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September 23, 2017 **Hearing from the Universe**

Last week was long—seven two-hour Gray Area Thinking™ human inclusivity trainings to various audiences (county employees, legal professionals and engineers) in three different cities in two states. I'm exceedingly passionate about my work but even my passion couldn't keep me from being a bit worn out.

What I'm trying to do—change the world for the better—is quite daunting, especially when our national leaders say and do things that further marginalize humans from many communities. This makes many people afraid, and I myself fear, making many less likely to be open to what I have to say since I—Ellie the trainer—am “other” in this society of ours.

Hence, I was a bit down on Thursday morning as I prepared for the last training of the week. I said out loud to the Universe at large, “Send me something to remind me of why this work is important.”

An hour and a half later I was at my dentist's office. As I stood at the front desk writing out a very large check for some upcoming dental work, the female dental assistant with whom I had been working poked her head through the doorway to speak to the office receptionist. In doing so, she referenced me and used a male pronoun, “he.” The word shot to my heart and sent my spirits tumbling even further. Indeed, being misgendered caused me to desperately want a big fat glass of Chardonnay (I've been sober now for almost 27 months).

I resisted the temptation to drink and instead found some hot chocolate, a sweet substitute. I then went on and conducted that last training to a group of engineers who were exceedingly open and welcoming and who appeared to appreciate my perspective on inclusivity.

Still, a part of me wondered, “Is what I'm doing having any impact at all?”

Once home, I opened my email and found the following from a woman who attended a Gray Area Thinking™ training at a state agency two months ago (I have permissions to share this email content):

Hi Ellie, I hope you are well! I wanted to share a story with you because I want you to know how much your session—Gray Area Thinking impacted my thinking.

I was on my way home the other night from a day of work, picking up kids at various activities, etc. It was 9 p.m. and I was driving down a busy road. I saw a woman on the street corner on her hands and knees. It looked like maybe she was digging for something like she lost something. But something didn't seem quite right. She was elderly and it was late on a busy street in not such a great neighborhood. So, I could have driven on...I could have (proceeded) home because I was tired. Many other people drove by. I decided to go around the block and check on her. She in fact had fallen and couldn't get up. She didn't appear hurt and so I talked with her to ask her name, if she was okay...I asked if I could help her up. She was quite confused. She didn't remember her name or where she lived. She didn't know what she was doing on the street...Luckily, she had her mail with her and I asked if her name was "Alice." She smiled and said, "Yes!" Her address showed she lived just a few houses from me. I asked if she wanted me to take her home...I got her home but unfortunately, her door was locked and no one else was there. I called the police and got my husband to talk with neighbors. I sat on the stairs with her and waited for the police while we talked about her family. When she started to calm down some...she remembered a little bit more.

Long story short—the police were able to get into her house and we were able to locate a daughter who came by. "Alice" said she didn't want any EMTs unless they were cute! She has Alzheimer's and has wandered a couple of times. She was probably 8 blocks from home that night. I think her family is working to get her moved to a nursing home.

Maybe I would have stopped before I attended your training, but I don't know... what I can tell you is that it definitely had an impact. I did have my kids in the car and I did take a risk taking her home. Everyone kept asking me why I didn't call 911 from that corner on the busy street...she just lived so close to me and she seemed so scared. My kids were too. I didn't want to let my kids sit in the car for who knows how long and frankly, I really just wanted to get off this busy and slightly scary street. Anyway, I just wanted to say thank you. I thought of you and your session later that evening when I was processing the whole event and thought, "I have to share this with Ellie!"

Of course, reading Ann's email made up for everything. No longer was I tired from a week of trainings, nor was I feeling sorry for myself for being misgendered due to this way-too-masculine voice of mine.

Nope. Ann's email reminded me of why I've devoted the rest of my life to this work.

Thank-you Universe for answering my call.

ellie