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*Do not act as if you had ten thousand years to throw away. Death stands at your elbow.
Be good for something, while you live and it is in your power.—Marcus Aurelius*

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COVER: DEAN ORNISH/SHARPER IMAGE
CONTENTS PAGE: TONY STONE/LARRY ULRICH
ABOVE: TONY STONE/JACK DYKINGA

From the Publisher



Personal transformation is about reaching maturation, becoming whole, and revering all of life as sacred. Truly transforming one's life is very challenging and is not for everyone. Most people are led by survival needs, and after survival needs are taken care of, the majority pursue the life of material acquisition and emotional comfort. Generally, in our culture, we tend to look to our outer life for meaning, forsaking the wealth to be found through the path of the

inner life. Our society fosters the dream of vast material wealth at the expense of developing our spiritual potential. Like you, Mary and I don't buy that dream. We believe that the way to the "good life" is through personal transformation. We believe personal transformation leads to social transformation, as people contribute to the good of all when they fulfill their greater potential.

We are at a crossroads with *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine. We do not know if we will be able to continue publishing. Over the years, our magazine has improved and become more focused, but it has left Mary and me vastly overworked and financially strapped.

When we started publishing seven and a half years ago, we literally spent our entire budget on advertising the magazine. It was a true make it or break it launch. The overwhelming return of subscriptions cash-flowed the business for several years. During the last couple of years, we have streamlined our business and marketing methods. In doing so, we have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars, but we have also ended up with a reduction of income for the company. In the past year, the local economy has flourished, and wages have risen dramatically. *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* has been unable to keep up with the increases, and in the past year our office staff has turned over several times. The turnover has kept us continually training new staff, rather than focusing on growth, marketing or other long term business challenges.

The bottom line is that we need more funding than what we can personally provide. We have contacted a number of like-minded organizations, foundations and individuals in an effort to partner-up. So far we have not found a partner, benefactor, grant or source of assistance.

We need to raise money and we need your help. If each reader would send in a donation — \$25, \$50, \$100, \$1,000 or more, depending upon financial ability — we would be able to reduce our debt, continue publishing, and aggressively search for resources and support to further this cause.

Welcome to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rick NurrieStearns".

Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

Personal Transformation

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Rick NurrieStearns

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PHOTO/SUSAN SLOTT

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JERRY LYNCH AND AL HUANG



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JIM ROSEMERGY



DAN MILLMAN

PAUL & EVE MOSCHETTA



BARBARA WHITFIELD

From the Editor

Rick and I have published *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* for seven and a half years. We developed this magazine out of a desire to support our collective efforts to become conscious, to mature spiritually and psychologically. We believe the magazine is a valuable service as it makes available material that moves readers to integrate their spiritual natures into everyday life. Feedback tells us that the magazine does in fact touch lives in beneficial ways. That is certainly my experience. Something in each issue deepens my understanding of who I truly am and encourages me to take whatever step is next in my own maturation.

Because the magazine does touch lives, we have continued to publish, even though we have lost money in doing so. We believed that eventually *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* would be able to repay its loans to us. That has not happened, and now we do not have the resources to continue.

We have been approached by individuals attempting to link us to partners and funding, but nothing has materialized. The future of publishing remains possible, although uncertain. It now rests in the hands of the unknown.

I love this magazine. It has introduced me to wonderful people, information and inspiration. It has called forth from within me unused talents and undeveloped skills. I have given blood, sweat and tears, in the ways that we do for someone or something that we love.

I am realizing a lot about love these days, including love for myself. Each time I read our personal mission statement, "to promote the deepest kind of personal and spiritual transformation, healing the world one person at a time," I smile. It's the "beginning with ourselves" line that rings most true. That includes loving myself more deeply, which means not risking chronic exhaustion and financial irresponsibility. Our limited staff and budget make for grueling hours. All of us, at times, put forth tremendous effort during

the inevitable crises of life, but to make a furious pace a way of life does not serve life. With financial backing for *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, I

could reorganize my work hours into a more nurturing pace.

I am discussing this with you because the process is universal. All of us are faced with letting go of something we love at times, because we know that doing so is crucial for our well-being. Yet, when to let go

and when to persevere is not always easily known.

Our culture equates success with prominence, power and material wealth. In that sense, this magazine has not been a success. However, when I weigh the richness of insight and inspiration received from the magazine, it adds up to success. For me, the immeasurable wealth is the way my inner and outer life is transformed by my association with the magazine. So what is success? And what difference does it make? I know that this has been an invaluable experience for me, and for that, irrespective of its continuance, I am grateful to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*.

In this issue, Dean Ornish discusses the importance of love and support in healing. If the magazine is to be financially healed, it requires the love and backing of others.

In a way, this is a time of death for *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, as it cannot go on as it is. Sometimes, death is a time of great healing, which leads to new life. Will this be the case with *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*? Will it be "reborn?" To contribute to its rebirth, see page 4.

Regardless of the future of this magazine, I want you to know that I cherish your commitment to personal transformation. One by one, as we transform our lives, we transform the world. Let us stay the course.

Mary NurrieStearns
Mary NurrieStearns
Editor

Choosing To Forgive

RICHARD G. YOUNG

The Buddha once likened anger and unforgiveness to picking up a burning ember with your bare hands in order to throw it at someone else, all the while being seared and burned by that anger. When Christ was asked by his disciples how many times they should forgive someone, he replied, "Seventy times seven." Even if he meant that literally, that's a lot of forgiveness.

Sit down in your usual place of meditation, in your usual posture. Bring awareness into your body. Let your attention rest easily on the sensations of your physical being—a tingling here or a vibration there. Don't grasp any of these sensations; just be aware of them with gentle attention as they arise and pass away. Feel your arms and legs. Feel your breath. No words, just bare attention.

Reflect on the way that anger makes you feel. As Stephen Levine says in his beautiful book, *A Gradual Awakening*, "Anger comes from pain and goes back to pain." Feel the tightness in your chest and the fire in your belly that is caused by anger and unforgiveness. Be aware of the separation and isolation you feel and the intense desire to do emotional or even physical injury



to the object of your anger. Notice the rationalizations that run through your mind. For example,

My anger is justified. I have been wronged! Now I have to express this anger outwardly or it will give me hives or an ulcer. Besides, I don't want this person thinking they can walk all over me. I need to be assertive. I need to show my wife (boss, friend, family) that I'm strong.

Does any of this really make you feel any better? Feel the chaos that is created in your thoughts by anger. Unforgiveness is like dropping a huge boulder on the still surface of the mind. Then, as soon as the waves quiet down a little, we drop the boulder again. Maybe it's time to try something different. As they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, insanity is doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result. Harboring anger, expressing anger, being anger—none of these things works to lead us to liberation.

Return your attention to the sensations of your body. Let your breath come easily and naturally and feel yourself opening up once more to the peace and still-

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Seeking Partners and Funding for Transformation

MARY AND RICK NURRIE STEARNS

Does this magazine speak to your heart? Is your life also dedicated to the work of personal transformation? If so, please join with us or direct us to organizations and foundations with similar missions, who have financial resources to back our endeavors. The work with *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine and the projects that are evolving out of it are exceeding the capabilities of our small office.

As you longer-term readers know, our mission is to disseminate information, resources and support about personal transformation into mainstream society. We seek to embed the value of personal transformation, which is a process of psychological healing and spiritual evolution, into American culture. We believe per-

sonal transformation leads to social transformation. When people become psychologically mature, families and communities become stable and sustainable. When people spiritually evolve, they become loving, honest, and realize their connection to all of life. Violence, injustice and prejudice diminish. When people fulfill their potential, they become tolerant of diversity and motivated to contribute to the greater good of all.

HOW WE ARE DOING IT

For seven and one half years we have published *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, a magazine dedicated to being a resource and catalyst for personal and spiritual growth. The magazine inspires and educates about

PHOTO/SUSAN SLOTT

Follow your dreams and pursue them with courage
for it is the pursuit of those dreams
that makes life worth living.—Linda DuPuy Moore

the many pathways and resources that lead to personal healing and evolution. We are eclectic in nature and draw from writers of various religious backgrounds. We do not advocate any particular religious doctrine or school of psychology and are not affiliated with any organization. We are not a self-help magazine, attempting to fix readers or tell people how to live. Our intention is to guide people in their process of becoming more responsible and mature for their lives and in their circle of influence. We are expanding by implementing other projects that support individual transformation.

WE SEEK TO SPREAD TRANSFORMATION BY:

- Educating people about the psychological and spiritual pathways of healing and maturation.
- Informing people about the resources available to support transformation, i.e. books, workshops, practical transformational practices.
- Motivating people to engage in their own transformational process by printing inspirational stories of people who have transformed their lives.
- Encouraging individuals to become responsible and socially conscious.

PROJECTS IN THE WORKS

- Transformation Groups. We are helping coordinate and launch a grassroots project to provide regional support for individuals desiring personal growth. Many studies show the value of group support when people are undergoing a process of psychological and spiritual development.

Our volunteer staff has written a manual to help individuals launch groups, and professional volunteers are coaching individuals as they organize these transformation study groups. We have an advisory board of leading thinkers and authors who are sharing their expertise and experience to help create and sustain these groups.

We are currently in the process of creating an in-depth guidebook utilizing the experience of our advisory board. So far, over 600 people have responded to the initial promotion to start or attend groups in their area. The groups project provides

needed support at a regional level for growing individuals.

- Transformation Radio. We are working to bring transformational stories to radio. The program would consist of talk segments with people who have gone through profound changes in their lives, with commentary by leading authors, thinkers and therapists.

Through this project, we would also market video and cassette versions of the interviews to bookstores. Currently we are in the development stage, researching distribution and marketing.

The initial stories for this radio product will come from the transformational stories that have appeared over the years in *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. We also plan to use the magazine as a way to recruit new stories from individuals who have had profound transformation.

- Transformational Stories. A book project that is a compilation of deeply moving stories, from people who have transformed their lives, is nearing the final editing stages, and we are negotiating to co-publish.

- Transformation on the Internet. A web site with up-to-date information about our ongoing projects will also provide needed support to help maintain our group project.

WHAT WE NEED

Our business is currently at a point that the amount of work exceeds the capabilities of our small staff to do it. Our limited cash flow prohibits expanding staff or doing needed marketing and advertising.

We need financial resources to sustain and further this work. We are seeking partners, investors or grants to support this work. Our business comes out of a mission to be a resource and catalyst for personal and spiritual growth.

If you have interest in our project and need greater detail, please contact Rick NurrieStearns. •

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Groups for Support and Service

FROM AN INTERVIEW
WITH WAYNE MULLER
BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

“A kind life, a life of spirit, is fundamentally a life of courage—the courage simply to bring what you have, to bring who you are,” writes Wayne Muller, author, ordained minister and therapist, in his book, *How Then Shall We Live?* “The family of the earth aches for your gifts. We all need what you have. We cannot survive unless you join our circle and bring who you are to our gathering.”

Walking his talk, Muller is the founder of Bread for the Journey, a not for profit organization based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which serves the changing needs of many different families and communities. He also volunteers his time on the Board of Advisors for the Transformation Groups Project, and is excited about future possibilities for dovetailing the two entities.

As kindred spirits join and form groups, the collective energy that is generated often gives birth to a natural seeking for ways to serve, to make a difference in the world. “The instant people feel any kind of abundance, they want to share it,” Muller believes.

One of the questions Muller poses in his book is “What is my gift to the family of the earth?” He con-



siders that a legitimate and rich field of inquiry for any group, and says using the question as an exercise or meditation together, we can help one another with discovering answers. “Sometimes others can see our gifts more clearly than we can,” he says. “So, one of the virtues of gathering in a group is that if someone says: ‘I don’t know what my gift is,’ another person might say: ‘You really do listen well,’ or ‘I feel peaceful in your company,’ or ‘I like the way you can find humor in most situations.’ That way, members can hear what they bring to the table. Then the group as a whole can ask, ‘What is *our* gift to the family of the earth?’”

Originally founded ten years ago to serve northern New Mexico, Bread for the Journey has recently begun to expand to numerous communities throughout the U.S. “Every group that does a Bread for the Journey will do it differently,” Muller imagines, and that is just fine with him. “They will do it in response to the needs that they see in their own community, and those needs will change over time. It’s a blank slate, in a way,” he says of the framework he has created and is making available to groups wanting to enter the path of ser-

PHOTO/MARCIA REEFMAN

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN A TRANSFORMATIONAL GROUP

Transformational groups are forming all around the country. Groups are an invaluable resource and support for growth. This grass roots movement is being organized by a volunteer group of people committed to supporting personal transformation. The project is backed by the following highly-respected experts in spiritual and psychological transformational processes. Their support will be helpful for all participants.

OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS INCLUDE

BERNIE SIEGEL	JACQUELYN SMALL
GAY HENDRICKS	GAY LUCE
KATHLYN HENDRICKS	WAYNE MULLER
RICHARD MOSS	MARY MANIN MORRISSEY
JEAN SHINODA BOLEN	

We've heard from some of you that you're interested in participating in a group but do not wish to lead or host one. If this is true for you, please send us your name, address and telephone number. We will forward this information to a group coordinator in your area.

We have incorporated this project as a non-profit organization; this means all your donations are fully tax-deductible. Please see page 17 for more information on ways you can participate.

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vice. "There are just some basic principles. Trust that people have their own solutions. Find ways to listen to them, and to get behind them, and join up with them, and to not spend a lot of money on overhead, to keep it small."

In essence, Bread for the Journey is a grassroots organization that provides material and organizational support to people who are trying to make their communities better. The basic model can translate into just about any kind of service a group might choose to embrace. Muller takes care of the paperwork necessary for tax-exempt status, and his organization is willing to coordinate with groups who would like to start a Bread for the Journey in their local community. For those who want to replicate the organization's simple way of being helpful, Muller is overseeing the creation of a "Cookbook" to let people know how to do it.

"Essentially, we believe that everyone is the light of the world; everyone does have Buddha nature. If in fact everyone does carry some unbroken fragment of the divine fire, then we don't necessarily have to come to those who are homeless, sick, dying of AIDS, poor or battered, and figure out how to make their suffering go away. Instead, we can help them fan the flame of their own divinity into a raging fire, so that they can take their natural wisdom and passion and curiosity, and let it shine."

Muller feels that a lot of the "dis-ease" among us is due to fear, an inner experience of some kind of scarcity that prevents us from participating in life as generously as we might. "A lot of people seem to feel; 'I can't give right now because I'm really stuck with this and that,'" he observes. "But once you unblock the headgates and allow that river of giving and receiving to flow more easily through your life, you actually feel better." Maybe we'll become "unstuck" if we focus on giving. "You lose that obsession with the smallness of your own story, and instantly your story gets larger. We only have a brief, finite passage here, through this sea of being incarnated, and if we stay 'small' for too long, I think it actually creates 'dis-ease,'" Muller says. It's as if the container of our lives wants to continually expand, and it's against a natural imperative to stay small; it takes up precious energy that could be used to benefit others.

