

A Rolling Perspective: Resistance is fertile

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Imagine my shock when, on January 14th, I received a letter from Social Security informing me my February check would be a third less than normal. *What?!* I immediately called them. I waited on hold for two hours and twenty-one minutes before being told that (a) they hadn't yet received the paperwork I had sent nearly two months before; (b) it would be at least forty-five days after receiving said paperwork for them to decide if they liked it or not; and (c) if they *did* like it, I'd get the money back. Eventually.

Hyperventilating and in tears, I asked how I was supposed to pay rent and bills? Silence from the other end; then: "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"Um... no. Thanks." *For nothing!*

Distressed? You bet I was. The fear of being homeless raised its shaggy head. I could neither eat nor sleep in my cold apartment. (The broken thermostat wouldn't be fixed until the government shutdown ended.) I rechecked the paperwork; perfect. I contacted my case worker and the local Social Security office, who assured me my premiums would be covered. They also confirmed I'd get the money refunded. *But how does that help me NOW?* How will I survive?

I know we've all had life events that cause us to wonder what happened. We did everything "right," yet we're screwed. Ah. There's a clue: stuff like this happens to *everyone*. Expecting a resistance-free life is a fantasy. In fact, perhaps we *need* resistance in order to thrive? Hmm.

Because I was suffering, I knew an unexamined belief or two lurked nearby. I found one soon enough: *People on low fixed incomes should never have their income reduced without warning!* Maybe not, but the fact is, I was getting \$300 less. *This shouldn't happen!* Alas, darling, it has. Deal with it!

To shunt the Fear Train to another track, first I meditated to quiet the amygdala and engage my higher brain. I reminded myself that stress is not an "outside" thing; it's part of human existence. An event cannot cause stress itself, and only my perception of it determines whether I suffer or rejoice. Finally, I applied the Byron Katie method. I came up with:

- *Expecting broken systems to work when they don't is just*
- *It's a wonderful opportunity for society to change how it treats its citizens, especially its poor, elderly, and disabled.*
- *I now have a fantastic opportunity to become financially independent, using my writing talent.*
- *This will turn out to be a blessing. I know this from experience.*

Once I saw the silver linings, ideas for empowering actions presented themselves. You can't help but see the possibilities in front of you once the blinders of fear are removed.

I could build stamina so I could work longer periods at my keyboard. The exercises physical therapists had given me, gentle but powerful resistance ones designed to strengthen me for surgeries, were resumed. Chair yoga was already in my routine, but I increased its frequency.

I read an inspiring study about weight lifting for seniors, how it was so successful that doctors are prescribing it. I found a diet that works *with* my gut biome instead of against it. I learned a transformative breathing exercise. A webinar guided me to make realistic goals.

These valuable tools are all *free* (see my recommended resources below). Once I implemented them, my body—delighted I was listening to it—took over. What a blessing that Social Security letter was, to galvanize me into empowering actions on my own behalf! I still don't have the money, but I'm not worried. I know I'm equipped, mentally and physically, to accept whatever solution shows up. And show up it will, now that I've overcome my resistance to reality.

The experience also sparked these "What Ifs":

- *WHAT IF* we've got it backwards? What if the longer we work, the better off, physically and mentally, we are? I don't mean working more hours in a day, but over more years, and benefited. In fact, how much healthier would our society be if the entire workforce went part-time?
- *WHAT IF*, instead of replacing them with young people who have no experience, companies valued the wisdom and expertise of their older employees and kept them on?
- *WHAT IF* young people got to focus on learning a trade because they were financially supported? Give *them* the Social Security until they enter the workforce and can save for a future free of government assistance. And:
- *WHAT IF* job security and decent wages eliminated the stress-related illnesses that cause older employees to lose their jobs in the first place?

If they're going to charge us the regressive premium for Medicare's various and mandated parts, then *by gum*, give us the opportunity to earn enough to pay it! Don't penalize us; utilize us!

Here's another one: *WHAT IF* seniors and disabled persons were given free gym memberships, not just those whose pricey plan qualifies them for it? And instead of paying poor people to undergo drug trials, give them organic, plant-based diets; gym memberships; yoga instruction. Watch what happens when physical exercise, a healthful diet, and meditations are traded for medications. See how much stronger and vibrant the subjects are who come out of *that* kind of study!

While most of these *What ifs* are but a dream in the USA, we still have outlets for creative resistance. If you're in a wheelchair and live in Salt Lake or a neighboring county, you're in luck. Have you had a stroke? Heart attack? Spinal Cord Injury? LUCKY YOU. (Me, too.) You qualify to participate in programs offered by [TRAILS](#) (now part of the Tetradapt program) and the [National Ability Center](#). They offer any and every sport you can imagine—all adaptive. You'll receive phenomenal support from everyone, I promise. My involvement with TRAILS changed me from a depressed woman to one who greets every day with joy.

Perhaps, like I do now, you live in a rural area. No problem! Learn how to build your resilience right at home. See how your living situation allows you to do things others can't. Start where you are: it doesn't matter how fast or well you move, just keep moving. The benefits of movement show up quickly.

Maybe our society has it backwards, but we can resist its unquestioned belief that we are "less than" simply because of age or infirmity. We can get older *and* stronger. If they won't accept us in the workforce or give us a living wage, then let's use our garnered wisdom and honed talents to generate our own income. It's never, *ever* too late to live an inspired life.

Resistance is not futile, it's our friend. We can use it, along with equal parts of rest, to creatively meet whatever happens on our path. We've only got the one journey; why not move through it with as much grace and strength we can?

Recommended Resources

A study on weight-lifting for seniors was reported in [The Guardian](#).

TRAILS is part of the Tetradapt program. To find out more, visit Tetradapt's "[What we do](#)" page, scroll down to the TRAILS entry. Or you can call them at (801) 581-2526. Activities are going on now, and anyone is invited to jump in and get started.

The National Ability Center also offers recreation and educational programs. Find out more [on their website](#).

[Common Ground](#) provides outdoor recreation opportunities for people with disabilities in the Cache Valley area.

Jennifer Holland taught herself to read and write at age four and has been doing both ever since. Minnesota-born and Wisconsin-bred, she nonetheless inherited the Irish penchant for travel. Despite the shoe-string budget, she visited a dozen countries before her disability, and even lived in Ireland for nearly fifteen years. Her encounters with other cultures inform the quirky insights into human behavior that find their expression in her poetry, novels, and non-fiction works. When she's not reading or writing, she enjoys chair yoga, video chats with her children and grandchildren, and living happily with MS on a tiny fixed income.



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