

## —Spiritual Perspectives—

# Can we change before it's too late?

By Diane Joy Schmidt

When I woke up from the dream all I could remember is that I had given a speech about change. Unable to remember the words, I started to write: What are coincidences?

There are three things I know about coincidences. One, you can describe them as selective attention, two, as the human need for making meaning out of seemingly unconnected events, and three, as evidence of the spiritual connectedness of everything.

And in many cases the coincidences will fall into categories one or two, but there are coincidences that cannot be explained that easily. Those are the ones I try to nurture along, to hone my intuition, by paying attention when small coincidences happen. And the more I acknowledge them, the more often they happen.

They come unexpectedly, like small miracles. And these little gifts help me to feel whole and healed and connected to spirit, really for the first time in my life. I find that it's the part of me that feels best, they lift my spirits and make me feel good like nothing else. It's a part that was always pushed aside, minimized, told was not important, was my imagination, was just impossible dreams. But now I must explore this country.

I also know that, for us to change, before we destroy ourselves, we need to open our eyes to our essential religious nature, that is, our essential spiritual nature, our connection to the spiritual nature of our plants, animals, water, forces of nature, life, stars above and earth below.

It seems odd to me when I encounter those who, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of a coincidence, have such a rational, logical, strictly Westernized mind that they cannot even allow for such a thing to exist. I find this even among many of those who call themselves religious leaders.

On the other hand, I have a dear friend who helps many people, who is most compassionate, yet is himself a devout atheist, a die-hard, died-in-the-wool non-believer, a skeptic of the most rigorous kind. Regularly, for years, when I have served up a precious coincidence to him, he would say in the most annoying way, "It's amazing to me how you are able to find meaning in the world," as if I'm making it up.



Diane Joy Schmidt

### Uncommon events

Finally, I showed him a series of photographs I had taken this week of uncommon events in Albuquerque: a coyote that walked by just when I went outside to get in the car and who turned to look back straight at me from 100 yards away, a red-tailed hawk flying overhead just when I drove down the road who conveniently landed in a tree and posed for me before flying off again, and twice, different cars with the license plate ending in SLF in front of me at the red light at the corner, just when I was telling myself to believe in myself, in spite of discouragements.

I commented, "The animals know what's coming. Are we listening? Can we understand them yet? Can we change before it's too late?"

Finally, this time, he allowed as how, "We can define coincidence as the meaning around us that we were not previously aware that we are connected to, without ever having been aware of that." Arrghh. Okay. Well, that was actually quite a big step for him.

I said, "Wow, you finally got it." (In words that he could understand, I didn't add.)

And then he suddenly did seem to understand. He said, "We have been brainwashed to reject things that we weren't taught to understand, and make fun of the people who have that spiritual connection." He also was anxious to tell me about an article he'd just read about how when Native Americans in Alaska reconnected with their culture they were able to shake off addictions and alcoholism. "We make fun of a lot of people; Native Americans, people who have religious beliefs different from ours, who have different values about how they live and what they hold important."

And, he said, "When I saw the photo of the hawk you showed me just now, I thought, he is saying to you, to us, 'It's important to be tuned in to things around you before it's too late.'"

And I knew, all this time, he hadn't really had to change all that much, because of his essentially compassionate nature, to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things, and, simply, to know that, as Chief Dan George said, "And if you destroy the animals, you will destroy yourself."

*Diane Joy Schmidt is a writer and photographer who was raised in the traditions of Reform Judaism and is an admirer of all things spiritually resonant. Read more at [www.dianejoyschmidt.com](http://www.dianejoyschmidt.com).*