

Energy Management 101: The Santa Claus Syndrome

The Santa Claus myth was dispelled for me when I was seven. Saint Nicholas was a 4th century, Greek Bishop of Myra (modern day Turkey) who performed the miracles of gift giving or expansion. He is known for wheat multiplication, leaving coins for the poor who left their shoes outside, and also known for leaving secret gifts. He also had a special day in December.

This short man with a Mediterranean heritage became linked with a Dutch dude named Sinterklaas and later became the original archetype of Santa Claus, through a poem called the "*Night Before Christmas*" (about a celebration allegedly for the birth of Jesus). The creation of this myth makes any game of "telephone" pale in comparison. Yet somehow, pagan and religious mythology have come together globally through time and created this modern day man with a red suit and a big bag full of gifts that fits mysteriously down your fireplace chimney and then flies away on a sleigh led by eight tiny reindeer (nine if you include Rudolph). Last but not least, you can be photographed with him in any department store from mid-November on.



The one thing we need, whether it is healing, shifting a behavior or preparing for a competitive performance, is a little magic. A belief that we can do this. There are so many reasons that things may not work out for us. So we don't even try for that miracle. Or we try, but we don't reach it. If it isn't meant to be we view it as a failure rather than seeing it as a huge learning curve. Disappointment goes into overdrive.

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house,
not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; the stockings were
hung by the chimney with care, in the hopes that Saint Nicholas

would soon be there; the children were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.”



Clement Clark Moore wrote this in an epic poem, first published in 1823. It created the imagery that harkens our deepest innocence, hope and cheerful anticipation all in one swoop.

And then we find out it's just a big fat lie, it is downright disturbing. We get to an age where we question, we have suspicions and so it's like being let off the hook a little more gently because enough time has created a certain amount of reason. When we first question it, we're met with even more elaborate lies and sneakiness. Eventually the cat is out of the bag so to speak and now how do we even trust our parents or the people around

us? What about the tooth fairy? The Easter Bunny too? Really??
All magic goes out the window.

If you have any decency in terms of not spoiling it for others, you are left to perpetuate this Santa Claus lie. Whether you are on the inside track because you are the oldest and you found out or perhaps you don't culturally celebrate Christmas, but aren't going to blow it for your classmates; you are still forced into a position of duping others in what seems like a trivial pursuit. It could create a bit of smugness or swag as far as being in the know. If you do celebrate Christmas, eventually if you become a parent, or an aunt or uncle, you tell the lie yourself as if there is something okay about this.

Skeptics would say that blowing this bubble is good so that children learn not to believe in supernatural events or people. Other people love that their dads stayed up all night putting together StingRay bicycles. Or their mothers had to read instructions all night and placed all the easy bake cake tins just right. Maybe people realize their parents are Santa Claus and that's a great transference. Also, this doesn't even include dealing with the people that can't afford a holiday. Any way you slice it, there is a group disappointment involved.



The idea of Santa Claus builds such expectations. If you're good all year you should get paid in Malibu Barbies and a Barbie convertible. It also supports a sense that we should be rewarded with material things for our goodness.

Another very important fairytale is that love lasts forever. Romantic love, that is. Western culture doesn't do much to support the concept that love may require compromise or that love may require deep communication in order to last. Instead,

love “stories” always end with that love being the final bit. There’s never Part II of a love story. There isn’t a sequel or lots of sequels, like Harry Potter. There aren’t any final cut scenes in a DVD about how the characters worked it out. No, it’s a series that ends at the point that the lovers get back together.

A friend of mine got married about 2 years after my wedding. We got together and decided we were going to write the handbook for “*what they didn’t tell you*” about getting married. There is a certain let down; marriage has this epic enchantment built in to it and for many, it is an unspoken disappointment.



Somehow people get through that, but 50% in the USA obviously don’t and those marriages end in divorce (mine included). The

enchantment is addictive because people continue to get married! And then for some of us who thought we'd get married once and that would be it--whether that is a religious, cultural or personal conviction--the disappointment drowns out anything else for a while.

There are a lot of feelings we carry as a group about specific subjects that are palpable. Money carries the energy of disappointment for many. We feel ineffective by the news whether it's a hurricane, an earthquake, or an oil spill and it leaves our inner monologue going "uh oh, uh oh, uh oh". Our adrenals shoot off over images on the television and the mental loop continues. And there's nothing we can really do about it standing that moment in our living room.

Another key disappointment is that The Law of Attraction works for some, but not for others and this is carried as a group. Events in recent history are providing us with a collective feel, whether it has been collective fear, collective excitement, collective grief or collective malaise. However the disappointment is like some badge we all carry and through this lifetime we have to individually shake free of it.