Sometimes the gift is "pulled out" by the need, Muller notices. "We end up doing things because they are necessary, and then we find out that we have a certain gift. We don't always know ahead of time what our gift is; we can misperceive it." He tells a story in his book, about going to visit a man who was dying of AIDS, and finding out later that the fellow hadn't really understood or cared much about what Muller had said to him, but loved their time together anyway. "Basically it turned out that

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Solar Logos V7n3p18

Star Foundation V7n3p18V7n3p18

Groups

Continued from page 15

regardless of all the relatively brilliant pronouncements I might have made about life and death and suffering, he just liked the sound of my voice!”

Muller chuckles as he admits that learning the truth of that man’s experience was the best thing that ever could have happened to him, and he lets it remind him that we don’t always know for sure which gift is going to do the most good. “With Bread for the Journey,” he explains, “you listen not only to what the needs are, but what the gifts are in the community, simultaneously. You don’t just do a needs assessment; you do a strengths assessment. It’s so easy to identify that the community is impoverished in this way and that. But that’s a dishonest way to look at it. In any community, even though there might be financial poverty, there is also tremendous kindness, and selflessness and patience, and all manner of qualities that aren’t really accounted for if you only do a needs assessment.”

He points out that, “It’s easy to count how many kids are dropping out of school, or what the teenage pregnancy rate is, but that focus can mask strengths like all the loving and caregiving grandmothers. We need to look at all the factors that come to bear on a situation, and to support and shine the light where the strength is. You can’t just get rid of darkness; you have to add light.”

Muller hopes Transformation Groups will take advantage of the simple matrix he has helped to create whereby we can gather and be intimately useful with individuals in our communities, without a lot of overhead, and without a lot of

bureaucratic hassle. He's backing off from being on the road lecturing this year, in order to spend time fine-tuning the process of assisting more people to get started on Bread for the Journey. Several years ago, when *How Then Shall We Live?* was published, a number of people from different communities immediately contacted him to ask how they could start helping. In Seattle, a group concerned with health care is now focusing on seeing that uninsured citizens get some kind of medical support. In Birmingham, Alabama, folks are gathering to help offset the impact that welfare reform is having on children in the inner city. Environmental concerns are being addressed by a volunteer group in Bloomington, Indiana.

"I don't have any personal investment in which communities get helped," Muller says. "I'm just concerned that we find ways to be useful that are easy. Part of the problem has been that the problems of the world seem so enormous that people feel daunted or paralyzed. Many feel as if anything they do couldn't possibly help. But bit by bit, one person, one community, one good idea at a time, solutions get implemented."

With Transformation Groups beginning to grow, some might choose to reach out and share their blessings. "If we unite our families and communities through what we love," Muller observes, "the results are so swift and sure that it can take your breath away."•

To contact "Bread for the Journey," write to: PO Box 6635, Santa Fe, NM 87502. or call (505)988-1118.

Journey into Wholeness/new

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Longing To Be Free

ROBIN SAMUEL SIERRA

My first glimpse of the volcano was from out at sea, orange glowing against the black night sky, the shore of the ocean on fire. The following day, I went to where Kilauea met the ocean. Fire spilled into water, together hissing and churning while white clouds of steam boiled into the air.

Kilauea is a volcano on the island of Hawaii that has been steadily erupting for the past 13 years. The lava moves so slowly that I was able to stand right at its leading edge, as close as the intense heat would allow. This creeping pace is deceptive. Nothing stands in its way, not stop signs, not trees, not whole towns. During one siege when the lava was threatening to destroy homes, the U.S. Army tried to divert it, with dubious success, by dropping 600-pound bombs in its path. Diversion is the best they can do. Nothing stops the lava from reaching its destination.

I was impressed. I wanted to be like that, unstoppable. This memory came to me last year while I was in the midst of an exciting, yet disturbing, upheaval. After being a painter for 25 years, I had changed my course. I began writing, a task that called for a linear way of thinking, which was much more difficult for me



than the spatial, nonverbal approach that painting required. I was unpracticed at this newer mode, but instead of taking that into account, I let a harping voice in my head bully me into believing that this transition was just too hard, and I should give up. I wanted to crawl back into the womb-like familiarity of my art.

The family couch in the house where I grew up had cushions that were squashed flat by the weight of my father's despair. After 20 years of being an accountant, he was craving change, and was not only terrified of making that change, but could not imagine an alternative to sitting day after day tallying numbers. Instead, he lay down for days that turned into years. There were times when I would peer into his darkened bedroom, afraid that he might not even be breathing. Once, in my desperation, I went into that room, grabbed his arm, and tried to pull him out of bed.

In addition to leaving a lasting indentation on the couch, his experience left a big dent in my psyche. Through his depression, I learned that when life gets difficult, the preferred response is to lie down and give up. It has been a lifetime's work for me to break that spell. And here at a crossroads, at the critical point of

leaving the familiarity of my painting for the unknown terrain of writing, I too wanted to quit.

One day in the midst of this struggle, a little white dog showed up at my back door, nestled under the mesquite tree, and lay there all day. She was scraggly, with sores on her nose, cactus spines in her fur and ribs like xylophones protruding through her dull and worn coat. After weeks of these daily visits, I couldn't bear seeing her out in the 110 degree Sonoran desert heat, so I let her inside.

That afternoon, I happened to be reading about Kilauea. According to Hawaiian legend, there is a goddess, Pele, who resides in the volcano, and who appears to mortals in one of three forms: a beautiful young chieftess, an elderly

woman, or a little white dog!

I did some investigating in the neighborhood and found out that the dog's name was Snowy. She was never allowed in the house, slept on the concrete patio, and usually escaped from her yard within minutes after everyone in the family took off for work and school. Since my partner and I both work at home, Snowy apparently preferred staying at our house where she would have some company. And although her owners went to great lengths to restrain her, Snowy continued her visits, undaunted.

She tunneled out under their fence, so they chained her to a tree. But after yowling all night, she broke her leather collar and sprang free. One day, when I took her back to her home, I let her in the gate

and watched as she leapt up and scaled the seven-foot slatted wood fence. She was poised on the narrow ledge like a tightrope walker, looking for a place to jump down where she wouldn't land on the ubiquitous and spiny prickly pear.

They brought home another dog, thinking that companionship might be the key to keeping her home. Snowy wanted no part of this intruder and continued her breakouts. Then they tied an empty plastic gallon milk bottle to her collar, which was intended to keep her from crawling under the fence. One day, I came home from a walk and heard a strange sound. I had accidentally left the front door ajar, and Snowy was clattering around my house, milk bottle trailing behind her, and banging against the

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clay tile floor. The neighbor's final attempt to confine her was a harness, a contraption of half a dozen black nylon straps and buckles that looked like some medieval torture device and was designed to restrict her movement, to keep her from jumping. But this wraith-like Houdini did it again, appearing in our living room, straps flying, tail wagging. I was impressed.

We eventually worked out an agreement with the neighbors. When the youngest son would leave for school in the morning, he would drop Snowy off at our house and then pick her up in the evening. But after a month of that, I couldn't bear to send her back there again. Finally, I asked if I could have her.

Snowy now lives with us. We feed her millet and hamburger, vitamins and flax seed oil. She is loved and fawned over day and night, given daily walks in the wilderness, and has free rein of the house, with at least eight soft places to sleep. She has gained weight, and instead of being scraggly and anxious, she is content and beautiful.

The day I took Snowy back to her own yard, once behind the gate, she became frantic, and in that desperation she leapt over the fence. Desperation is part of creativity. It is so difficult for us to change, to break out of old patterns that sometimes desperation is an ally. We get to a point where we can no longer tolerate our condition, and instead of giving up, we leap, and, as the Sufi mystic Kabir said, "The intensity of the longing does all the work." Snowy longed to be free, and I, too, long to be free of the fear that keeps me from following my creative spirit.

It has become clear to me why

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Reflections



From Our Readers

DEEPAK CHOPRA INTERVIEW

In response to the interview with Dr. Richard Moss and Dr. Deepak Chopra in the spring issue, I have great respect for Dr. Moss after reading the article. Dr. Moss is a true master; he recognizes the deception of the human mind and ego impressing itself with learned information.

The divine cannot be learned in books. It can only be experienced. When you experience the divine, it is beyond conception, beyond the ability of the human brain to identify the experience with words of description.

The brain is a neuro-net of patterned information produced by what the person expects, what it hopes it will be, and what it allows itself to experience.

Dr. Chopra has studied too much. He needs to get simple again. True divine experiences are beyond the neuro-net intelligence.

Information from books creates a pattern in the brain with an attachment to an identification of another person's mental evaluation. The moment identification is present, the innocent experience has been jaded by the ego.

Humanity is now worshipping

people who use clever intelligence to deceive them. They are driven by self-interest, money, status, power, and a claim to know all.

I say throw away the books, sit down, be quiet and experience the unspeakable, the unreferenced, the unidentified, the unknown. It's free, it's within you, and you will never again be impressed with neuro-net intelligence.—*Hilda Moody, Tampa, Florida.*

THIS IS IT

I thought I'd pass along that your new look worked for me at my crowded Borders bookstore. First, the name of contributor Thich Nhat Hahn caught my eye (I have read several of his books), and the message of "Inner Peace and Compassionate Living" said, "Yes, this is a magazine for me." Thank you. I look forward to regularly reading your insights.—*Scott Rehr, Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania.*

THANK YOU

I would like to take this opportunity to say thanks for putting together such a great magazine. I just came across it today at a Barnes & Noble bookstore. I especially appreciate the broad range of topics covered. Perhaps one day I'll

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Common Vision
V7n3p19

A New Life

BILL ASENJO

It appeared suddenly. Blackness blotted out my vision. A moment before, I'd focused on the cards that I held. Now I was blind. Then—like a puppet with its strings cut—I slumped over the table paralyzed. Time stopped.

"Call 911!" a poker player shouted.

Stunned, a resigned bitterness took over, "So this is how it happens. I'm having a stroke, and I'm dying." A siren approached.

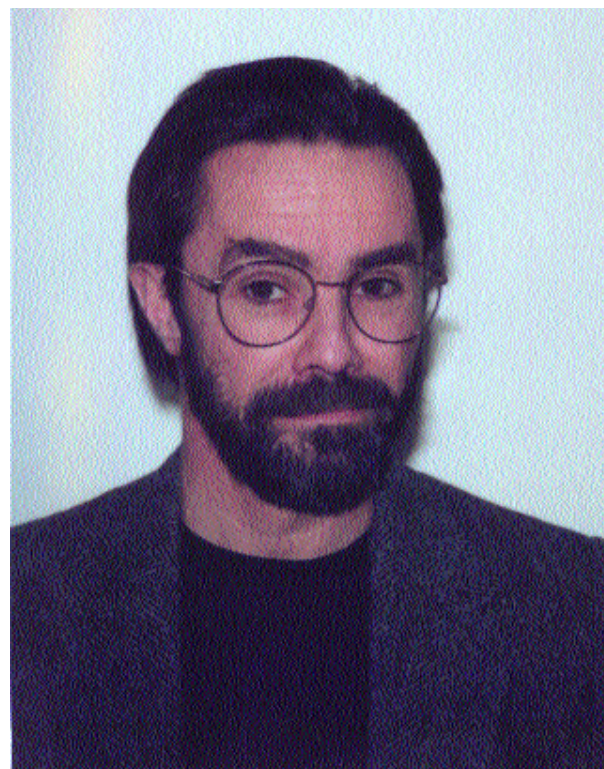
Examining my brain scan, the emergency room neurosurgeon announced gravely, "Well, you didn't have a stroke, but you do have a brain tumor—about the size of a golf ball."

I heard his words, but couldn't comprehend their meaning. I only wanted to return to the game so I could finish the hand that I'd been dealt.

In a way, I guess I was. There were more surprises. Surgeons removed skull and began probing. My brain swelled. I awoke in intensive care with a garden hose down my throat. It breathed for me.

To allow for swelling, a section of skull had not been replaced. I felt like I had an ax buried in my head.

A blurry face hovered above. "Bill," the neurosurgeon explained, "we're not sure what happened; we had



to stop. I know you're hurting, but we can't give you anything. It might cause more swelling. I'll check on you again later."

I didn't care if the medication *did* kill me. I'd never imagined such pain. Whimpering like a puppy, I gagged on the thick tube reaching into my chest. It would be a long night.

By morning the swelling subsided. They began again. The first operation preceded five more. Some vision returned, but only hazy shapes. Shaved bald, Frankenstein stitches stretched from the nape of my neck to the top of my head.

Between surgeries, I was mugged by spinal meningitis. Like the tumor, it took over suddenly. I was too exhausted to be afraid. Paralyzed, my speech slurred. I drooled.

Indignant to the surgical intrusions, my brain short-circuited. I had seizures. Medication made me spastic. Jerking uncontrollably, I was strapped down.

Completely helpless, having long ago dismissed the God of my childhood, I felt utterly alone. As far as I was concerned, my life was over.

I began vomiting. Without warning, my last meal would shoot out of me like a scene from *The Exorcist*.

Mysterious pains struck randomly as if an alien beast were trying to exit my body.

The tumor blocked a passage connecting my brain and spinal cord. Spinal fluid seeped into my skull, but couldn't drain. Trapped in my skull, fluid crushed my brain. The strange pains and vomiting were alarms.

The next morning, I was awakened by a man with a knitting needle on a small tray. He had come to do a spinal tap.

Spinal taps siphoned fluid, relieving pressure. For weeks, while gaining strength for the next surgery, I was awakened each morning by a man with a knitting needle on a tray.

By the sixth operation, the tumor had been removed. To relieve the continuous accumulation of spinal fluid required surgical plumbing. A tube was inserted into my brain and threaded beneath my skin; the other end was inserted into my stomach where fluid drained.

Seasons changed. I progressed from bedridden to wheelchair, walker, and finally, a cane.

The day to leave the hospital arrived. I could only think about the raw deal that life had dealt me.

At the rehabilitation facility, nonsense counselors didn't indulge my self-pity. Surrounded by patients with a menu of life-threatening conditions, my thumb-sucking wasn't tolerated.

A counselor began the group session, "Bill, how are you?"

I mumbled something about how life had wronged me.

He seemed amused. "Bill, 'sympathy' is in the dictionary between 'shit' and 'syphilis.' Now who else wants to talk?"

I was appalled.

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Seated among those recovering from serious conditions, I wasn't special.

To help adjust my attitude, each day I was to list ten things for which I felt gratitude. Insisting my glass was half-empty instead of half-full, my list remained blank.

The problem, of course, was me. As long as I insisted on sucking my thumb, counselors always seemed willing to help me choke on it. One later explained, "Bill, if we'd given you what you wanted, you'd have drowned in self-pity."

Weeks passed, my body detoxified from months of medication. Without a chemical cushion, self-pity gave way to fear. I was afraid of the future. I hadn't expected to live this long.

