



## Counseling and Human Resources Consulting, PC

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### **Trump, the 10-Minute Miracle, and the Transpersonal Self**

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I had eleven clients to see that day in my private counseling practice in Richmond, Virginia and when I got there my first client was waiting for me at the door, crying. It took a half-hour to fully understand why she was so upset. My second client showed up in a numb, incredulous state. It took awhile to clarify his concerns and get his energies moving once again. My last client of the day came dressed in black from head to foot. She said she would be wearing black for the entire next week. Every session that day was colored by recent events in important ways but these three were the most troubling. The date was November 9 and Trump had been elected President of the United States the night before.

We focus our attention on everyday events and respond or react to them pretty much out of habit. Unexpected events, though, can trigger unexpected reactions. My first client said she was overwhelmed by what she felt was Trump's misogyny. She said his election seemed to say this kind of behavior was somehow acceptable and OK. But looking more deeply at why she reacted so strongly to his election she recounted how she had been sexually assaulted in her teens and was later accosted by the middle aged man who lived next door—a posttraumatic stress reaction.

My second client was also dumbfounded by the election. He could not understand how Trump got away with making up facts on the spot, changing them at will, throwing to the wind the possibility of rational conversation or deliberate debate. He was a professor commissioned to teach college freshmen how to think logically and write well-reasoned arguments. He said Trump's behavior was a bad model for the 18-year-old students he was trying to teach how to communicate clearly.

My last client felt undone by what she said was Trump's attack on the defenseless, on immigrants, on the media and others. This behavior triggered her resentment toward her husband who suffered from a profound mental disability. For 25 years he had verbally abused her at unexpected times, often in public when she was unable or unwilling to defend herself. Trump's election exacerbated her distress and stimulated the terrible anxiety that was the focus of her counseling work with me.

I'm not here to bash Trump. *De gustibus non est disputandum*<sup>1</sup>. Everyone has an unalienable right to her or his own beliefs and opinions and as a counselor it's not my job to tell them what they ought to be. As a crisis manager I am, however, deeply aware of how unexpected outside events can open a Pandora's box of unresolved memories, feelings and energies that sooner or later must be addressed and resolved for us to live ever more healthy, wise and loving lives.

Counseling is not an easy process. To be successful, the first step a client must take is to learn how to relax. "The worst time to learn Karate is in the middle of a mugging," I often say. It is difficult to stop, turn our attention inward and manage difficult reactions when a trigger sets them off. It takes time, patience and courage for clients to learn how to slow down and answer such questions as "Why *have* you come to counseling? What *are* your feelings and needs? What are the *roots* of your distress? What can you *do* to improve your situation?" Learning to relax allows an authentic conversation to take place, rare enough for many, and initiates a journey of Self-discovery. It makes possible the insight, inspiration, and creativity so essential to healing, development and growth.

In their second session with me, I teach each client how to relax using a specific technique I have developed called “The 10-Minute-Miracle.” It is as simple as it is profound: Three deep breaths followed by eight regular breaths, repeated as a pattern, over and over again for ten minutes. Focusing on the count – in-breath, out-breath, 3-8, 3-8, 3-8, – clears the mind of troubling thoughts and the emotions they evoke and brings us squarely back into the present moment. Three deep breaths hyper-oxygenate the blood which metabolizes the chemistry of stress at the cellular level. The result is almost always an amazing, dare I say near miraculous, experience of centeredness, relaxation, calmness, serenity, and peace. It could be said that the exercise brings us an experience of our Transpersonal Self a point of clear awareness above or outside the issues that trigger the reactions of the personal self. But it takes the whole 10 minutes to achieve such results.

Fortunately, the clients I saw on the 9th of November were well aware of “The 10-Minute-Miracle.” As part of their work with me they were doing this technique on a daily basis, documenting in journals their results and discussing them with me. It was easy for me to guide the three mentioned above back into this open space in the quiet of my office. They came in, acknowledged their reactions, focused on the 3-8/10, and let go of their distress. When their sessions were over each clarified what s/he needed to do to contend with and adapt to this national event.

We all need to learn how to do something like “The 10-Minute-Miracle,” and we need to do it often to relax and recharge, to resolve our conscious and unconscious worries and concerns, and to prepare ourselves for triggers and troubles surely yet to come.

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<sup>7</sup> A Latin maxim meaning “in the matter of taste, there can be no disputes.” (Literally” about tastes, it should not be discussed/disputed”).

