

Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Since this is St. Patrick's time of year, I would be remiss and unfaithful to the memory of my dear departed mother – Mary Catherine Bernadette Kelly Brehony – and my paternal grandmother -- Mary Geraghty Brehony, straight over on the boat from County Galway she was -- not to mention my herd of Irish cousins, were I not to use this column to wax eloquent about some of the magical wisdom the Irish have bestowed upon civilization. (Irish blood flows through my veins and now I'm channeling for stream of consciousness writers like – oh, say -- James Joyce. How about that extremely long sentence? You could barely get through it without taking a breath, were you to read it aloud).

Irish traditions and mythology have brought us more than leprechauns, four-leaf clovers, Irish Spring bath soap, and Lucky Charms cereal. The Celts spiritual wisdom recognizes the oneness of all people, our deep and abiding bonds with nature, and pay special attention to the importance of honoring a rich inner life.

Here in the United States, we tend to think of St. Patrick's Day as an opportunity for loud singing in faux Irish accents accompanied by pints (several pints?) of green beer. But in Ireland, this day is not an occasion to parteeeee! Instead, it's a day of quiet reflection and increased spiritual awareness. Most of the Irish head to church instead of the pub. Or at least church BEFORE the pub. The Celts have brought many wondrous things to other cultures in the world and I'm not just talking about Guinness Stout.

One of my favorite Celtic concepts is that of an *Anam Cara*. *Anam* is the Gaelic word for soul; *cara* is the word for friend. Together these words mean "soul friend." In the Celtic spiritual tradition an *Anam Cara* is a relationship that is deeply bonded, and filled with love, a soul friend who reflects your own inner light and beauty, and accepts you for exactly who you are. This is someone to whom you can reveal all the secret intimacies of your deepest self. This kind of friendship offers the most profound kind of belonging. It is a recognition, a remembering of one soul for another.

The Celts – like the Hindus, Buddhists and Shamans of all persuasions – believed that the soul radiates all around our physical bodies in an aura. When you deeply connect with another person and become completely open and trusting, your two souls begin to flow together. When this profound bond is formed, it is said that you have found your *Anam Cara*.

Irish poet, John O'Donohue says that when you find your *Anam Cara*, "You are joined in an ancient and eternal union with humanity that cuts across all barriers of time and convention. When you are blessed with an *Anam Cara*, the Irish believe, you have arrived at that most sacred place: home."

On this day, and even before heading out to the parade, scouring your closet for something green to wear, or engaging in the raucous singing of old standards like, "When Irish Eye's Are Smiling," reflect for a moment on the magnificent friendships in your life and give thanks for the blessing of your soul friends. Your *Anam Cara*.

And here's a blessing for your toasting to your friends: "May you have warm words on a cold evening, a full moon on a dark night, and a smooth road all the way to your door."

Send your personal coaching questions to kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2006 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) Columns are archived at www.fullpotentialliving.com.