Only days from discharge, I gazed through a window and mumbled "Help me," to what I didn't know.

There were good reasons to be afraid. Until hospitalized, dead-end jobs supported a lifestyle of immediate gratification and self-destructiveness. My philosophy of life had the depth of a beer commercial.

Months later, I'd recovered sufficiently to... to what? Years before, I'd failed out of a community college. Since then, I'd accomplished little.

At my sister's suggestion, I anxiously registered at a junior college while wondering if I was too damaged to cut it.

Attending school with a different perspective, but without a hangover, I enjoyed learning. The first time, college had been a bore—nothing interested me. This time, everything did.

Although I continued to heal physically, I needed help emotionally. I attended a self-help group.

Innerworks V7n3p69

Timeless Books v7n2p28

A counselor suggested that I also join a support group for those with life-threatening illnesses—not for me, but to help others. This kept my problems in perspective. It also gave me a chance to repay a debt. I’d asked for help; it came as a chance to help others.

As a member of a student organization which helped people with disabilities, I realized a fulfillment different from academic achievement. Paradoxically, the more I did for others the less I thought about me, and the better I felt about myself.

Transferring to the University of South Florida, I became an officer for several campus clubs while continuing my other commitments.

Filling out a scholarship application, I pondered, “Who IS this guy?” The person I’d become bore little resemblance to the person I’d been.

Having spent enough time in bars and pool halls to complete several degrees, I wondered how much credit was mine. I didn’t plan to have a brain tumor, and I also hadn’t arranged all that had happened since then.

A once indignant “Why me?” had become a quiet “Why me? Thank you,” to what I still didn’t know.

This new life excited me. An early influence was Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Awed by his triumph over years in concentration camps, I was inspired by his transcendence over pain and loss. Frankl helped me make sense of such experiences. He stated what I suspected: although we may distract ourselves, people seek meaning. Compared to the losses Frankl endured, my experiences paled. I was humbled.

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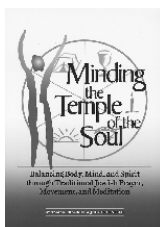
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Personal Transformation.

chotherapy discussed issues that fascinated me: meaning in life and death, existential isolation. Drawing from literature and philosophy, Yalom examined the questions I asked, timeless questions pondered throughout history.

From Jung I discovered synchronicity—events connected by meaning rather than cause and effect. He described his near death experience during a heart attack, and blended psychology with spirituality.

Expanding upon Jung, mythologist Joseph Campbell summarized years of studying cultures suggesting the word "God" was merely a metaphor for The Mystery.

A peculiar, personal "intellectual spirituality" took form. Reading voraciously and omnivorously, quantum mechanics, philosophy, astronomy, history, I sought ways to understand.

I realized I wouldn't arrive at the answer. Yet, I was enchanted by the process. Walt Whitman suggested that God was a journey.

Philosopher Paul Tillich's observation that the concept of "God" was not necessarily "A Being" but rather "Being itself" helped me reframe rejected childhood beliefs.

Being encompassed a constant process of becoming and dying, moment to moment. Change was the only constant. Permanence, Buddhists suggested, is illusion.

I began to notice simple things: my cut finger healing, a spider weaving its web. I gazed at stars knowing that I consisted of atoms originating in dying, exploding stars. Thermodynamics revealed that nothing is created nor destroyed, but merely changed form. Water could be liquid, solid

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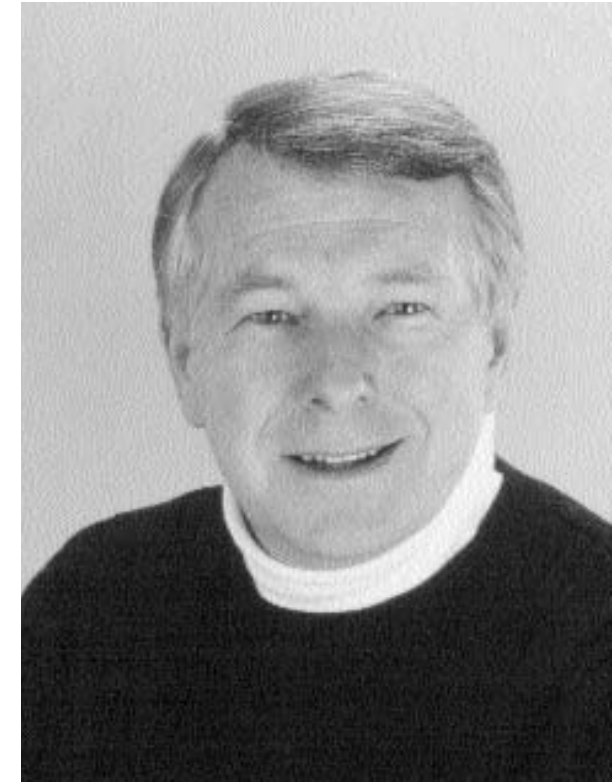
Learning To Wait for God

JIM ROSEMERGY

Once we no longer use prayer as a way of trying to convince the Almighty to serve us, we are candidates for a closer walk with God. We say, "Teach us to pray," but the teacher hears us say, "Teach us to wait." Every teacher of spiritual lore knows that the practice of prayer is primarily the art of waiting.

As we embark upon this path, let it be known we do not *achieve* a closer walk with God. We can achieve many things in life, but an experience of the Presence does not come through our efforts. God cannot be scaled the way we climb a mountain. Discipline and persistence are developed in the seeker and skills are learned, but waiting is the primary skill to be mastered. It is like the rising of the sun. We may beg and beseech, burn incense, and practice rituals, but these human efforts do not make the sun rise. Basically, we must sit in the dark, face the east, and wait. This assures us we will witness the sunrise, but it does not lift the velvet canopy of the night.

Our way of life calls us to use affirmations and denials (statements which affirm what is true or deny what is not true) in pursuit of what is called affirmative prayer. Essentially, statements are formed which we would say if we believed we had received what we want-



ed. This kind of prayer is based upon Jesus' statement, "...whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." The prayer of the human being usually considers the "it" to be something tangible we want or at least something which is personal to us. An individual praying the prayer of the human being might say, "The right and perfect place of employment is coming to me now," or "I live the abundant life, for my every need is met."

An extension of this practice of prayer is the idea we have a subconsciousness mind which can be conditioned. The conditioning occurs as we think or say an affirmation and/or denial over and over again. Through this activity, images and beliefs are stored in the subconscious mind. Then through the law, "Thoughts held in mind produce after their kind," these beliefs and images manifest themselves as our life experience. Most people are aware of the nature of seeds planted in the earth, but not everyone is familiar with the fact that thoughts, beliefs and images are seeds which bear fruit in our lives.

WE HAVE THE MIND OF THE CHRIST
These ideas are truth-filled and helpful, but they are

still steps along the spiritual path and therefore only partial truths. Several years ago, I was at a prayer retreat, and we were given a brief time to relax before one of the meals. I went to my room, not to meditate or pray, but to sit quietly and rest. While I was sitting on my bed, a voice still and small said within me, "Jim, you do not have to condition your subconscious mind anymore."

"Oh," I thought, "why not?"

"Because you have the mind of the Christ." This answer startled me, but it rang true, for I knew it was based on Paul's statement, "But we have the mind of Christ." Obviously, it would be foolhardy to try to condition the Christ Mind. Instead, it needs to be released to do its sacred work and to be an avenue of divine ideas and God thoughts.

Typically, when we decide the subconscious mind must be conditioned, we sing, think or speak a statement (an affirmation or denial) over and over again until it becomes a natural part of our being. However, remember Jesus cautioned us against *vain repetition*, and is it not true the Truth is already written upon our hearts?

Does this mean that our old friends, affirmations and denials, are no longer to be a part of our spiritual journey? Dear friend, they are destined to remain with us and become even more precious. But they are to be used in a different way which makes us more available to Spirit. Those who pray the prayer of the Divine Being know the "it" to be a consciousness of God. The actual practice of affirmative prayer forms statements like, "I am one with God," or "I and the Father are one."

THE HIGH MEADOW

I believe the purpose of affirmations and denials is not solely to condition the subconsciousness mind, but to help release the wonders of the Christ mind within us. Imagine you are climbing a mountain. The summit is an experience of the presence of God. Through human effort, you climb to a high meadow. It is a beautiful place. You can see things you have never seen before. You think you have arrived at your goal, but eventually you realize this is not the summit. The peak is shrouded in mist. You cannot even see the trailhead which leads to the experience you desire.

At the high meadow, you must wait. No amount

of human effort will take you higher. However, a woman is coming to show you the trailhead and to lead you higher. Her name is Grace. Through waiting and God's grace, you are taken into the mist, into the mystery that is the Presence.

In the analogy, we climb to the High Meadow through the use of affirmations and denials. These positive statements, which affirm what is true and say "no" to lies and falsehoods, lift us up in consciousness. Through their use, we do not succumb to negative statements and thinking. We stand our ground and refuse to descend into the valley below and its limitations. During our climb to the High Meadow, there is no conditioning of the subconscious mind. Instead, affirmations and denials are like a lifting wind taking us to a high state of human consciousness which feels good—the High Meadow. We are in a positive state of being, but we have not yet made contact with Spirit. From here we can descend into the valley of negativity, or we can wait for Grace to come and take us higher.

PUTTING ON OUR WINGS

Another image may be helpful in explaining this idea. You are like the great bird soaring near the cliff waiting for the unseen wind to carry you higher. By denying the seeming power of error and speaking the truth, you reach a point where you put on your wings and wait. Suddenly, the wind lifts you higher, and you are in the presence of God. However, before this happens you must learn to soar, to wait.

This is the most difficult part of developing a prayer life. It does not take a person long to know what is true and what is a lie, for such things are written on our hearts. We learn to say the right things quickly, and often can speak an eloquent public "prayer," but there is no experience of the Presence. The reason is there is no waiting. A consciousness of God is not achieved through our efforts. We rise to the apex of human consciousness, put on our wings, and wait to be lifted higher.

How often have we spoken our truth, felt a little better, said "amen," and gone about our business, only to have the problem return? The reason this happened is simple: we did not wait. This is why when seekers say, "Teach us to pray," the teacher hears, "Teach us to wait."

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Transformation

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or gas depending upon conditions. Einstein described energy and matter as interchangeable.

Perhaps this energy was influenced by conditions. Could this energy or “God whose name I did not know” be both comforting presence and indifferent gravity plunging someone from a rooftop? Was approaching this force, this presence, with a list of demands like a greedy child at Christmas misguided? I was too limited to know. It seemed almost arrogant to expect to understand.

As a youth I’d rejected someone’s dogma, one perspective. There were many: American Indians, shamans, Taoists—a buffet of beliefs. I’d assumed what I’d been taught was all there was. What would I have believed if born in another century or country?

Death seemed less intimidating after reading Michael Sabom, Stanislov Grof, Raymond Moody and other educated or spiritual individuals. Several cultures suggested it was simply the next step. Physicists pondered parallel universes.

Stephen Levine’s *A Gradual Awakening* offered user-friendly explanations of mindfulness meditation, and Buddhist perspectives on awareness, karma and illusion.

A wise friend suggested “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” I couldn’t wait to meet others.

This journey’s not been flawless. There have been detours, disappointments and lessons to be learned. Most telling were my father’s death and the end of an engagement. I expect others.

Most of the time I’m grateful for what I once took for granted, reminding myself that disappoint-

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 79



Healing And Moving On

JACQUELYN SMALL

"The soul once turned toward matter, fell in love with it, and burning with desire to experience earthly pleasures, could no longer hold herself away from it. And so the world was born."—From an ancient Russian text.

We are both an ego and a soul, a species whose nature, according to Teilhard de Chardin, is made of "spirit-matter." Psyche is the mirrored reflection of our soul, and functions as the mediator between the spiritual and earthly dimensions, which we must somehow learn to blend. Our psyches are the battlefield where all our dualities play out. When our higher and lower selves are in misalignment, we suffer, for this is a violation of our nature. All human disease is the soul's inability to express through us.

Psyche is our perceiver. In order to be healthy, our

bodies must have a healthy psyche to wrap themselves around. We must have a strong intention to live, and to know that our lives matter—to sense that there is a purpose and a plan for our incarnation here. Otherwise, no matter how much we exercise, how well we sleep, or eat the proper foods, our physical health will run amuck. With no reason to live, we'll eventually break down. All disease is the soul's inability to express through us. So we must all learn to release anything that's in the way of living a soulful life.

Several authors today are telling us it's time now to "get over it." And it is indeed time that we all stop focusing on our wounded parts and get on with creating our whole self. It's time to turn away from the past and start creating our longed-for future. But "getting over it" is not an intellectual declaration! It's a process that truly must be honored, with compassion, right timing, patience and understanding. We didn't get

wounded all at once, and our healing doesn't happen just like that. We must commit to the necessary inner work of making conscious all that we've repressed, so that we can truly focus on what we intend to be as more of our ideal. No one can do this work for us. We are self-creative organisms!

Your soul and its counterpart, your ego, have had a long history here, and have taken on many wounds. If we try to jump past any unfinished business in our biographies without bringing the issue out of denial and healing it, our bodies will tell the tale. We can sicken, and even die. We call it stress. The wear and tear of our unprocessed distant or immediate past causes us to suffer an emergency that was intended to be a spiritual emergence, a lesson we were to learn about being a loving human. We transform our lives through making our ways of being completely conscious.

Your psyche seeks completion, not perfection. We are to know and claim it all, both the dark and the light—for this is how we are made. It's in this willingness to live authentically within the tension of all the contrary opposites that plague us that we ultimately find that "something" that brings us fulfillment. We've given it many names: We find our balancing point, our center, the archetypal self, the jewel in the lotus. We complete our grand design. We come whole, or home. Whatever we call it, this is the purpose of our incarnation—to remember that we are divine.

So, in this crazy world of stacks of e-mail and over-loaded appointment books, where do we go to find ourselves? How do we proceed for the advancement of our soul? Is there a map, or are there certain stepping stones along the path? There are.

In our work at our company *Eupsychia*, we've been guiding people directly through processes of personal transformation for over twenty years now, hundreds of people just like you. And we've found some "seeds of wisdom" along our way. For home is simply the remembrance of our divine heritage, the full awareness of who we really are. Psyche dove into matter, remember? She decided to take on this life, to experience it all. In the doing, she forgot that she was divine. Then, she had several impossible tasks to complete in order to return to

Mt. Olympus from whence she came. She had to remember, while in human form that she was divine. And this, too, is our story. This remembrance is our true healing.

To get back home again, the following may serve to comfort you, and help to remind you that you're not alone.

