

Compassionate Imagination

by Phil Porter

from the upcoming book *The Slightly Mad Rantings of a Body Intellectual Part One*

Phil Porter is one of the founders of InterPlay and co-director of Body Wisdom, Inc. He is the author of several books, including Having It All: Body, Mind, Heart & Spirit Together Again at Last.

Here is my rule: I can make up as many theories as I like about the reasons for other people's odd behavior as long as I am nice about it. No fair making up bad excuses for the actions of others. This the practice of "compassionate imagination."

It seems to work better all the way around. Looking for the good is a justice-practice on an individual body level. It is just more fair. it is also better for me. Negativity wears down the bodyspirit very quickly. Some may think that cynicism is the only appropriate response to the reality of the world, but I think it is really an attitude on a down escalator with no end in sight.

Don't get me wrong, I can be as cynical and judgmental as the next guy. That is precisely why I need to practice something. And I have noticed a shift in my own attitudes. And do you know who I am much less judgmental about as a result? Me! Go figure. It feels better all the way around in my body to be looking for the good.

I was at a concert in Sydney, Australia a few years ago. A strange and interesting performer named Diamonda Galas was the featured attraction. It seemed that she drew strange and interesting audience members. I remember one young woman who was dressed in a skin tight, faux-leopard patterned unitard. She was also wearing a bright backpack, with a huge yellow smiley face on it. It was strapped on to the front of her body (so I guess it was more of a front pack). I was transfixed by the oddness of it and probably stared more than I should, but it was a big crowd we were in and I don't think she noticed me. I have a habit of dressing in public precisely not to be noticed. It was an excellent opportunity to enjoy rather than judge.

One of the spiritual disciplines that I practice is to imagine that every young person I pass on the street is an honor student regardless of their dress, comportment, attitude, tattoos, piercings, or, perhaps most importantly, the color of their skin. It works for me, curbing my enthusiasm for jumping to conclusions.