

Being with Mother Teresa

Russell Delman January 2014

Thirty years ago, on Feb 1, 1984, my wife Linda and I began the extraordinary adventure of working with Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. We created the Feldenkrais-India Project in which we would work seven days a week with brain injured children at Shishu Bhavan, their main center for parentless infants. Many of these little children were newborns left on the street or late term abortions that were rescued by the Sisters.

Our main supporter at Shishu Bahavn, Sister Barbara along two other Sisters were so excited to learn our methods for helping the older children, 2-5 years, to move more independently. Each day we would teach them along with the children. In addition to some basic hands-on methodologies, we were able to institute some simple yet transformative practices that are still in use at the center.

For example, we explained to the Sisters that the children needed time on the floor to have the opportunity to move. We noticed that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week these brain-injured children remained in their cribs. It is tragic yet true that while the floor is both the playground and the learning laboratory for all children, those that need it the most are often given the least access. Just this change has helped innumerable children.

Another simple example was our realization that since the kids were kept in cribs all day and their feeding always came from the same side, most developed functional scoliosis from always turning in one direction. We encouraged the Sisters to reverse on which end they placed the head of each child. Needing to turn in both directions transformed their vertebral columns.

Much to our surprise Mother Teresa took great personal interest in our project and invited us to private meetings with her in her sitting room/bedroom each week. How remarkable to knock on her door, walk up long, narrow stairs and sit in her little room. Each meeting was a rich lesson.

For example, one day we were feeling like God's gift to humanity because one of the children had begun to walk for the first time. Her response was to look out the window at the busy street and say with a sigh: "there is so little we can do, for each child we save a hundred more are born". Quite sobering for our pride-filled egos.

A few weeks later, feeling somewhat weighed down by Calcutta and all the suffering, we trudged up her stairs to meet her smiling broadly. With a heavy voice I said, "Mother what are you so happy about today". She said, " I was just thinking of how each drop of goodness adds to the bucket and makes it that much fuller". Like meeting a Zen master, we were lifted into another dimension.

In honor of the grace we received thirty years ago, I offer these exquisite reminders from Mother Teresa:

*People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.*

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

*If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.
Succeed anyway.*

*If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.
Be honest and sincere anyway.*

*What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.
Create anyway.*

*If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.*

*The good you do today, will often be forgotten.
Do good anyway.*

*Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.
Give your best anyway.*

*In the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.*

Sending many Blessings.....Russell