STEP ONE. We realize we are dying to our old ways. The first step we take upon this path is one of complete upheaval. Your old life begins to fall away. And it seems to "just happen" while you were looking the other way. This process will usually start with some event that shatters some strong belief you hold. A spark must be bright enough to blast open the doors of our psyche, so she can release her divine/human treasures from the collective unconscious mind. Either an outer crisis, like your house burning down, a cherished relationship ending, or a critical medical diagnosis may come along. Or it can be an inner crisis, such as a complete loss of faith in life or in one's self, a serious depression or loss of life force. Nothing turns you on anymore. Life is no longer interesting. And you lose hope. This can be the beginning of your journey. The mystics call it the "dark night of the soul."

At this stage, we're required to remember: the self is greater than its conditions! Then we can pass through this stage more gracefully, being "in the world but not of it." Faith is the quality our soul brings us at this stage, if we make it through. Then, we must practice being a faithful servant to this process itself, and allow it to fully take hold. We consciously surrender to a power greater than ourselves, and voluntarily enter "the mystery."

STEP TWO. An uncomfortable confusion sets in, and you know you're no longer in charge; something's now in charge of you. So for a while, you'll go this way and that, trying first one thing, then another, hoping to regain control. At this stage, you at least become active, but not to much avail. Your energy is too scattered. Back and forth you go between opposing forces inside you. You may crave a geographical move, feel that you're in love with two people at once and having to make a hard decision, or you might desperately yearn to have a different profession, anything to get away

from your unhappiness or ambivalence. Whatever the opposition, you feel stuck. But you simply must wait. Now, the keynote that will aid us is: it's not *out* but *through* that we heal.

Patience is the quality our soul is bringing forth. We are now to learn about cycles and rhythms, the natural seasons of change. Like the farmer who kept pulling up his new crops to see if they were growing, we are tested to the extent we need the lesson about how to stay faithful to our process and remain open to whatever's happening. We watch; we study; we journal and document our experiences. We are willing to know ourselves. We commit to not act until destiny truly moves us onward. And this, too, will seem to happen while we're looking the other way.

STEP THREE. We see how our shadow, the dark side of our personality, defeats us until we own it. The human shadow is our "holy grit" that keeps forcing us to move toward the realization of our ideal. We all detest our dark side. And we're even more resistant to owning it! We'd much rather project it out onto others and call them the problem. We've gone into denial about the parts of ourselves we're ashamed of, so we can do just that. But the shadow will act out and cause us a great humiliation until we finally face it. This means we are willing to see our faults and make the shadow conscious so it can heal. Anything still unconscious in us has the power to ruin us. We keep an ongoing dialogue in place with this unlived, unloved part of ourselves until it's fully known. Then, it loses its power. We can watch our emotional reactivities as clues to where we're still "charged" with some unprocessed stuff from our past. And we'll see the story we tell ourselves that's holding all this in place. Because we've repressed it, it's never had a chance to be conscious. So it's had to act out when our guard was down, to get our attention. The shadow is your unconsciousness—your anger, your fears, your pettiness, your unhealed or undeveloped aspect. It's not evil; it's just uncivilized.

If we'll do our shadow work, we'll start to become more transparent—so the winds of change can blow through us more readily. Knowing this is the dawning of our awakening. The keynote here is this: the shadow has a sacred function. Owning our

shadows gives us compassion for others when their dark sides are acting out. In shadow work, we learn the quality of spiritual discrimination. This is the ability to separate the essentials and non-essentials in our lives and the willingness to heal or walk away from what's blocking our advancement.

STEP FOUR. We begin to forgive ourselves, and others. We see how it's all been for our good—no matter how great the cost at times. We see our mistakes in the light of understanding, and this changes our past—how we view ourselves and others who have harmed us. We'll see that all our mistakes were for a sacred purpose of refining our personalities for the work of spirit. How else can we learn about human life and love? We now feel a part of a greater plan, and are beginning to see our purpose here, though we still have many unanswered questions. We've discovered by now that there are no outside "experts" on us; we see that the self is our only true teacher, that all is learned from within. The keynote to remember now is this: the open heart is the bridge to a higher consciousness.

We develop the quality of compassion. Our old judgments begin to fall away, and we become more broad-minded. After all, who can we blame when we once see that it's all a part of the plan?

STEP FIVE. Our higher and lower minds come into rapport. Now we walk through life simultaneously gathering knowledge from our experiences while the wisdom of our inner and greater self brings us more enlightenment. We are growing in spiritual stature. Insights and revelations we've had begin to integrate into our daily lives. During this stage we become fascinated with the study of the self, the universe, and of the divine from whence we've come. We will seek out a spiritual practice or way of life that fits and feeds our deepest yearnings. Questions about our true life's purpose or life's work begin to preoccupy us. We want to find "our group."

Our creative imagination awakens, and we see that we can co-create our future by imaging our own ideals. We take responsibility for being co-creators. The creative imagination is our higher cognition that fills in the gap between who we are today with who we long to become. This is how all

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Healing With Love



AN INTERVIEW WITH DEAN ORNISH
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

Dean Ornish, M.D., holds the Bucksbaum Chair in Preventive Medicine at the non-profit Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, California, which he founded in 1984. He is Clinical Professor of Medicine at the School of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and a founder of the Center of Integrative Medicine there. He is also an attending physician at California Pacific Medical Center.

For the past twenty years, Dr. Ornish has directed clinical research demonstrating—for the first time—that comprehensive lifestyle changes may begin to reverse even severe coronary heart disease, without drugs or surgery. He is the author of four bestselling books.

A one-hour documentary of his work was broadcast on NOVA, the PBS science series, and was featured on Bill Moyers's PBS special, "Healing and the Mind." His work has been featured in virtually all major media.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: *You are known as the diet doctor. You have recommended diet, along with lifestyle changes, for the treatment of heart disease. Yet, your latest book, "Love and Survival" is on love, intimacy and healing. Do you think the power of relationship is more significant than these other lifestyle changes you advocate in the treatment of heart disease?*

DEAN ORNISH: I have always talked about the importance of love and intimacy; however, people tend to focus on diet. Certainly, diet is important; I haven't changed my views on that. But I don't know of anything in medicine, not drugs, not diet, that has greater impact on our health and well-being, as well as premature death and disease from virtually all causes, than the healing power of love and intimacy. I decided that if I wrote a whole book about it, people would tend to pay more attention to that.

PT: *So, this book is an emphasis on this aspect of your work, not a shift in your orientation.*

PHOTO BY SHARPER IMAGE

DEAN: This has always been part of my work, but over time I have developed a greater appreciation, in both my personal life and in the lives of the patients with whom I work, of how important love and intimacy are.

PT: *Early in the book, you gave an introduction to the ways that loneliness and isolation affect our health, and I am going to quote you. You wrote, "It increases the likelihood of disease and premature death from all causes by 200–500%—independent of behaviors—through different mechanisms, many of which are not fully understood." That was astounding to me.*

DEAN: Yes, it is to most people. Isolation and loneliness impact our *behaviors* as well. People who are depressed, lonely, unhappy and/or isolated are much more likely to smoke, overeat, eat too much fat and cholesterol, drink excessively, abuse drugs, work too hard and so on. I find it interesting, however, that even when those factors are *controlled*, these studies show the effect of loneliness and isolation.

PT: *In the book, you describe numerous studies that demonstrate the healing power of love and intimacy. This compilation of studies is a helpful resource for people like me, not in the medical field, who are interested in health and wellness. Would you highlight a couple of studies that are particularly revealing in documenting the healing power of support?*

DEAN: Yes, I reviewed hundreds of studies in the book, and a few are particularly meaningful for me. One study, conducted by Dr. Thomas Oxman, at the University of Texas Medical School, was with men and women before they had open heart surgery. The study examined the relationships of social support and religion to mortality in men and women six months after undergoing elective open heart surgery. The researcher asked them two questions: "Do you draw strength from your religious faith or spiritual faith, whatever that might be? Are you a member of any group that meets regularly, a civic group, a church group, a synagogue, support group, a bingo game, etc?" The results were astonishing. Six months after open heart surgery, of those who answered no to both questions, 20 percent were dead, compared to only 3 percent who answered yes to both questions. There was a seven-fold difference in mortality, six months after open heart surgery, between those who answered yes to both questions and those who answered no to both questions. I don't know of anything in medicine that causes such a dramatic difference in fatality rates; yet these are not questions that most surgeons ask their patients, or

MY STORY

BY DEAN ORNISH

In my first study, 20 years ago, many of the men and women talked during the group support sessions about how the lack of love and intimacy in their relationships in the past may have contributed to their disease. I began to realize, "Hey, that could be me in a few years if I don't make some changes in more than just diet and meditation and exercise." It's not enough to intellectually understand or to write about these issues; I need to live them or I might die from them. Love and survival. How extraordinary that the people who were coming to me for healing were helping me heal myself.

What had seemed liberating—going out with different people—became increasingly frustrating. I knew that I needed to make some significant changes. The same drive that was causing these problems was now getting my attention to begin addressing them. I wanted more intimacy in my life.

I began to realize that an important part of my healing was that I needed to learn to be alone. If I wanted intimacy and love, then I first needed to learn to coexist with this pain without trying to numb it or run from it or distract myself from it in the ways that had been most familiar to me.

I spent increasing amounts of time by myself. The hardest times were when I would travel somewhere to attend a meeting or to give a lecture; afterwards, I would end up in a hotel room, alone. Unlike before, I tried not to call anyone, spend time with anyone, or even watch television or read a book in order to stay with whatever feelings arose. I discovered that when I was alone, I felt as if I were disappearing.

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that physicians even value.

PT: *In that particular study, they were talking about involvement in civic groups; they weren't necessarily talking about intimacy. Even casual contact with people is apparently good for our health.*

DEAN: I think that the real epidemic in our culture is what I call emotional and spiritual heart disease, not physical heart disease. The loneliness, isolation, alienation and depression that are so common in our culture are caused in part because of the breakdown of the social networks that used to give people a sense of connection and community. This study indicates how powerful these issues are and how deprived people are in these areas since something as simple as attending a civic group meeting regularly can make such a difference.

PT: *You are talking about emotional heart disease and spiritual heart disease. Are love and intimacy at the root of not only what makes us ill, but what makes us well?*

DEAN: Love and intimacy are certainly the root cause of health and well-being on the one hand, and premature death and disease on the other hand, for many people. Certainly, genetic diseases are a primary determinant of health, but that's not the norm for most people. For most people, I think love and intimacy play an important and compelling role, not only of quality in our lives, but even of quantity of our lives. We've always known that people who feel loved are happy, but what we may not have known is what a powerful difference this makes in our survival. I am hoping that this book can raise the level of awareness of how much these things matter. It is easy to make fun of the need for support or not take intimacy seriously, as we tend to do in our culture. If we understand what an important difference love and intimacy makes, we may have the courage to begin taking them more seriously.

PT: *In the last few days, since reading the book, I've had heightened awareness of not only my intimate, but particularly my social and casual relationships. Knowing that how I related was making a difference for both of us, in terms of our well-being, created a more authentic interchange on my behalf.*

DEAN: That makes me feel good because that is

what I hope the book will foster. When people realize that relationships really matter, they might be more courageous. Vulnerability requires courage because you can get hurt, but if people understand what a powerful difference this can make, they may be more willing to risk—to learn to open their hearts, which is what it means to be vulnerable, because it's worth it.

A study I found particularly interesting, in addition to the one I mentioned already, was the study of Harvard undergraduates from the 1950s. The study shows how loving relationships may affect susceptibility to disease in general. The graduates were asked, "Were you close to your mother, and were you close to your father?" A follow-up study was done 35 years later. One-hundred percent of those graduates who answered no to both questions had major illnesses in mid-life, compared to only 40% who answered yes to both questions and 60% to those who answered yes to one of the questions.

This doesn't mean that you are doomed to get sick later in life if you weren't close to your parents when you were growing up, but we tend to relate as adults much as we did when we were children growing up. If we grew up in a family where we weren't rewarded for learning to be intimate, or even worse, if we were abused by our parents, then intimacy is dangerous. When we are older, we tend to relate to people or unconsciously choose relationships with people who have the same limited capacity for intimacy that we do.

Other studies show that we *can* change. The study by Dr. Spiegel at Stanford Medical School of women with metastatic breast cancer, and the study by Dr. Fauzy at UCLA, with men and women with malignant melanoma, found that a six-week support group in the melanoma study, and a year-long support group in the breast cancer study, caused significant reduction in premature death, extended survival, and in the melanoma patients prevented recurrence. Even a six-week support group made a difference! Five years later, these people had less recurrence and lived longer. It is almost mind-boggling to think that a six-week support group could have such a major impact on survival. I think the reason that it did is not because the six-week support group per se had such an important impact, but

When you can be authentic, when you have the courage to show all of yourself to someone else and to make yourself vulnerable, it often allows the other to do the same, and the level of intimacy can be much more powerful...

for many people, it was the first time that they were encouraged to be intimate and open. They learned to be open, and they began to experience how good it feels to be intimate, and then carried these skills beyond the six weeks.

PT: *Those studies are encouraging and motivating. This information can reassure people that changes can be made, that support does make a difference, and that we are not doomed. What would a new model of medicine be like that incorporated these findings?*

DEAN: It's a model that is more caring and compassionate, as well as more cost-effective and competent. That's what we are trying to create in our work.

PT: *Are the shifts more in the quality of relationships than in medical technology?*

DEAN: They are not mutually exclusive, but I don't think anyone needs to worry that we do not have enough technology in medicine. It's the other aspects that are lacking and people are voting with their feet by choosing alternative practitioners, because alternative practitioners respond more to basic human needs, which are to feel listened to, cared for, nurtured, nourished and loved. When people don't get that from their traditional doctors, they go elsewhere, even if elsewhere may not have the scientific basis or technology that a Western practice might have. It is always better to incorporate everything that works. I am a founder of the new Center of Integrative Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, where we're trying to incorporate the best of allopathic and alternative approaches and to pay attention to these psychological issues as well.

PT: *Throughout the book, you use the term an "open heart." What does an "open heart" mean?*

DEAN: An "open heart" is the willingness to make oneself vulnerable. We've all been hurt at various times in our lives, and there is, metaphorically speaking, a wall around our hearts that protects us from pain. It's not that we shouldn't

have our emotional defenses, but if we have no one with whom we feel safe enough to be vulnerable, those defenses that protect us also isolate us because they are always up. The goal is to have one person in your life, preferably more, but at least one person, with whom you can make a commitment to open your heart. By that, I mean to let down your emotional defenses and to make yourself vulnerable as a way of being more intimate with that person.

PT: *If we have one or two persons, with whom we are intimate, do we also need quantity? You talk about quality and quantity of relationships in your book.*

DEAN: Some studies show that both may be important, but I believe that quality is the more important. If you have even one person in your life with whom you can truly be yourself, where you can be so vulnerable that they know your dark sides, as well as your social sides you show to other people, that relationship is healing. One person in your life who really knows you and loves you is healing. Many people don't have one person, not even their spouse, with whom they can be completely authentic, because they fear that if others knew that they weren't perfect and had dark sides, they would be unloved and abandoned. People often create an image of who they want other people to think they are that exposes just their good sides. Unfortunately, when you do that, if you don't get love and respect, you lose, and if you get it, you lose because it's not for you—it's for this image of you. When you can be authentic, when you have the courage to show all of yourself to someone else and to make yourself vulnerable, it often allows the other to do the same, and the level of intimacy can be much more powerful, even though the fear is often that you'll be more alone.