Carolyn Myss wrote what I would consider her magnum opus, *Anatomy of the Spirit, the Seven Stages of Power and Healing*. Very few works have totally informed my work as this did in 1996. She breaks down the chakras and talks about everything from our emotional wounds to our power centers. She talks of how Jesus always treated the emotional healing first and foremost. She is truly a pioneer in the field of medical intuition and understanding

your emotional patterns, thus explaining every element of your health down to each cell. She writes:

“The ‘wounded child’ within each of us contains the damaged or stunted emotional patterns of your youth, patterns of painful memories, of negative attitudes, and of dysfunctional self-images. Unknowingly, we may continue to operate within these patterns as adults, albeit in a new form. These patterns can damage our emotional relationships, our personal and professional lives, and our health.”

She goes on to say that when we are truly loving ourselves and working through healing it includes unseating this wounded child’s authority over us. I would say that these patterns include our relationships with our animals as well. So if for no other reason – start a self-healing path for your animal companions!



It is important to acknowledge our level of belief in magic because it is this pure intent that we come to when overcoming challenges. If our disappointment badge is showing, we have a lot more to overcome in terms of getting to the task of healing, or showing / competition / performance with our animal or helping

our animal companion overcome an unwanted behavior. That is not in any way shape or form to blame or invalidate ourselves, rather it's a place of measurement for our growth.



Even if we believe we can heal something, sometimes we are met with other people's badge of disappointment. Their belief system infects our potential for progress in that moment. This can hit us when we least expect it. Conviction is the only thing that can combat everyone else's alternate attitude to what you are attempting.

Just being aware of how invested we are in disappointment, how deep that well runs and how we bring ourselves out of it is a very key place to start. Measuring it alongside all of the surprise wins is

a wonderful way to bring you out of this state and create a little balance around this.

I went to a Brownie (as in pre-Girl Scout) camp at the age of 7. It was probably the first time I was away from home. The camp counselors were so cool and were probably all of about 14, but oh they had such amazing adventure and courage, and I wanted to be just like them. They sent us on an assignment to look for brownies, as in the fairy-style brownies.

Off we went at dusk, searching around the cabins and the woods and we would constantly see little, darting lights. I thought I saw something, but was not really sure. I did, but I didn't, but I did! But I didn't. I swear I saw something. When we reconvened, the counselors asked us if we had seen brownies. I raised my hand and said "*I think I did*". One or two others were tentative about it. Immediately those cool as a cucumber camp counselors let us know there was no such thing.



So does that deny the reality of what I saw? Does that mean the shifting, the lights, the quickness in the bushes didn't exist? Did I see a teeny being in a red and white polka-dot skirt under a toadstool with a grin from ear to ear? No. Did I sense energy and magic all around and an earth energy? Yes. And how valid is it for someone to publicly dash someone's dream? If someone has to do that, how likely then are we to share what we did experience? How many heartbreaking little moments did we have as children away from our delightful beliefs? Everyone has these moments, where you've had to stop in your tracks and question everything. It

would be easy to have the “rightness” of those supercool camp counselors overtake my belief. Thankfully it didn’t.

I went to an all-girl Catholic school where the nuns could have swept it out of me quickly while also ironically having the class review the Holy Sacrament every Friday in mass. Something in my own spirit and journey had conviction most of the time.

Whether we are bound and determined to quit our job and become an energy healer for animals or we want to balance out a situation with our own animal companion, the self-healing is still the biggest jumping off point. The following is from Donna Eden’s *“Energy Medicine”*:

“I do, however, appreciate the concept of the wounded healer. With my own personal history of health challenges, I could be the poster girl for “We teach what we need to learn.” I also know that when you heal yourself, you discover what no one can teach you. It is an initiation into the very foundation of life, and it organically seems to follow that you have compassion for people who are frightened about their health and want to offer the harvest of your experience.”

Taking healthy stock of this is a true gift, we can see where we followed our intuition or where we fell away from what we needed to do. Clearing our energy, our emotion, our attachment to the past outcomes is very important. We have to be very diligent with this work. Any time we are clearing, we are healing something.



Whether we desire balance in our home, are focused on a big competition or are hoping to beat the odds of something science says is terminal, this is an important time to clear ourselves so we can come with pure intent for our animal companions. The energy of the past, whether it is a conscious thought or not, is always with us unless we have true tools to be in the present moment.

Now let's talk about Binny. Binny was a horse that had so many physical ailments it was impossible to keep him alive and it be okay for him. He had an original stifle injury, but Binny's caretaker (a young woman named Shelley), always knew deep in her heart that there was also a sprained ankle. Shelley continually fixed this, that or the other thing. It still came down to her knowing that

there was something in the ankle. After several years of the vet denying that there was anything wrong in the ankle as they systematically fixed everything else that was wrong, Shelley finally got a second opinion. Sure enough there was something wrong with the ankle. Sadly, there were so many other tears to the other tendons and ligaments in other parts of his young body, the kindest thing to do was to hit the restart button and euthanize him.

