



Running toward Life's Roar

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FROM THE EDITOR



Running Toward Life's Roar

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

*Keep walking, though there's
no place to get to.*

*Don't try to see through the
distances.*

*That's not for human beings.
Move within,*

*but don't move the way fear
makes you move.*

Walk to the well.

*Turn as the earth and the moon
turn,*

circling what they love.

*Whatever circles comes from
the center.*

—Rumi

I'm always startled when I realize how much fear makes us move in a particular way. Of course, it is easier for me to see fear in other people than in myself. But being aware of my own fears helps me hesitate before I move the way fear "makes" me move. This sometimes micro-moment of hesitation is a great blessing: It gives me the opportunity to choose another option than the one move (usually defensive, survival-strategy born) that fear reflexively demands.

In the last *Oncology Issues*, Joe Halperin, Jim Zabora, and Karlynn BrintzenhofeSzoc discussed their initial findings that suggest oncologists are as anxious and depressed as their patients! My guess is that similar measures can be recorded for many members of the oncology team, and perhaps for many other members of the health care community, as they try to cope with the rapid collapse of one system and the emergence of another with a completely unpredictable set of rules.

Much of our planning (strategic and otherwise) is an effort to see through the distances in an attempt

to calm our fears of a future that rarely comes out looking anything like we expect anyway. Given the rapid and turbulent changes taking place, we are either going to tighten our grip until we break, or let go and recognize the direction of the flow of life and go with it. Don't get me wrong. I have spent years being as big a control freak as anyone. Yet, it is always a pleasant surprise when I do loosen my grip, recognize that the ship of life is going to wobble, notice that my hand hurts where I clutched the tiller, and slowly feel the body tensions associated with my fears release me and shudder away. Would that it would happen more often!

Rumi suggests that we "walk to the well" where our own internal, centered resources reside. I suspect that this internal reservoir was what oncologists were referencing when they cited their own competence and a personal philosophy as two highly rated techniques they use to manage their stress. This study helps us validate the fears, anxiety, and depression that our gift of caring often brings. Looking for the way we can walk to our own well is the challenge.

One African story might provide a clue about how we can find our way. An old man tells a young boy to run toward the lion's roar because it is the older lions that are roaring. The younger, more agile members of the pride are waiting for us to run away from the roar. Thus, running to the roar...toward the fear...gives us another way to respond, one that might save our lives. 🦁