PT: *What's the importance of intimacy with oneself?*

DEAN: Intimacy is not just with other people, but also with oneself and with something spiritual. On one level, we are separate, and on another level, we

My Story

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In one sense, I was. I was experiencing my self—more precisely, my lack of self—without distractions or modulation. That frightening realization helped me to begin constructing a real sense of self and self-worth.

Although it was very painful, it was healing. This same pain that I had been avoiding began cutting through some of the layers and walls that had protected my heart, yet also isolated it for so many years. I began to realize that I didn't need to be with people in order to feel I existed. Slowly, little by little, my heart began to open.

While it was important for me to define a separate self as part of my own growth, it was equally important for me to go beyond separation. So much of psychotherapy tends to focus on the first half—helping people develop an autonomous, independent, separate self—at the expense of learning how to be in an intimate, sharing relationship and finding community. I am finding that real freedom comes from choosing interdependence rather than the false choice between codependence and independence.

I learned that the capacity for love and intimacy—an open heart—is so important to having a joyful life as well as to survival. In *all* relationships, not just romantic ones.

In the past, being involved with women whose capacity for intimacy at that time was as limited as my own felt safe. At least I wouldn't be controlled and consumed, even if it was frustrating because the relationship wasn't very close. As my capability for intimacy grew as a result of working on these issues, I was able to make different choices. As I began to heal, I found myself in a committed relationship with a wonderful person.

are part of something larger that connects us all. By spiritual, I mean that direct experience of interconnectness that is so healing. Intimacy can be with parts of oneself, as well. As we talked about a moment ago, many people feel as if parts of themselves are not lovable. They fear they wouldn't be loved if others knew about these fantasies or wishes or parts of themselves that they don't like very much, and so they hide them from other people. Often, these are hidden even from oneself. They are split off, and sometimes projected onto other groups of people. If you think you are not lovable or if you feel anger or hate and don't acknowledge that as an aspect of being human, there is a tendency to project that onto other groups of people. That is an underlying quality of racism or anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred of groups of people. Hatred is projected onto other people so that we don't have to deal with those underlying issues in ourselves. Part of healing is to re-own and reintegrate those aspects, so that we realize they are a part of being human, too. Liberace used to say, "We have a Mother Teresa in us, and we have a Hitler in us as well, and when we can have compassion for that in ourselves, we can then have more compassion when we see that manifested in other people as well."

PT: One of the people you interviewed for your book made the point that if we don't have intimacy with ourselves, when we are in a group—due to our projections and our defenses—we might not experience the support of the group, and in that sense, becoming intimate with oneself is also central to the healing process.

DEAN: I don't know that I would put it quite like that. What makes a group experience powerful for many people is that it enables them to disclose those parts of self to the group. If the group is an effective group, you can say, "You know, I may look like I have it all together, but my kids are on drugs," or "I may look wealthy, but I am really bankrupt," or "I may look like I am successful, but I have a lot of doubts about myself." When people can say those kinds of things, just to use a few examples, they find that the group doesn't abandon or reject them, but just listens compassionately. Other group members say, "You know, I have similar kinds of feelings, too," and they find that they are more connected. The group process itself can help them become more integrated, accepting and compassionate to those parts within themselves. Becoming intimate with self and with others in a group can go hand in hand.

PT: You mentioned relationship with spirituality or God. What's the significance of spirituality in healing?

DEAN: You can be alone on a mountain top or in your room and feel the direct experience of interconnectiveness and oneness with God or whatever religious term you put that experience into. Feeling a oneness with God is an ineffable experience, a limitless experience. You can be walking down Fifth Avenue, surrounded by thousands of people in New York City, and feel terribly alone. It is not necessarily the quantity of people you are with, but the inner experience that is the most important.

PT: How do love, intimacy and social support get inside the body?

DEAN: One of the things that I found interesting in interviewing these people about healing was that although most healing systems—Chinese, Indian, Japanese, African medicine—had different vocabularies and paradigms to describe these issues, there is a recognition of a vital life force, whether it is called Kundalini or Chi or Prana. In Western medicine we tend not to acknowledge the validity of these kinds of concepts because we don't have the technology to measure it. We tend not to believe what we can't measure. Every healing system, besides traditional American or Western medicine, talks about this life force. The idea is that when you close yourself off from another person or close yourself off from parts of yourself, you also close yourself off from that source of life and energy. Health consequences derive from doing that. When you open yourself up to that life force, you are less likely to get sick, and healing is facilitated. When you close yourself off from it, the opposite is more likely to occur. The sun still shines whether you open your window or not. Our choices in every moment, in every action, lead us more towards intimacy and healing or more towards isolation and suffering and often premature death and disease.

PT: What you are discussing reflects a certain mystery in the energy of love and the energetics of healing.

DEAN: Yes, there is an element of mystery to all of this. We don't have all the answers; yet because we don't understand the mechanisms of why these things matter, it doesn't mean that we can't benefit from them. There are many things in medicine

that we don't fully understand, But we know that they make a difference, and this is one of them.

PT: What about the relationship of meditation and intimacy?

DEAN: Meditation helps you quiet down your mind and body so you become more aware of what you are feeling, which can be used to enhance intimacy. Once you know what you feel, you can express those feelings to another person, which can bring you closer together. Even more than that, when you quiet down enough, you can have a direct experience of transcendence. Whether it's through meditation or prayer, any system that helps you quiet your mind and body is useful. As Swami Satchidananda said, "When you tune your radio better, you can hear the music." The music is there, whether or not you turn your radio on. Meditation or prayer can help you find the right station and tune your radio more clearly.

PT: Is there anything that you would like to share about your own journey with our readers?

DEAN: I talked about myself in the book in a self-disclosing and personal way. I felt a little anxious writing about myself because, like everybody, I want people to think well of me. I talked about some personal struggles I have had in my life that most people don't talk about. I did that as a way to try to be an example of what I am writing about, with the hope that what I learned from my own struggles might be of benefit to other people.

PT: Reading study after study that verified the significance of intimacy in relationships and well-being was the most impactful part of the book for me. I also enjoyed the pictures. Where did you get those photographs?

DEAN: I took them. I was a photographer before I became a doctor, and I took thousands of pictures. I notice, looking back on that period of my life, how often the pictures were of people who were together, but weren't *together*. They embodied the loneliness that I was feeling at that time.

PT: Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

DEAN: Having seen the powerful difference these issues have made in my own life and in the lives of so many other people, I am grateful for the opportunity to share this with your readers. •



Getting Your Ego Out Of the Way

EVELYN AND PAUL MOSCHETTA

Only your spiritual self has the ability to witness your selfish self and free you from a survival mentality. This is how you get your ego out of the way. Witnessing is being silently aware of what is going on inside you, of all that happens in your mind and through your senses. From the witness stance, you merely want to *look*, watching the movement of your thoughts, feelings and sensations rising up and passing along on the surface of your consciousness. Witnessing means seeing the workings of your ego self and not acting on them.

You are always talking to yourself. But you rarely, if

ever, focus on this inner dialogue as an outside observer. Watch your mind. Observe what goes on inside yourself, the thoughts that pass by, one after another. Then you will get a firsthand view of your ego mind at work.

Witnessing is an alert watchfulness. It is an attitude of watching the watcher. The watcher is your self-centered ego, that part of you which continually makes judgments, conclusions and interpretations of all that it sees and experiences.

Witnessing comes from your spiritual self. It is a special kind of awareness because it is free of any

TSJ/STEWART COHEN

judgments, choices or opinions. It is simply a watching of your inner reactions and responses carefully, without any self-blame or self-glorification. Judging of any kind means that your ego self is back on the scene.

Through witnessing, you get to know your ego self as it really is in each present moment. The neutral observation of witnessing highlights the contradictions between how you see yourself and how you actually behave. Being aware of these differences opens the possibility for change.

When frustrated by little things going wrong, I would get annoyed and cranky. It happens less frequently now because Evelyn and I have spoken about it, and I am very aware of my tendency to react this way. Sometimes it still comes up.

For example, working out of two different offices and having a weekend home in a third location means we live a rather nomadic lifestyle. Recently, Evelyn, after getting ready to start an evening of work, left her travel bag and suitcase on the bedroom floor, blocking a direct path to the bathroom. She turned off the lights before she left. Sometime later, I found myself groping my way toward the bathroom in complete darkness. I stumbled over the bags and almost did a swan dive into the toilet bowl.

Cursing, I got up and turned on the bathroom light. My blaming ego immediately sprang into action: "God damn it, how could she be so careless; she never thinks about anything she does. I could have broken my neck because of her. Just wait! I'm going to let her have it but good. I'm going to leave these bags right here so I can show her this mess."

There was a sense of self-righteousness that went along with this inner tantrum. As the thoughts and feelings passed through my mind, my witnessing self observed the whole scenario. I let witnessing take over, allowing me distance from the emotions. In that distance I could consciously choose not to have the angry outburst be my response. A calm feeling took over and instead of waiting to surprise Evelyn with the "evidence" of her misdeed, I moved the bags and later said, "Evelyn, let's both remember not to leave our bags where we can fall over them. I came in before in the dark and tripped. So let's make sure we also always leave the bathroom light on." That was it. No blaming, no judging, no

feeling one *up* because I made her one *down*. Just a smooth and easy statement of the facts, which left us still feeling as close and warm as before.

When you can clearly see the facts about a person or situation, right actions will follow. Right actions leave no trace of regret, guilt or shame. Witnessing and right action go together because witnessing helps you to interrupt your tendency to react impulsively with destructive anger, criticism, inappropriate guilt and anxiety. Your spiritual self, because it is not motivated by desire or fear, can see facts clearly. When your self-centered ego is guided by your spiritual self, right action follows.

Only your spiritual self has the ability to witness your selfish self and free you from a survival mentality.

AWARENESS MOMENT TO MOMENT IS KEY

The witnessing attitude is a new way of looking. With a survival mentality, your insecure ego works mostly by analyzing events and situations. As an analyzer it wants to answer a question or solve a problem, to get to the bottom of things, to determine right from wrong, or to reach a decision or draw a conclusion. This way of analyzing is important in the practical side of your life, but it is not very useful in creating intimacy.

So often when couples come to see us for marriage counseling, they spend several sessions acting like lawyers arguing a case. Each partner uses a lot of energy analyzing their situation and making a strong case against the other. They are determined to prove their view of the problem is the correct one. Our effort is to help them understand that there is a better way for them to look at their situation. As long as your analyzing ego is in control, you will tend to see your partner's shortcomings and not your own.

*Witnessing is pure "in-the-moment awareness."
It happens now, in each new moment, without any analyzing.*

When the thinking mind of your ego analyzes a present situation, it is usually looking back at the past or ahead to the future. Witnessing, on the other hand, is pure *in-the-moment* awareness. It hap-

pens now, in each new moment, without any analyzing. It is the in-the-moment awareness of witnessing that helps you immediately see your thoughts, feelings and reactions as they begin to arise. For most of us, because analyzing is so common, understanding comes after the fact. For example, we usually become aware of our inner tensions and conflicts after they have firmly taken hold, disguised as a headache, a sudden change in mood, or a way of behaving that is uncharacteristically negative and uncooperative.

Through witnessing, when you observe rather than analyze, you begin to see how and when your survival-oriented self shows up and that it has a characteristic pattern or style. Your ego self may consistently appear as meek, apologetic and needing approval. Or it may take the form of smug superiority, sarcasm and conceit. Knowing what your general pattern is helps you be more successful at interrupting your ego self before it makes a mess of things.

ENDING AUTOMATIC PATTERNS

You develop witnessing awareness as you begin to watch for the fears, hurts, angers and anxieties that cause you to get all tied up inside. Gradually you'll learn to observe yourself, to see when and how you cause your own unhappiness. For example, without a witnessing attitude, as soon as you feel the slightest "pinch" of fear, let's say of being controlled or manipulated, you may do something negative as a defense, such as getting nasty, being sarcastic or attacking. These reactions only create more conflict between you and your partner. By witnessing, you *carefully observe* the negative thoughts and feelings that start working inside your mind without acting on them.

Through witnessing, you don't allow your ego self to automatically take over and create more pain. In fact, you see more clearly not only the attack you may or may not have received, but also what you may be doing (if anything) to invite or prolong that hurt or attack. In other words, you become acutely aware of when you are feeling controlled and manipulated and when you are doing the controlling and manipulating.

This kind of self-awareness is new for most of us.

Usually, we don't give much attention to what passes through our consciousness. This frequently leaves us feeling overwhelmed, because an unwatched mind has no way of regulating how fast it is going. Giving attention to our mind's flow enables us to begin slowing down our thoughts, feelings and behavior to a more manageable pace. Then in-the-moment awareness is more possible, and we are less likely to go on automatic and repeat patterns that cause us pain and unhappiness.

Through witnessing, you don't allow your ego self to automatically take over and create more pain.

I know that between Paul and myself our selfish selves tend to surface at times of stress. When I feel under pressure, I become anxious and immediately want to eliminate what is causing the stress. I want to move quickly, find a solution, complete the task, or solve the problem. For my anxious ego, sooner is much better than later. Often, I fail to see that what I need to ease my stress may be different from what Paul may be needing in the same situation.

Paul needs to move more slowly when under stress. He likes to consider the situation, look it over, think about it, and then act. For example, while writing this book, we each dealt with deadlines differently. Each of us worked independently on a topic, and then we came together at an agreed-upon time to collaborate on what we had written. This agreed-upon time was our self-imposed deadline. I always have a strong need to finish on time or, preferably, before the deadline.

Recently, I had finished my writing. Our deadline was Monday morning, and it was now early afternoon on Saturday. Paul said he was going to spend the day getting a haircut, going to the hardware store, and then doing some yard work. I saw the anxious ego start thinking, "Why isn't he choosing to use this precious time to work on our chapter? If we worked all day today, maybe we could be finished by tonight. Why is he choosing now to get a haircut and do the yard work? Doesn't he realize our deadline is approaching; we need every spare minute we have. No, I don't want him to spend the day this way. Because of him, we won't finish on time. I must show him, convince him he shouldn't

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Realizing Your Potential

JERRY LYNCH AND AL HUANG

According to the *Tao Te Ching*, people who are accepting will ascend; those who are not will descend. A peaceful, accepting frame of mind enables you to adjust to the existing circumstances with success. Resistance to change or the way things are causes hardness, tension, anxiety and stress, all of which obstruct your potential. Rigid tree branches break in a storm; Chinese bamboo bends softly and bounces back unharmed.

