

THE WISDOM OF RELEASE & FLOW

I RECENTLY TRAVELED to the largest dam removal project in U.S. history. Just one month earlier, the fourth and final hydroelectric dam had been removed from the Klamath River on the Oregon-California border.

In the mid-1800s, the Yurok, Karuk, and Hoopa tribes were forced onto a reservation in the lower Klamath Basin. Over the next century, they watched as the dams went up and salmon, blocked from their spawning grounds, disappeared from one of the three most prolific salmon runs on the West Coast.

Environmentalists and the tribes worked unsuccessfully for years to remove the dams. As it happens, circumstances change and consciousness shifts. In the early 2000s, facing steep costs to bring the aging dams up to federal code, PacifiCorp announced it would consider removing rather than repairing them. The rest is history in the making.

As I rounded the final corner on the steep, winding, gravel road and first glimpsed the wild river running where a megalithic dam had stood just weeks before, tears welled. The river snaked, free-flowing, through the bottom of a wide denuded canyon that, a month earlier, had been underwater. Bare beige dirt stretched upward from the river until reaching the tree line above the scoured flood zone. Already, a ribbon of verdant vegetation was sprouting and spreading along the riverbank.

Downstream, I stopped to touch the river and send blessings and gratitude. The water was turbid and dark from churning and flushing a century of sediment. I was witnessing a river and landscape in the process of healing.

Like rivers, we humans fill with sludge when we allow ourselves to resist the flow of life. I've heard it said the opposite of life isn't death but stagnation. *A Course in Miracles* teaches that giving and receiving are the same, and I've found that true whether the giving is of love, a helping hand, holding prayer and positive intention for someone, or helping ease a loved one's financial stress. It's all about flow. Another line I love from *ACIM* is, "clearing space

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on the altars of our minds." My personal journey has been a doozy of releasing old beliefs and programming, letting them flow away so that more authentic, peaceful offerings can flow onto the inner altar.

Three days after I returned from the river, biologists announced the discovery of the first salmon making its way beyond the dam removal site. For more than a century, over many generations, the wisdom to return to ancestral spawning grounds had remained alive within these extraordinary beings.

Salmon grow and change their entire lives. Even in death they serve, as the bodies of spawned-out elders provide nutrients for the fry and other creatures in the river habitat. Within a year or two, new

young salmon begin an epic quest to the ocean; the cycle repeats, an awesome example of flow and abundance.

As I write this, just a few months after my visit to the river, more than 6,000 salmon have made the new/ancient voyage beyond the former dam site. Researchers believed it would take many years to reach this level of success, but nature had other ideas. Rivers, much like human consciousness, can heal very quickly when blockages are cleared, flow is restored, and innate new/ancient wisdom is unleashed.

ACTION IDEA: Notice any natural space or wild being that you can help restore or strengthen. This could be as simple as putting out high-quality wild birdseed or rescuing and releasing (rather than squashing) a spider. Or it could be more involved, such as replacing part of your lawn with plants that provide habitat and feed pollinators. &