorkers and bearing witness to each other.

People are very frightened here. And at the same time I see people making enormous strides in their therapy and in their own lives. Life has become very precious and we must live it to our fullest.

Love and a special warm hug
Susan Lee Bady