Learning acceptance is not easy for anyone. It is a form of self-realization, a huge leap of faith enabling you to come to terms with the way things are, not the way you think they should be. By their very unpredictable nature, sports and exercise are divine teachers affording you the opportunity to test your levels of frustration when circumstances or events change rapidly without warning. For example, many athletes are well prepared and trained, yet they do not live up

to their billing. A national-class cyclist, competing in the Olympic trials, talked about feeling helpless as she was struggling with an “off-day” during this important event. “How can I accept that?” she asked. To fight the reality is to further the struggle, which she did. Her anger and fury over the helpless situation further hampered her efforts. When you find yourself having an “off-day” in any arena of performance, it is better to accept the situation, relax and ask yourself: “Since I’m having an off-day, what can I do now; what am I able to do if I can’t do it all?” By asking these questions, you take positive action by doing what is possible, and you reduce the stress and anxiety associated with trying to come to terms with the struggle. When things fail to go your way, acceptance and adaptation will help you to function at higher levels and feel better internally during the process.

Many of us also have difficulty accepting injury or

illness. Such setbacks halt your physical efforts instantly. Yet, this is where sports and exercise offer the perfect opportunity for inner growth if you choose to use this downtime for reflection and meditation, a time to examine your training program, to ask sacred questions, such as “Where am I? Where am I going? Could I do things better? Am I happy with what I’m doing?” Here is a situation that truly tests what you are made of, whether or not you are flexible enough to go with the flow.

It’s easy to resist acceptance. You may fear that it is synonymous with resignation, a state of predestination where action is useless. Nothing could be further from the truth. Acceptance is truly a sign that you are in tune with a given situation and, knowing who you really are, take positive steps that will help you to optimize your potential. It often means the difference between success or failure. Acceptance is a definite soulful choice, a deeply spiritual act taking you beyond a state of inertness. Accepting “what is” shows an inner strength, one that requires you to assess the situation thoroughly, ascertain what is required in order to function adequately, adapt and then act accordingly. For example, people who inhabit desert regions are not fatalistic about plant life. Given a dry, hot climate, they don’t plant flowers that need lots of water; they accept the environment and plant succulents. Accept—adapt—act. It is the action that steers you away from helplessness.

As you begin to get physically fit and well-conditioned, you need to assess the present shape you are in and accept this openly. Once you do accept your physical state, get down to the business of taking appropriate action. Remember that as you take an inventory of what you lack, consider what you

You need to know that, whatever you imagine your limitations in life to be, if you’re willing to trust the enormous capacity for growth that you’ve been given and take the necessary steps to develop yourself, you will redefine and explore the boundaries of your full potential.

have going for you and be sure to emphasize those qualities (physical, mental, spiritual traits) that will help to encourage you and ignite the fires of physical resurgence.

Once you learn the Tao lesson of acceptance in sports and exercise, you are ready to apply it to all of life. The key is to emphasize what you *have* by letting it keep you afloat during the early stages of self-development, rather than focus totally on what you *lack*. You may not be the best speaker or the most knowledgeable teacher at this time, but your innate charisma, charm and caring nature will keep you going until you develop these skills. Notice and nurture what you do have, and you will begin to develop that which you don’t. Basically, you need to have the grace and wisdom to accept the aspects of self that you cannot change and to alter those you can. A true champion in sport, as well as a winner in life, does not have it all. One may only use

what one does have—repeatedly—and use it well.

LIMITLESS LIMITS

Like the Tao, you are a natural process capable of continual growth and blossoming. In Confucian ethics, the unlimited person is one who constantly reassesses his or her state of being and is willing to do what it takes to improve. When you are in tune with the Tao, you possess the power of continual transformation, from being to becoming. According to Lao Tzu, this process of becoming requires you to be aware of your shortcomings and see yourself as a beginner, totally empty and ready to receive. When you think about it, the beginner has limitless possibilities; the expert has none.

Your power and strength in sports and exercise start with the deep humble sense that you are a

beginner with unlimited potential, regardless of how much time you have devoted to your discipline. The concept of being totally empty and willing to learn is a precondition for unlimitedness. In Chinese, we call this empty place “Wu Ji,” that which gives you the ability to face your insecurities and flow into the vast sea of potentiality, profound growth and improvement. With the Tao, we are reminded to travel openly on uncharted paths, remain empty and learn to sustain the beginner’s mind.

Opening up to the unlimited boundaries of his vast potential was the choice of Keith Foreman. As a freshman “walk-on” on the University of Oregon men’s track team, he was told how limited his possibilities were with an elite group of scholarship athletes. Yet Keith saw himself as a beginner with unlimited opportunity to learn, and he took on the challenge of competing with the best. He believed the sky was his only limit. Before he graduated, Keith became only the fifth American runner ever to break the four-minute mile barrier. Having accomplished this in sport, Keith seized the opportunity to grow spiritually and apply his confidence and strength to other endeavors in life. In his 50s, he continues to push the limitless boundaries of his potential, studying for an advanced doctoral degree and continuing to compete as a national-class athlete.

It’s important to understand the difference between two types of limits. There are the “limiting limits,” those that are actual, real obstacles defining the boundaries of your potential. For example, in basketball, your lack of height could be a real limiting factor in playing center for the Chicago Bulls; money will determine what you can or cannot afford to buy; without gas, your car won’t go; humans can’t fly. These are natural limits.

Then there are the “limitless limits,” those that we *think* or *imagine* to be limits, yet, with the right shift in consciousness, rarely become limiting factors. Most limitations fall into this category. It has been said that the average human being uses a mere 15 percent of his or her physical and mental potential. We constantly underestimate our capabilities. We even are surrounded by global limited thinking. Consider this situation: after an in-depth study of

the bumblebee, the world’s best experts in the field of aerodynamics announced that the bee could not fly—it was too heavy, too slow, too small, and limited in numerous other ways. Fortunately, the bee couldn’t read the final report. Unfortunately, we *can* hear and read, which often works to our disadvantage. Yet, when you refuse to listen, but instead you dig down deep and discover potentials through your physical activity that you never knew existed, you attain a level of spiritual growth that enables you to be open and receptive to what life has to offer when you say “yes” to all possibilities.

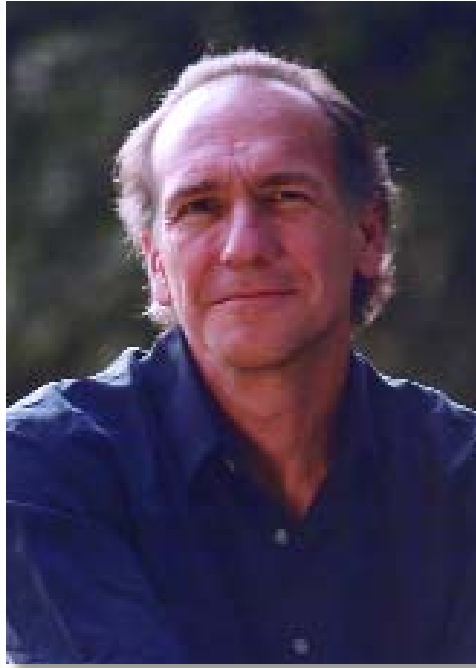
Many people have bought into stories of self-limitations. There are those who say “We can’t ski, we’re too awkward,” yet they see a talented skier with no legs; then they hear about the concert guitarist with no arms and reevaluate their limited thinking about playing music. People who argue for their limitations are limited. You need to know that, whatever you imagine your limitations in life to be, if you’re willing to trust the enormous capacity for growth that you’ve been given and take the necessary steps to develop yourself, you will redefine and explore the boundaries of your full potential. The message of the *Tao Te Ching* is clear: trust the power within and use it.

When faced with what you think are limitations, ask close friends for their input, and watch your progress closely so you continue in the direction that contradicts these limits. Maybe they’re real, maybe not. But at least you will have tried and discovered the truth.

Remember, too, that some limits can be useful, particularly in sports and physical activities. For example, you have a certain capacity when you begin to work out, and it’s good to not strain beyond, in order to avoid injury. The same applies to life: you take advantage of seeing a play or concert because you are aware that it’s here for a limited time. Many signs of caution are limits that could save your life. For example, don’t exceed the weight limitations for takeoff in a plane. It could prove costly. •

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Conscious Healing



AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD MOSS M.D.
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

After a short medical practice, Richard Moss, experienced life-changing realizations that led him to his true calling: the exploration of spiritual awakening and its integration into daily life. His books include “The I That Is We,” “The Black Butterfly,” and “The Second Miracle.” For over twenty years, Richard has worked with groups, helping people throughout the world to transform their lives. He lives in Oakhurst, California with his wife and children.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: Let's begin with a general definition of healing.

RICHARD MOSS: Healing has to do with a sense of meaning. Healing occurs when suffering no longer causes me to feel like a victim, or to contract, but brings me to a new sense of meaning about my life—why I'm alive, what it means to be alive, what it means to be a man or a woman, what I want to share with the world around me, how I want to give myself to life. When a sense of meaning has come about, where before there was just suffering, healing has happened.

That is a definition of healing at the level of how we feel or live. At the level of the physical body, healing is restoration of some function. As an organism, we are constantly repairing damage.

PT: That is true. A lot of healing goes on outside of our awareness.

RM: Thank God. Would you want to be responsible for getting all those platelets to clot or blood vessel walls to start growing into new tissue? It's beyond our comprehension at a mental level.

PT: How does meaning come out of suffering?

RM: New meaning emerges automatically from meeting the suffering—as long as you are not crushed by it—that's the healing process. We go along in a particular state, feeling more or less well and suddenly our world is broken. It can be illness, a change in circumstances, many things. But as we meet the suffering, really enter the dynamic confusion that our lives have become, gradually we are transformed in that ordeal. I know a man, a bachelor in his fifties with a demanding career, and recently his son was sent to

When you finally stop running away from some of the deeper feelings, then tremendous repressed energy is freed up, your very cells are transformed, your whole sense of yourself changes, and there is less fear and a lot more joy. All kinds of illness will suddenly just disappear.

prison. Then he realized that his daughter-in-law was on drugs and his two grandchildren were being abused and neglected. So he gained custody, and almost overnight he had to sell his house which he loved, rent a larger one, and take full-time care of two very troubled, damaged children, ages nine and eleven. He's confused, exhausted, feels helpless to meet the children's anger and terror and grief. He never has a free moment. It is what many single mothers have had to face. You can see the suffering in his face. But you can also feel something else. His life was very self-centered and superficial, and he tended to dissipate himself in dating and drinking. He might have said he was happier then, but anyone could see his life was pretty empty. Now it is anything but empty. Our relationship is a business one; he is not one of my students. But whenever I see him, I tell him how much I respect him, how much I can feel that this commitment, as difficult as it is, is bringing out the best in him, and it is true. He can't see it, or he can't admit to seeing that yet. But he is so much more honest, so much more open. He is being healed in this ordeal. It would be easy if it were just physical pain for which he could take a pill. One of the great gifts of modern medicine is the control of severe pain with medications like morphine, but diminishing suffering in this way, as crucial as it is, is not healing.

PT: So medicine can help with pain, but it doesn't help with suffering?

RM: Suffering is a psychic process, and that requires a different intervention. It requires a more intimate relationship. I can help you with your suffering only to the extent that you experience me as an important person whom you relate to, communicate with, and feel listened to by. That is rarely part of medicine today. Medicine is about seeing as many people as possible and providing them with

the medications deemed helpful for their situation. The psychic component of the healing process, which in many situations is the most important component, is not well-addressed by modern medicine. When you walk into a physician's office, you walk into a relationship with a human being, who by a touch, smile or nod of the head can uplift you quite profoundly. Whether or not that happens depends upon what that physician has lived in himself or herself.

PT: What is the importance of relationship in healing?

RM: People who have intimacy and connection live longer, have less pain, and recover faster. Literature shows that attending a support group even once can add as much as eight months to life expectancy in terminal illnesses. This is all about relationship. Relationship is probably the central issue in all healing.

PT: Healing includes our relationship with emotions. Does healing usually include facing fear?

RM: Fear is a break in the relationship to myself, a loss of connection, as if somehow I have been cut off from the core of myself. Fear is, part of time, the loss of the future I imagined, and from people to share it with. Fear is a contraction away from relationship in the present. To heal fear, paradoxically, is not to fight against it, but to enter a relationship with it. For example, we are often most vulnerable to our fears in the middle of the night. When this happened to me, I taught myself to turn toward the fear, rather than getting up to make a cup of tea or reading to escape it. Instead, I lay on my back with my arms out straight from my shoulders and my feet about eighteen inches apart. Then I just breathed into the fear, and let my mind relax away from thoughts about it and how to respond. It takes

When forgiveness starts as an idea, it may seem noble and wise, but it is still a defense against the painful feelings. And forgiveness is not a defense; it is a kind of enlightenment. When something is truly forgiven, there is no longer a trace inside your psyche that hooks you back into the pain and reaction. When that happens, those around you heal, too.

will power to face into fear in this way. But gradually, by staying present in the fear in this way, the energy changes. Often it becomes bliss. When you have had this experience enough times, will power gives way to faith, and the energy releases almost immediately.

PT: *No matter whether the fear is of death, a loss of person, or a loss of functioning?*

RM: There are infinite fears. But at the root of fear is perceived loss of sense of self, the imagined loss of connection to my own basic “I am.” You can’t solve fear by accumulating money. There is no strategy to absolutely protect you from fear except relationship with fear itself. You can evaluate the cause of the fear, and the fear will lessen, but you can’t ultimately defeat fear without having a relationship to something much larger. If you have a relationship to fear, it is because at a deeper, usually pre-conscious level you sense the wholeness of the universe or have faith in something—God—more than the fear that you feel. You may not consciously know you have this faith, yet the encounter with fear helps bring you to faith. When I learned to open to fear in the way I described, it taught me that fear is energy in a particular configuration, and this configuration grows out of who I subconsciously imagined myself to be. The healing act is awareness turning towards the central place in your body and being, where you feel that fear, and meeting it, instead of running or trying to avoid or change the cause. Entering into relationship with fear gradually challenges the sense of who you believe yourself to be. If you are overly identified with your career and believe, “I am a doctor,” anything interrupting that causes fear. If you are an “important person,” anything threatening that self-importance generates fear. For a devoted mother,

an illness that weakens her ability to mother can cause crippling fear and guilt. To relate to fear is to be challenged at every level of personal identity until we can let go to something more fundamental, which is hard to talk about because it is a profound self-realization. It’s like God revealing Himself to Moses through the burning bush. When Moses asked, “How will I say who you are?” the bush responded, “Tell them that I Am.” “I Am” is the core—that’s who we really are.

Fear brings us to an encounter with everything that is not my “I am.” Everything I think or imagine I am, and everything the culture has told me I am, will be threatened by fear until we come into a relationship with something that is truly my “I am.” If you have even moments of such a relationship, faith grows in you and you re-engage life with less fear and more joy. Healing is to return to a sense that is not dominated by fear and in which there is a feeling of joy. From that point of view, most people aren’t healed, even if they aren’t sick. Joy is a rare commodity. Most people who think they aren’t afraid aren’t afraid because they live inside narrow boundaries. Those boundaries are threatened by the diagnosis of cancer or AIDS, or the sudden illness of a spouse or a child, which changes everything you imagined your life would be about.

