



## A thank you to my allies

by Rick Belden

I'd like to thank everyone for the encouragement and supportive suggestions shared in response to my blog post ["Caught between the road and the sky"](#). I've been struggling with the issue about which I wrote for a very long time. It has deep roots and there are times (like now) when I feel as if I will never resolve it.

I know I'm not alone in having longstanding core issues that challenge and confound. Unfortunately, I still often find it far easier to extend my patience, compassion, and understanding to others with their own issues than I do to myself with mine. Try as we may, sometimes we simply cannot see ourselves and our own situations fully and clearly. At those times, we need others.

I learned to survive during childhood by internalizing everything I could because my perceptions and feelings were not welcome or safe, and by relying on myself because I couldn't trust others to be there when I needed them. Old habits of survival learned and practiced under decades of duress can be hard to shake.

I still expect, much of the time, that if I open up about a problem or share a fear or weakness, no one will be there. I still tend to expect that the help I need will not be there when I need it, and that I'll have to go it alone, because that's been my experience for so much of my life. I also learned, very early on, that any help, support, and attention I received typically came with a price. Receiving help, support, and attention

meant paying up now or owing a debt. Most of the time, I paid by giving up part of myself, as that was all I had to give as a child. I've not shaken this pattern fully either.

I do my best to be brave and clear in both my life and my writing, but sometimes, despite my most heartfelt efforts and intentions, I feel weak and confused instead. I aspire to freedom but find ways to trap myself. I am sometimes as stubborn in my desire to quit trying as I am in my refusal to quit trying. I've been experiencing all of these states lately in some very deep ways, and I'm frustrated with myself, with my inability to be smarter, to make better decisions, and to solve my own problems.

For all of these reasons and many more, I appreciate the fact that I have allies, witnesses, and supporters out there (most of whom I've never met) as I continue to make my way forward in what mythologist Joseph Campbell called "[the night sea journey ... where the individual is going to bring forth in his life something that was never beheld before.](#)" It's a long trip, often lonely, sometimes dark, and it's good to know that you're with me.

*Originally posted at [poetry, dreams, and the body](#) on Apr 5 2013.*

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Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive, or neglectful family systems. His second book, [Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).