It would be easy to blame the vet. Shelley was so distraught that she was haunted by this for months before she called me to check in with him. She had gotten him as a baby Quarter Horse that would never be shown in the division he was bred for because he had a severe parrot mouth (overbite). Breed standards are such that form to function matters and while he could do something else, he would never be shown in that capacity. It would also totally affect his ability to graze and forage and fend for himself if he were in the wild. Or even just out to pasture.

One of the reasons for the inconsolable nature of Shelley at that moment when she decided to call me was her guilt and worry. At this point however, these were well ingrained habits and having him no longer on the planet suffering from the various ailments and pain was not a consolation at times. She was still plagued by reviewing her participation in the event, not trusting her instincts on the ankle and knowing that she should have or could have or would have done something else.

This was so epic that she was unable to see two very key things:

- This could indeed be his contract this lifetime – part of which was to connect with her and help her learn all sorts of healing things, getting away from her traditional train to show values instilled in her since her youth. She learned so many modalities.
- Allow her to see her addiction to that worry, anxiety and caretaking to the exclusion of all other parts of her life.

His loss created a vacuum because she was in a state of fixing one hole in the damn before another spot burst open. And it did, continually. I asked her, “Did you ever think this was his fate, it was going to snowball no matter what you did and that you were lucky to be the person that experienced his sweetness and learn all these lessons?”

A very small voice answered back, “yes.” And on some level she always knew that he was her angel. There was no way her life would be the same after this short, 4-year life with this horse. She felt as though she was pulling him back because she couldn’t let go.

“Well, he’s gone physically. There’s nothing you can do about that. You can’t actually pull him back. What if you were to close your eyes and take a deep breath and know that he is with you forever in your heart and that he will help you when you tap into this love? Let’s feel that for a moment.” We spent a few moments in that space. “What does that feel like now?”

She immediately said with resolute *“I feel peace.”*



“I feel peace.” What a great place to start rebuilding after the emotional rollercoaster. In her situation she could never get ahead of the healing. In the four years that he was in his body, they never got to a place of physical peace within the relationship. And that is a lot of building up of neural pathway muscle memory. Muscle memory, in a positive neuromuscular way, is how we remember to ride a bike or how a piano player remembers an entire symphony within his or her fingers as he or she listens to another orchestra perform it.

Muscle memory is also a memory of trauma in the muscles and tissue and can cause a fear in moving forward. For some animals

even once the pain is gone, they don't have reason to remember that the discomfort or agony is gone and are anticipating pain.

Muscle memory encoded into society has created a certain DNA of disappointment. The neural pathway is deeper and we feel as though we are going to be let down, because frankly, this is our muscle memory from past experiences. We process this through emotion. When we get to overwhelm we finally throw up the flag and say truce to the situation. That is the breath of peace where we can learn from the situation. It is also the moment of glory, where we are going to pass the information along. What if all of our “suffering” over situations could help someone else?



If we could all sit in our hearts and remember a peaceful calm, a point in healing where the energy went the direction we were hoping, where our hearts were correct in what we were driven to, the world would be a better place. This is truly something to work toward because we aren't necessarily wired that way and our experience continues to create more muscle memory. Add to this all the empathy that people have, the compassion and the feeling "sorry for" situations and we have a wide deep neural pathway groove of expecting the other shoe to drop.

Going back to Temple Grandin's book, *Animals Make us Human*, and her expansion of Dr. Jaak Panskepp's theory of blue ribbon emotions, she says:

"It's possible the SEEKING system helps you anticipate bad things, too. There is new research showing that one area in the nucleus accumbens, which is part of the SEEKING system, responds to negative stimuli that the animal is afraid of. The SEEKING system might turn out to be an all-purpose emotion engine that produces both positive and negative motivations to approach or avoid."

Diane brought Ryker over to my home, a very handsome Belgian Tervuren. He had Hepatocutaneous Syndrome, a liver breakdown that has symptoms of dried, crusty scabs around the feet and other skin ailments. This dog had become Diane's life partner and had navigated through much of life at that age of seven. Diane's husband Ted had just died from Hepatitis C after tragically being rejected for a liver transplant. Ted left behind his three children ranging in ages from late teens to mid-20s. His early death was a

real challenge for the whole family. And now, Ryker was suffering from a rare disease with his liver.