PT: *Let’s move to the relationship of healing and forgiveness.*

RM: Healing and forgiveness work together because when you forgive yourself or someone else, you end the pattern of energy that binds you to the injured self. Then the wound can heal, and you stop losing energy. Forgiveness is about having more energy because when there is forgiveness, someone’s behavior or a painful memory no longer has the power to cause your awareness to collapse into

it. For example, say that your father drank too much or was withdrawn and unavailable during your childhood, and this has caused you to feel angry, abandoned and unloved. Forgiveness exists when your heart no longer closes and your energy doesn't contract when you are around him. You have "given away in advance" or fore-given the emotional reaction that usually leads you into anger, or a victim stance. It is released before it has even become a reaction. This freedom is not detachment or indifference; it's not immunity to feelings. You may feel the feelings, they can still hurt, but it passes through you because you're no longer identified with your wounded persona. This takes real self-knowledge; you have to work on understanding your own reactions. Forgiveness means you have become grounded in a deeper recognition of who you really are. And the moment the reaction ends in you, something changes in the other person, whether it's your father, mother, spouse—these are the people who can hurt you the most, and who you can hurt the most—but as you forgive, they begin to have more freedom too. So there is more energy, more relationship to your true self, and then healing begins at every level. When I forgive someone close to me, my whole pattern of who I am is radically changed.

PT: We may begin forgiveness with an idea, but it is something much more encompassing?

RM: The first step toward forgiveness begins by recognizing that you are much larger than just your wounded persona, that you have the power to stop giving yourself away to emotional contraction—the sinking or exploding feeling, the tightening in the body, collapsing into anger or worthlessness. When you contract, and then react like this, you are already the victim. But when you begin to take conscious responsibility for your own suffering instead of contracting and reacting—you meet this suffering consciously, instead of blaming anyone else—and this conscious suffering gradually leads you to disengage from the whole structure of victim and woundedness. You can try to make yourself forgive through an act of will. But when forgiveness starts as an idea, it may seem noble and wise, but it is still a defense against the painful feelings. And forgiveness is not a defense; it is a kind of enlightenment. When something is truly forgiven, there is no

longer a trace inside your psyche that hooks you back into the pain and reaction. When that happens, those around you heal, too. In all relationships, but especially strong in families, energetic patterns link us to one another. When a pattern no longer has any place inside me, it ceases to have energy in others, and they begin to change.

PT: Which is one of the ways that love heals. Can we literally love someone else into health?

RM: Love always heals, because love is relationship, real relationship, not an imagined one. When we love, we are participating with the spirit that binds all of existence. It is that spirit being revealed to us and in us when we feel love. To learn to love consciously and maturely is life's greatest opportunity. When we love another, we are including the other in our faith in life; we are holding the other in our relationship to God. The loved one becomes the mirror in which we begin to see our real capacity for trust and forgiveness, our real capacity to meet and be transformed by difficult feelings. Because if we can't find some way to meet these feelings, sooner or later we will close our hearts and kill love in us. Love is the teacher, not some tool to be used to fulfill our ego's agenda. So how can this love that is being revealed to you through the deepest process of obligation and self-surrender, be something that you imagine you can use to heal someone else? You don't turn on love like a water from a spigot because someone is sick and you want to make them well. Love is not a weapon against the parts of life we fear; it is not to be wielded as a strategy for control and happiness. If you visit someone you love hoping to heal her with your love, she will probably close off from you, and you will feel very exhausted afterwards. Your intention to use love is actually avoidance of where both of you really are, and maybe that more truly is grief and helplessness. It is far more loving to stay present in a state of unknowing, not protecting yourself from the sense of powerlessness. Then, your hearts will meet. You won't need to say a word, but you will touch deeply, and you may even feel the room full of presence. I have had this experience many times, and sometimes this presence is healing in the physical sense. But every time, whomever I have been with has had much less pain and fear after we've shared such a

space. I didn't do anything; I didn't try to love them into health. I am simply present. And while that sounds simple, and it is, it is also difficult; the feelings are very difficult to be with. But as love grows in us, it teaches us how to remain open in such feelings. This is such a blessing.

PT: *How powerful is hope as a healing agent?*

RM: At first, hope is crucial; it keeps us from drowning when life brings us to a level of suffering that exceeds our faith. Sooner or later, everyone is tested in this way. Whatever we think we have mastered, whatever strength or faith we imagine we have, when presented with real suffering—illness, the loss of a loved one—the faith which seemed like a strong rope suddenly feels like a fraying thread. Hope is our life jacket, but hope itself is not healing. The agency of healing is the deeper relationship we must find to ourselves and to something more than ourselves in the midst of our suffering. It is the meaning that we bring to our lives in the midst of our suffering that is the real healing. And after the initial support, hope can become an obstacle, a form of denial, even an expression of our lack of faith. I am reminded of T.S. Eliot's poem. He says, "I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope. For hope would be hope for the wrong thing. Wait without love, for love would be love of the wrong thing. There is yet faith, but the faith and the love and hope are all in the waiting. Wait without thought for you are not ready for thought. So the darkness shall be the light and the stillness the dancing." This beautiful poem talks about how, at a higher stage of spiritual development, love and hope and thought are fundamental obstacles. That's not true at an earlier stage. If you throw a child who doesn't know how to swim into a turbulent stream, he will likely drown. If you tie a strong rope to him and give him a life jacket before you put him in the stream, he will have hope and probably will survive. At a later stage of life, if someone is thrown into that turbulent mountain stream, she might completely relax and by not fighting, pass through the rapids, come into calm water, and step out. This ability to not struggle or hope, this surrender to what is, this is faith. This comes from a committed spiritual practice and from a life lived deeply.

PT: *How important is spiritual practice in*

healing?

RM: That depends on what you mean by spiritual practice. For me, spiritual practice is the ultimate expression of sanity. Can there be healing without sanity? And sanity is relationship. Spiritual practice brings us into relationship with ourselves, and this cannot help but bring us closer to each other. And this growing intimacy is aliveness, is energy, is spirit. Energy is trapped in ignorance, in repetitive patterns of self-protection. This unconscious repression of our aliveness weakens us physically and psychologically. It makes us see our world as though it were outside and other. That's when the "enemy" is born and so much pain, so much destructiveness and suffering. Spiritual traditions give us finely honed tools and the invaluable understanding of those great ones who have come before us. But authentic spiritual practice is also always original. You live originally, and you are healthy regardless of the condition of your body.

PT: *When is death a time of healing?*

RM: Death is healing in many ways. For someone in a coma, on life support with no hope of coming back, death would be a profound healing for his family. When someone has suffered, death comes as a gift. But I think of death in a larger sense. Death is healing for human consciousness because death is the final humiliation for our egos. In the Hindu scripture, the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna, the hero of the spiritual journey, must penetrate into the deep ignorance of mankind in order to understand himself and save his own life. Finally he answers, "Everywhere we are surrounded by death, but no one believes he will die." Or even if we believe we will die, it is only a concept; we do not act that way, we do not live with reverence for the miracle of life. Our egos find ways around death with belief systems like reincarnation and life after death. These beliefs are a kind of life jacket so that we don't really allow death to work its miracle in our souls.

Death places in front of the human ego an insurmountable barrier, one ultimate humiliation. The ego thinks that it can co-opt the wisdom and genius of God and this universe, that it can control everything and solve every problem. That we may try to understand the universe is our gift to the universe. That we believe that we can bend everything to our

will is our curse, for which death is a mighty medicine. Often, I have felt the fear of death, but as I grow older, I give thanks for death. I give thanks for something I can look toward and have no power to control, reverse or avoid. This brings me to profound humility and helplessness and unknowing. If every day, every human being would face death and remember death, we would make better, more heartfelt choices.

PT: *Is an ongoing awareness of death a gift to our consciousness?*

RM: Yes, a great gift. But we should not carry it to the point of morbidity; that's just another self-involvement game. Sometimes our egos need humiliation, not something to obsess over. We need something that stops our obsessive thinking and controlling, something that puts all our frantic activity into perspective, something that brings us to self-surrender and awe. Life leads us to this in many ways: when we witness a birth, a luminous sunset, a starry night, but also in illness, divorce, the loss of a job. Bette Davis made the point perfectly when she said, "Aging isn't for wimps." We need inspiration and humiliation to become humble. When will we stop believing we can exploit all the earth's resources? How weakly the United States responded to the global warming conference! There is a naivete and foolishness in human beings for which death is good medicine. Our egos can and have rationalized away death with all kinds of nonsense belief systems about the afterlife that ultimately weaken us. But death is stubborn. Thank God for that.

PT: *What is the relationship of consciousness to healing?*

RM: In an individual, less consciousness means less capacity for relationship, for feeling, for sympathy, and less likelihood of being hurt. The less conscious you are, the less you suffer because there is less consciousness, more is repressed, more remains unconscious. As we grow in consciousness, there is, at first, greater suffering. For example, we don't suffer childhood wounds until we start to remember them. This is the return to awareness of what has been repressed and which must now be suffered consciously in order for it to be healed.

PT: *What do you mean by conscious suffering?*

RM: It is feeling something fully. You would be surprised at how rarely people really let themselves fully feel anything. We try to disguise the feeling, or rationalize it, name it, think about it, or blame someone for it. But this is because we still aren't able to consciously allow the full feeling. It's like in the movie *The Full Monty*, the men didn't want to expose themselves; they didn't want to feel the embarrassment. But, of course, such allowing is a kind of suffering. And when you finally stop running away from some of the deeper feelings, then tremendous repressed energy is freed up, your very cells are transformed, your whole sense of yourself changes, and there is less fear and a lot more joy. All kinds of illness will suddenly just disappear.

PT: *But we don't have to suffer to become conscious or for healing to take place?*

RM: No and yes. I'm not saying we require suffering to become conscious, but more that where there is suffering, consciousness is incomplete, understanding is incomplete. The reality of life is that when there is suffering, we start to ask questions, we reexamine our behavior, our choices. No one starts smoking cigarettes because they are conscious. They start smoking to conform to a certain look, an idea of who they are. They haven't a clue who they really are. It's image and rebellion. Smoking is a ritual confession of unconsciousness and until it leads to suffering, smokers don't examine their behavior. The same for alcohol and drug abuse. No one becomes addicted consciously. Being conscious implies much deeper understanding of the origins and motives of one's choices. People become alcoholics or drug addicts precisely because they are unconscious about how to really engage their difficult feelings.

I am not blaming them. Where in our society are we seriously teaching people not to be afraid of feeling? This should begin in kindergarten. Emotional awareness and mastery should be the first things emphasized in grade school and high school. Math, science, even language skills are too powerful to hand over to emotionally unconscious people. Where have we as a society stood up to acknowledge the suffering our cultural values inflict on so many people? We create so many angry and disempowered people who turn to destructive behavior.

Everywhere I go, even the well-off are universally bemoaning the lack of time, the sense of endless pressure. But the reason for this begins in every one of us the moment we turn away from a conscious relationship to difficult feelings. Every one of us is avoiding certain deep feelings of emptiness, worthlessness, the fear of nonexistence that have their root in early ego development. They are not real in any ultimate sense; they are artifacts of the nature of the ego's perception of separateness. Most of the time we are unaware of these feelings until we awake anxious in the middle of the night, or feel threatened by divorce, or illness and death. And then BAM! We're trembling in dread. These underlying fears haunt us until we have made a conscious effort to face them squarely. This is what I write about in my book *The Second Miracle*. Too much of so-called conscious life is nothing more than unconsciously compensating for these fears, especially the disease of consumerism. We are trying to fill a hole that cannot be filled, certainly not in this way.

If we are going to talk about consciousness and healing, shouldn't we go to the root of it? None of this can be healed until whatever is being avoided is felt nakedly and completely. This is true for each person in his own journey, and it is true for all of us as a society if we are to heal ourselves. And sorry to break the New Age bubble of love and light, but there is an element of this healing process that is suffering. But it is conscious suffering. It is heroic, redemptive suffering. Now you may be feeling terrible, but you are not the victim; you have become the disciple of your experience. As a disciple you are learning and growing, not merely reacting. And the terrible suffering is relatively brief when you meet it squarely. You are on a conscious path, and if you live it with real honesty and courage, the transformation and healing is tremendous.

PT: How do you define a true healer?

RM: A true healer is someone through whom the innermost self, God, or Mystery can appear to you in a form in which you can receive it. Every person who comes to a true healer finds a way for his or her faith to grow in the healing presence of that person.

PT: What are you currently exploring about healing?

RM: You mean in my personal life or in my teaching work, the edge?

PT: Yes, what are the edges you are exploring?

RM: Well, it's really the same thing. It's always the same thing: learning to love more fully, to live with an open heart. For my wife and myself and our family, to love one another is our growing edge—the ability to live with and love one person and learn about ourselves in the beauty and friction of that commitment. And as a teacher, it is also about relationship. Twenty years ago, I believed that if you brought people to a higher energy where they experienced a higher consciousness, that was all that was needed. Healing, to the extent that it was possible for a particular person, would happen automatically, and it does. And I thought they would automatically go out and live new lives, with the new understanding. And some did. But most people don't have understanding. That is, most people don't actually have within themselves the very basis for a relationship to life that is ever renewing, ever self-inquiring in a healthy way. They have it, but it's more or less dormant. Most people—the ones that are conscious seekers—are trying to solve problems, they are trying to heal themselves, they want to be safe, immune from pain and fear. It's a natural reflex, but that is not what it means to live a real life. Not for me. How do you teach understanding, or insight? Not understanding something, not having specific insights, but the living relationship that is understanding and insight? That is the real healing. That is the real gift. I want to help ignite that gift. And this can't be taught simply. It has to be communicated, really transmitted, and that requires intimate, open relationship. That is the real challenge of my life as a teacher. To offer my life and invite that relationship in the healthiest way possible for me and the people who are attracted to me.

PT: Is there anything you want to add?

RM: I ask that each of us stop for one minute, as often as possible in our lives, and in prayer, embrace the intelligence that is bringing us forth in the midst of what often looks like a great deal of human mistake. I invite people to be, for a minute each day, a living prayer that honors the wholeness that is, always has been, and always will be. •



UNDERSTANDING THE DYING PROCESS

BARBARA HARRIS WHITFIELD

Denial can be harmful when there is a strong possibility that dying is inevitable. If the dying person or her loved ones refuse to accept the most likely outcome, they are missing their last opportunity in this lifetime to share this important final passage.

I was asked to visit a 62-year-old man who was in the hospital with throat cancer. He told me in a whisper that he was finishing another round of chemotherapy and needed a few more days of inpatient care before he could go home. He said he had not been able to hold food down for weeks at a time and was sometimes being fed through a tube or intravenously.

