

Reflection #27
By Eugene Dufour

Look for The Flicker of Life

This response to the COVID-19 pandemic is long and difficult and many of us are grieving the death of family members without the comfort of visitations, funerals or celebrations of life. Many are suffering the effects of being physically distant from our loved ones. Many members of our community are suffering from financial stress. Our front line workers are tired and scared... just like us. The Chinese word for “crisis” means – danger and opportunity. I share the following story to highlight the need to look at what the COVID-19 crisis might be teaching us and where we can get strength to keep looking at the theme of “meaning” and “purpose” during this pandemic.

I had been working with, or what I like to call “walking with” a couple that had just experienced the death of their 17-year-old son. This couple had never been to a therapist before and they thought counseling was a sign of weakness. Despite my best efforts I did not feel that we make a connection during our first session. I did not think that I would see them again. But for the next 22 months they came faithfully to each session and it turned out to be a powerful experience for all of us.

At the end of our last session I told them that, after the first session, I thought that they would never return and asked them why they continued with the counseling. They explained that they had a very strange but comforting experience when they left the office. They always had a nighttime appointment and after the first session, as they were walking down the stairs, the streetlight in front of the office began to flicker. The couple felt that this was a message from their son to keep on going on this journey of healing. The couple continued to share that this experience happened often as they were leaving the office. I never saw the street light flicker when I left the office.

About a year latter I was leaving the office one night feeling somewhat dejected. The four sessions that I had just completed did not go particularly well and I was questioning my ability to be a therapist. As I walked down the stairs of the front porch, I looked up at the streetlight just in time to notice that the light was flickering. I felt a strange but comforting feeling and was encouraged to keep on this journey of healing.

If we are intentional about being open to new ways of learning, we just might find them in the strangest of places.