In addition to some supplements and healing, I had Diane continue to see him as perfect. The vets were seeing a whole different picture. They hadn't seen any patients survive this and Ryker had some serious issues showing in his liver counts. Ryker had a quiet sadness in his eyes as well. He had always held himself in a regal way and was so stunning. His demeanor was shrinking; it's as if he were vulnerable and going away.

Between what Diane had just suffered with her husband, the veterinary prognosis, and how Ryker was getting smaller by the minute, this was a tall assignment. Especially when the last thing you're going to believe after losing your husband to a 20-year liver cancer battle. It is exceptionally hard to believe that your dog was going to survive this sickness -- Santa Claus Syndrome at its best. I kept saying "You can't put Ted's story on this. I don't know what this story will be, but it has to be Ryker's story. I suggested that she go see my friend Linda Joy for people energy work, to continue to work through the grief of losing Ted.

Within a short amount of time, she had a true miracle. Two years later, against all odds, Ryker is not only still alive, he is very alive. The turnaround happened right after the work with Linda Joy and releasing the grief. Yes, there were many other factors -- the supplements and the visions for him. By working energetically on herself, Diane was able to collapse the story around him that energetically held so much disappointment and devastation around him.

Emotional Leadership

I talked about emotional leadership earlier, but I can't emphasize it enough. The first step in supporting your animals energetically is to get some practice setting the emotional thermostat in your multispecies world.



With cats, you might want to do this for the sake of your furniture! Cats can pick up the displaced emotions in a household on so many levels. When those emotions are chaotic, they don't feel safe—and you'll know it soon enough, maybe in the form of a shredded armrest.

If you walk into a horse's stall feeling fear, depending on the horse, you could be met with either defensiveness or kindness. Horses can smell the energy of fear; they can taste fear. That's why when you're introduced to a new horse, you need to enter its space with the energy of confidence, respect, and compassion. Any animal that's reacting to fear has a keen awareness of its surroundings, and whatever the human in the picture is feeling will only magnify this intense awareness.



When I communicate with horses, they frequently tell me that a person in their life has brought all the baggage of their nine-to-five job — the worries, frustrations, or even joyful

excitement — to the barn. Whatever emotional state their person is in, they can sense that the human isn't fully present, and this can be a real challenge for the horse, who is looking for emotional leadership. If The rider on its back is stuck in a mental argument with her boss, the horse has no incentive to play along with that energy.

Energy can build up in undesirable ways. Let's say, for example, a horse is in the ICU with a fever and tests are inconclusive. The veterinarians are baffled and the horse's people are feeling sad, confused, and helpless. This can create a snowball effect, building more fear, grief, and a premature sense of loss. Energy like that can work against the horse in its attempt to heal. As the emotional leader, you need to do whatever you can to find neutral again. You'll find lots of suggestions for ways to do this farther along in the book.

So energy begets more energy. Energy builds on itself. This can work to everyone's advantage too. A good example is what happens during training when the animal "gets it," finally understands what you're asking of it. You can frequently see and feel the light bulb go on for the animal, and the energy of that breakthrough and the resulting praise carry forward into future sessions. The emotional reward creates the desire to continue to do well, and when that happens, training is something they can easily understand — and it becomes fun.



The Energy of the Professional Animal

In competition, some animals have a certain air of professionalism. They are used to winning, have neural pathways carved out for it — no if's, and's, or but's about it. I love watching the best-in-show segment of the Westminster Dog Show. I'll never forget an Australian shepherd named Beyoncé, who was just fantastic in demeanor and gorgeous to boot. Oh, but wait! The next dog that came out strutting his stuff was a phenomenal Tibetan terrier. And then came a long-haired dachshund who was equally fabulous. And on and on it went. These dogs had beauty, swagger, and grace. They were great examples of the breed standard — and personality!

I couldn't imagine what the judges would do because every one of these dogs deserve a ribbon. In the end, they picked a boxer, a beautiful, leggy girl with a kind face. And guess what? That boxer had won fifty-six best-in-shows by then. Her muscle memory, neural pathways, aura, morphic resonance, and soul's journey clearly, undeniably exuded winner.

In a similar example of winning energy, I once watched the jockeys mount their horses for the annual Kentucky Derby while the sports commentator bantered with Gary Stevens, a three-time Kentucky Derby winner. As the horses were being led to the starting gate, the commentator said, "Oh, these guys must be so nervous at this point."

"Oh, no. Not now. Now they have a peaceful calm," said Stevens. "They only have to trust their connection with the horse now. The work of the trainers and everyone else is done. It's just them and their horse."

Some animals carry a healing energy vibration. Therapy animals have a certain aura that exudes peace or inspires learning. The pure entertainers among them seem to know just how to make everyone laugh. Animals that assist humans in these ways are aware that their bright vibrations can shift the human energy field.

