

Embracing Fear with Love and Conscious Work with the Twelve Senses

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes.
Because each has been sent,
as a guide from beyond.

— Jellaludin Rumi,
--- (translated by Coleman Barks)

Who would have imagined an unexpected visitor, in the form of a virus, could sweep through our lives so swift and radically impact us physically, socially, emotionally, financially and spiritually, creating a global crisis. There were talks that it could happen and it has happened in the past. However, we were not prepared for such a visitor on our doorstep, nor could we think about meeting this one at the door, laughing. While we distanced so the uninvited guest would not violently sweep through our homes, it turned out there is still upheaval and many of the vulnerable are still experiencing great loss and sorrow.

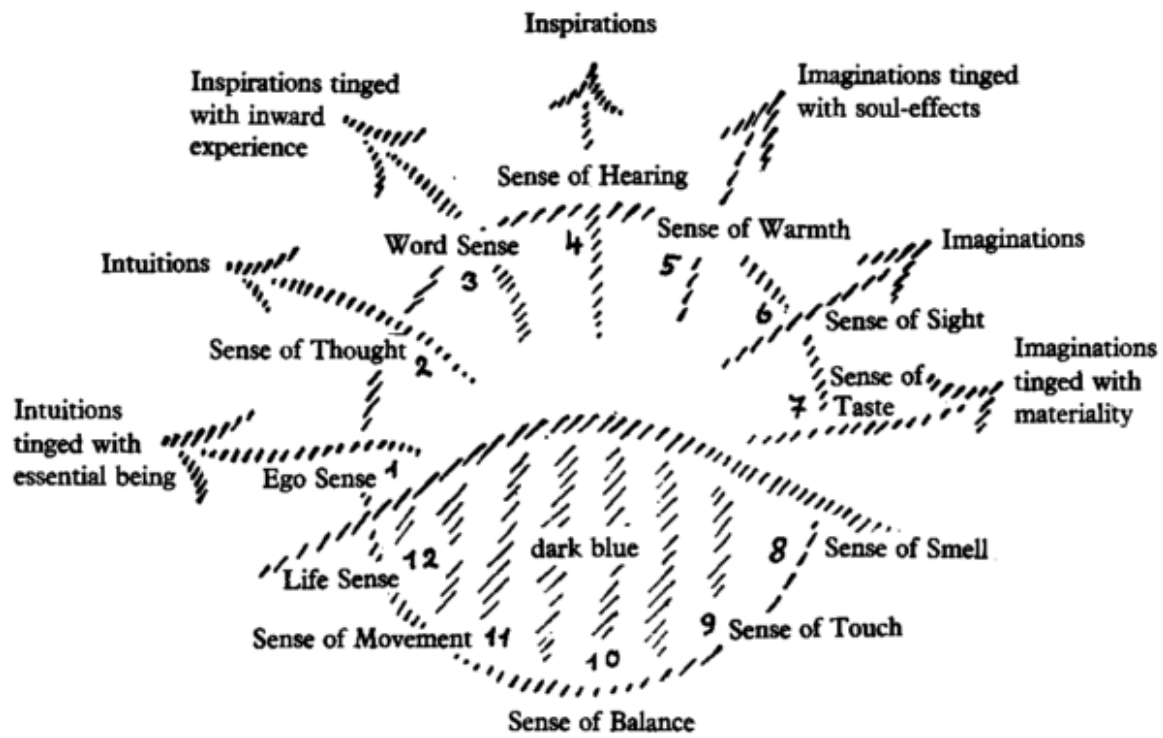
Emerging from this crisis requires personal and collective transformation physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, in order to prepare us to create order out of the chaos created by the effects of a global pandemic. The consolation of a new normal may not apply, since crossing the barriers of distancing to meet face to face again; we will encounter new awareness to our responses of socially connecting and engaging since pre-corona times. And one of the dark thoughts we may encounter when we open the door to meet the world again, is *Fear*.

Now as we begin to navigate our way across the bridge to meet one another in our school environments, working with the Twelve Senses can help prepare ourselves and support the children's need for healing..

Waldorf Early Childhood Education emphasizes working with young children on the four foundational senses, touch, life or well-being, movement and balance. In preparation to engage with the children, we may want to re-evaluate our responses, for instance, regarding the sense of **touch**. It is important when we encounter the children in our environments we cultivate gestures of love and warmth as opposed 'to fear of contracting a virus.' Developing the sense of touch, the children, as sense organ beings, will touch everything, taste, smell, and even put things in their mouths. Therefore interacting with inner calmness, we reinforce their sense of trust that the world is good. As for their sense of **life** or well being, daily checks of temperatures, hand washing and sanitizing, may become part of our meaningful work to ensure the safety and well being of everyone. Their sense of **movement** may be rigorous to compensate for disruption to the children's daily routines and rhythms of indoor/ outdoor play and being in Nature, essential to regenerate their life forces. Our sensitive observation could be a key practice for daily visual checks supporting the children's inner and outer sense of **balance** to reorient them in the world as a safe and healthy place.

As teachers, in preparation to return to school, we could make daily personal assessment of body, mind and spirit, journal, continue our meditation practices to deepen our inner work and remember to seek help as needed. With regard to our own foundational sense, our sense of **movement** and gestures could be slower and conscious to meet the needs of children who could be over or under stimulated. It may be necessary to strengthen our **life** forces with nourishment, remedies and self care. Our sense of well being will demand our strong ego presence and for the sense of **touch**, as in the approach used by Mother Teresa, we practice the use of loving care over fear. It is essential we involve parents and draw parameters where collaboration on the health and well being of the children, parents and teachers are high priority to ensure everyone's sense of **balance** is re-enforced once more.

In these times of disruption, we have engaged with deep vulnerability to connect and communicate, employing the use of media to cross thresholds of distancing into the lives and homes of our parents, children and colleagues. We are a testimony to the creative abilities we share as a Waldorf community using social art and media to consciously stay connected. As we emerge from our homes and step into the world again, may we be grateful and befriend fear at the door instead of making it an unexpected guest in our house. Using new eyes to envision a hopeful future, new ears to listen to the stories of the other and new minds to conceive a sustainable earth, may we help to restore the world as good, beautiful and truthful for our children and community.



Rudolf Steiner's diagram of the Twelve Senses

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