

Thriving – No Matter What.

by Reverend Margaret Shepherd, MBA

She was ninety-four the last time I saw her. She had become severely diabetic a few years back causing amputation of her right leg. She was now in a wheelchair. In my childhood she had a lot of lap to sit on and sturdy shoulders to cry on. Now she had diminished to maybe eighty pounds. Her bright eyes had dulled into blindness. But she still sat up straight and her mind was clear.

Aunt Alva and Uncle George had been prosperous. They lived well. But, his extended illness before he died, and now hers, had left her dependent on government benefits. With no more money for the private nursing home, she had moved to this place. It was as bad as the worst stories we've all heard.

What was my beloved Aunt Alva doing here, living in these hideous conditions? It hurt to see her there. What was she doing in this place?

... Thriving. SHE WAS THRIVING. She spoke cheerfully of how well she was treated, how pleasant the staff was, the fun of getting to know new people, how grateful she was to be cared for, and how much she appreciated that the Lord had left her her faculties and her wonderful memories. She was thriving. It surely didn't look like it to an observer, but in her reality she was thriving. She met all the definitions. Her story shows us that those in perfect physical health living in ideal circumstances don't have a lock on thriving. Regardless of your current health or life circumstances, you can thrive just as she did.

The dictionary definitions of thriving include: To make steady progress; to grow vigorously; to flourish. Thriving is about expansion, vitality, joy, fulfillment, creativity, expression, success, energy, vibrancy, forward motion, happiness. When you thrive you are in an upward spiral of positive energy that creates more of itself. Thriving is an experience of the soul, not of the physical body. Thriving is a spiritual experience.

Striving is the opposite of thriving. It is a state of human struggle that has no spiritual counterpart. When you experience anything less than ease of life you are striving. The dictionary definition of striving: is to exert much

effort or energy; to struggle or fight forcefully; to contend (as in contentious). Striving is about effort, anxiety, pain, work, difficulty, failure, and fear. It's where most of us live too much of the time. Yet, striving is unnatural. Perhaps you might be striving to overcome your physical limitations when you could be thriving within them, and perhaps that attitude of thriving could create or support healing.

Thriving is the natural order of life. As a human being you have been programmed by God to thrive. Look to nature for illustrations of thriving. Forests live in symbiosis with their environment and thrive, effortlessly. Unless we pollute them, bodies of water naturally thrive. Wildflowers make no apparent effort to thrive on the roadside, yet they flourish. Even weeds in the lawn and viruses that resist antibiotics are programmed to thrive. Thriving is the truth of life.

In spiritual metaphysics we sometimes make a distinction between the *facts* and the *truth*. Perhaps in your case the *facts* are that you are a STD patient and that you can't live the life you want at the moment. The *truth* is that you can thrive anyway. Your ability and your opportunity to thrive has not been diminished by your condition. Do not allow yourself to believe otherwise.

Remember that your reality is created by your beliefs. Where thought goes, energy flows. Your thoughts come from your deepest beliefs, many of which are unconscious. Change your thoughts to change your life. You have convinced yourself that striving is necessary. It's NOT. You can make a decision to thrive – no matter what your life looks like. As you create the inner reality of thriving soon that decision will show up as thriving in your outer world. Just as it did for Aunt Alva. Surely if she could thrive, you can thrive.

As you consider your life in terms of thriving or striving, remember this universal truth. You are programmed to thrive. No matter how impossible it may seem, there is something within you that knows how to thrive. It is your inborn nature. You just have to agree with yourself to do it. The spiritual support you need is there too. Your Higher Power is always helping you if you are simply willing to ask and accept.

What does thriving mean to you? What would it be like for you to be thriving all the time? Can you imagine yourself in an upward spiral of

positive energy, always moving to a higher experience of living? How do you know when you're thriving? Search for that inner feeling, the inner knowing. Remember thriving is a spiritual experience, not a material one.

After you've thought about all this and you know you can truly thrive no matter what, here are some *actions* you can take to transform your life into a perpetual experience of thriving.

1. Know what thriving means to you. Describe it in writing. Develop a personal phrase or a statement that describes thriving for you. (Look at the definitions above for some ideas, and please remember it's an inner, not an outer experience.)
2. Manage your energy flow. Don't waste your energy on self pity or hopelessness. Focus your energy on thriving, and soon you will be.
3. Make a conscious choice to thrive. Create some affirmations and monitor your negative thoughts, replace every one you catch with your affirmations of thriving. Cultivate an attitude of thriving.
4. Take a quiet moment, then state to yourself what you are willing to do to move yourself into thriving. Make an agreement with yourself. Commit to changes in your attitudes and actions. Be specific and write down your commitment. Keep it with you and act on it every day.

My wish for each one of you experiencing STD is that you have a new story to tell. I wish you would tell yourself and the world that you are **THRIVING**. Go ahead. Get in sync with the natural order of life.
THRIVE!!!