"I know I'm too young to die," he said so softly that I had to lean in close to his face to hear. "My family doesn't believe I'm dying. They won't listen to me.

I tell them I'm dying, and they keep yelling at me, 'You have to fight, Daddy, fight!'"

"How does that make you feel?" I asked.

"I feel like no one hears me," he answered. "I think the cancer is spreading. I can't talk to anyone. No one hears me."

"I hear you, and I'll talk to your family when you want me to." I smiled and made sure we had eye contact. I told him I would return the next day.

I visited every day until he was discharged at the end of the week. Our conversations were always the same, except when his family was there. When they were, he said little. They would ask me to convince their father to fight and regain his strength.

I visited him at home once. My sense was that this man was in prison. He was being kept. He had no voice. He sat in his pajamas and watched the scene of

wife and daughters scurrying around—continuously busy with the duties of caring for a catastrophically ill loved one.

The last time I saw him, I witnessed his death. In the hospital, hooked up to tubes, he lay in the bed and looked up at me. “I’m going to die now,” he mouthed the words more than he whispered them.

“Your family is in the waiting room. What shall I tell them?” I asked.

“Don’t tell them anything. I need to die, and they won’t let me.” He strained so I could hear his last words to me. “I need to die now.”

I sat down quietly next to his bed. I held his hand for a few seconds or minutes, and then I realized that I had to let it go. He needed to leave. Even my touch was keeping him here. His eyes were closed, and I watched the last bit of life leave his face. It was such a peaceful and humble transition.

I checked in at the nurses’ station, and they made the necessary call to a resident who came and confirmed he had died. Then I went into the waiting room and told his family. His daughters and wife started to howl. I closed the door. The four women were screaming about their needs, about their loss. I heard anger over his 40-some-year habit of smoking. I heard anger with the doctors and the way they handled his case. I heard anger with the hospital. I waited until the four of them settled down a little and offered my condolences over their loss. I told them I would visit if they wanted me to, and I gave them my card.

I helped them to the door of the hospital, and I never heard from them again.

DENIAL IN A NURSING HOME

I was called to a nursing home to help an 85-year-old woman die. She had been there for three years because of senility and deterioration. Her seven children, ranging in age from 51 to 65, sat or stood around her bed. Her husband, still robust for 88, sat sadly in a chair in the corner.

“My wife has been on her deathbed for over a week now,” he told me. “Why did they send for you? There’s nothing anyone can do for her. She needs to die.”

“May I sit here with you for a little while?” I

asked him.

“Yeah,” he answered. And he told one of his sons to get me a chair.

I sat with the family for an hour. Each one of the old woman’s breaths was loud and labored. Finally, there was a period of about five seconds when she didn’t breathe. The daughter who was holding her mother’s hand screamed and was then grabbed and pulled back by another sobbing daughter standing behind her. The momentum of this pulled the old woman forward, and she gasped and started to breathe again. I quietly got up and went over to the bed and took the first daughter’s hands away from her mother. I held this daughter’s hand and rubbed her shoulder.

“We need to let her go now,” I said as I looked into the grieving woman’s face. “No, I want my mother,” she replied and started to cry.

“I know you do. But your mother needs to go now.” I was praying silently while I was talking to her. Two other women in the room began to cry along with her. Their father got up, came over, and put his arms around the two of them.

“She’s right. It’s time to let Mama go. I’ll be with her again soon, and someday so will you.”

The old woman gasped and stopped breathing. A few seconds later, she started to breathe again, and then stopped one more time. I think I was in the room with them for two hours, maybe a little longer, when her breathing finally stopped for the last time. No one pulled on her. No one screamed for her to come back. Her husband stood by her side and said quietly, “I love you. I’ll be coming along soon.”

By holding back her daughters, her husband and I helped this woman to release. If everyone would have continued calling to her, grabbing her hand or pulling her forward, her dying would have continued much longer. She had to die, regardless of how much her loved ones wanted her to stay.

Sometimes the only thing we can do to assist someone in the dying process is to let go and help the others around us to stand back and let go, too. •

*From “Final Passage,” by Barbara Harris Whitfield.
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Our Psyche and Synchronicity

DAVID RICH O

Our ego is the center of our conscious rational life. It has our name and body. It is functional and healthy when it helps us fulfill our goals in life: happiness within ourselves, effectiveness in our tasks, and fulfilling relationships. The ego becomes dysfunctional and neurotic when it distracts us from our goals or sabotages them. Behind every neurosis is a fear that has never been addressed or resolved. "Neurotic" means being caught in useless repetition of archaic ways of protecting ourselves against what no longer truly threatens us. This is why Jung defines neurosis as "a defeat by the unreal." We know we are integrating ourselves effectively and are on a valid spiritual path when we simultaneously remain functional and balanced in daily life.

TS/BRUCE AYRES

The Self is a spiritual source rather than a psychological resource. Jung called the Self "the God archetype" within. It includes the ego and is the center and circumference of the entire psyche. It is a field of inner gravity that is sometimes unconscious and sometimes conscious. Jung theorized that our unconscious is both personal, containing the family album of our own memories, and cosmic, containing the mythic memories of humankind. This collective unconscious, he said, "contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual."

Our ego is in us; we are in the Self. Ego is the bearer of our personality. The Self is unlimited by individual personality. It has no name. It is the same

threefold reality in everyone: unconditional love, eternal wisdom, and the power to heal ourselves and others. It is mediated into the world by its incarnation: our body/ego. We might say that *the ego is our capacity for light and the Self is the light*.

Our human enterprise is to form or find an equilibrium, an axis, between ego and Self. We thereby unleash the powers of the Self from the stranglehold of our frightened, limiting ego and let them flow into the world. We were born with more potential than actuality. Our task is to activate our potentials, to make them conscious, i.e., articulated in our lifetime. This is how we let the light of consciousness through. Astronomer Tim Ferris says "Consciousness is like a campfire in the middle of a dark Australia." Spirituality is igniting ourselves so that such a wonderful thing can happen.

Our psychological work is to shape our ego so that it can function well. This brings all our talents into the service of the Self and drafts our every thought, word and deed into showing all the love we can in one lifetime. The neurotic ego contravenes this work by its prejudice that we are separate, in control, and licensed to have all our needs met. Our psychological work is to dismantle our neurotic ego in favor of our functional ego.

Our ego is functional when it is leading us to our goals in life: to live happily, to be productive in our choice of work, and to have satisfying and effective relationships. If I want to go north, my body is functional when I walk in a northerly direction. If I walk south to go north, something has become dysfunctional, i.e., neurotic. The functional ego is the best vehicle for the emergence of the Self.

St. John of the Cross wrote "Swiftly, with nothing spared, I am being completely dismantled." This is the true fate of the neurotic ego. Nothing less is required for spiritual growth than the total dissolution of the inflated ego. Inflation is the habit of imagining and acting as if the whole purpose of life were one's own aggrandizement. Aggrandizement means bringing attention only to our own needs, demanding to be in control, believing we are entitled to be served by everyone and to have the ordinary conditions of existence repealed or relaxed for us. Intimate relationships provide the

most powerful provocations for the dismantling of the illusions of our controlling and entitled egos!

The neurotic side of the ego is not meant to be destroyed, but paradoxically to be expanded so that it can extend its creative possibilities to all our psyche. It is liberated by being relieved of its arrogance and then opened to its potential for power *for*, rather than power *over* others. This is also our potential for bringing peace into the world and into our relationships. A hero is a person who lives through the pain of this process and is thereby transformed by it. This transformation reveals us to ourselves as singular and as one with all that is: "All the lotus lands and all the Buddhas are revealed in my own being," says the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. The Self is the Buddha nature.

Our psyche is driven by a spontaneous urge toward wholeness and strives to harmonize polarities: conscious and unconscious, ego and Self. It is up to us to animate this process with tangible actions or to let it slumber. Our lively affirmations might be, "I feel a homing instinct for wholeness. I do what it takes to break the spell of ego." Joseph Campbell says, "Hell is being stuck in ego." He is referring to the neurotic ego with its compulsive attachment to fear and desire. The first noble truth in Buddhism is that all is suffering. Such suffering in our lives is the best clue we have that we may be clinging (desire) or running (fear). So the first noble truth of Buddhism ("All is suffering") is actually "All is ego!"

Contemplate this image: St. Paul is sitting, arrogant and erect, on his high horse of ego. Now see him under the horse's hoofs, lower than an animal. That is how it feels to be divested of ego; it is that dramatic! Humility is hell for the ego! If hell is being stuck in ego, then becoming unstuck must be as difficult as getting out of the worst hell!

Our functional ego adapts to the external world by socialized behavior and extroversion (mediated by our persona, the appearance we make to others). It adapts to the internal world by introversion (mediated by our shadow, the dark side of us that we hide from others and from ourselves). Our ego becomes more and more functional by disidentifying with any exclusive attachment to our persona, by reclaiming shadow projections, and by recover-

ing our body as a legitimate and useful tool in the adventure of living. The shadow is the part of us that is hidden and unconscious to us. Our negative shadow contains all that we strongly detest in ourselves but cannot see. We tend to see this shadow of ours in others—detesting in them exactly what is disowned in us. Our positive shadow holds our untapped potential. We admire in others what is buried and deactivated in us!

The work is to return to the source through the healthy ego's resources. The source is within. It is the Self beyond the clinging ego, my Buddha nature perfect in essence but imperfectly exhibited in my daily existence. So there is a perfect bee but not a perfect me: I have to work at being who and all that I already am.

The ego is inflated when its main concern is saving face—F.A.C.E. Fear, Attachment, Control and Entitlement. The ego does not know its first name (fear), only its last name (entitlement)! To be caught in the rigidities of the arrogant ego is to live in fear. Transformation is letting love no longer be only a letting in, but also a letting through. This can happen because love was behind the fear all the while, waiting for a chance to come through and then to expand through us to everyone else. We provide the Self that chance when we let go of ego. This is what is meant by saying that spirituality (and ultimately compassion) begins with the dismantling of ego. Wisdom-compassion means that you have finally seen through your habit of self-aggrandizement. Once you see how much of your creative energy you sunk into saving F.A.C.E., you see everyone else doing the same useless thing and compassion happens.

It seems that it is healthy not to care too much about others' opinions of you. To say that others' opinions and reactions to you do not matter does not mean that others do not matter. It is only to say that you have an immovable center of great value and that no one can supplant it, or is needed to enhance it. Freedom from fear and craving protects the soul's core with healthy boundaries. A healthy ego sets these boundaries and maintains them. In this sense, there are no significant relationships. No one can be significant enough to change or stop me. That happens only when I relax my

boundaries and allow it.

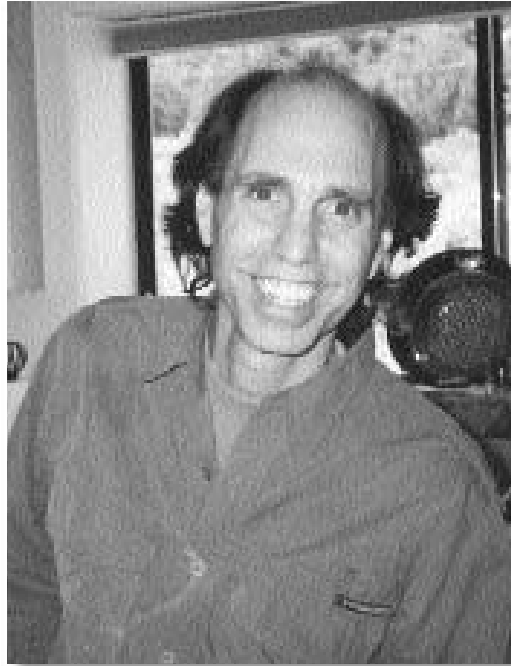
It follows from all this that people and events that challenge and deflate my ego are assisting forces of my soul. Each is a personification of grace. Ego enemies are friends of my Self. The woman who betrayed me, the boss who fired me, the son who turned against me, the friend who called me on my selfishness, the teacher who showed me how much I needed to learn may all have been players in my touching drama of liberation from ego. Each helped me by giving me the opportunity to let go of my arrogant entitlements in favor of humility and vulnerability, the antechambers to the throne room of real love. The fact that just the right people appeared at just the right time in just the right place is stunning synchronicity.

There is something sane and awake in us that is shut off when we are struggling through our dramas and holding our ego position in them. This something sane and awake is the transcendent function of the psyche that always comes up with a healing alternative in the form of an image or path that cuts through our dilemmas, no matter how confounding. It comforts us and shows us our inner resources. It comes to life in the gaps between the struggles. We stop to take time out and sit in what is. This is how Buddha sat. We often overvalue the consensual point of view that confirms our ego habits, and thereby automatically reject these gaps or refuse to see them. Creative moments happen when a habitual pattern is interrupted in favor of something altogether new, a gap in the same old story!

The humbling journey through ego is addressed paradoxically in *The Way of Tao*: "Attain the climax of emptiness." When we assent to emptying ourselves of ego, Taoists say that a "mysterious pass through the apparently impenetrable mountains" has been stumbled upon. It opens in the midst of the jagged rocks. It appears where thoughts, fantasies, fears and desires cease. It is the pause between stimulus and response, where freedom is. It is the pause between our storylines. There we become the fair and alert witnesses, and a serene sanity arises in us. This pause/pass is the soul space between ego and Self. It is the heart of me and the

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HEALING OUR WAY TO FREEDOM



AN INTERVIEW WITH MITCHELL MAY
BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

Mitchell May, Ph.D., spent seven years studying intensively with healer and UCLA parapsychology research staff member Jack Gray, an apprenticeship that began when Gray directly intervened to help save May's life. Following a devastating car crash that medical experts claimed May would never survive unless he had one leg amputated, the 21-year-old patient and the elder healer began a long journey of healing work together that lasted right up to Gray's death.

It was then that May took on the practice as a healer on his own. For the first three years, in a converted garage behind his Los Angeles home, he saw clients from early morning to late night, seven days a week. Although he has since worked with thousands of people who have sought him out from every corner of the world, both over the phone and in person, May conducts very few personal healing sessions these

days. He has resisted taking on a more public life until recently, when he realized that the only way to touch the large number of people wanting to work with him—his office receives about 100 letters per week, on average—was to begin teaching his approach in weekend workshops, so that people could learn to heal themselves.

By his own admission, incorrigible and insatiable in many ways, May, now 47, exudes a fresh, youthful presence laced with candid humor. He speaks slowly and softly, but with unmistakable love and passion for his fellow humans and the endless mysteries of life. Although he sometimes works and moves with agility in mystical realms where things take place that challenge standard concepts of time, space and matter, May continually emphasizes the importance of grounding every experience in practical, day-to-day life.

Absolute honesty with ourselves about “what is,” about where we are, is where the freedom is. Are you operating out of habit only, out of a pattern that you don’t have a relationship with? Or are you operating out of a place that is quite aware, step by step? Taking back responsibility for our lives is a very bold and uncertain step; it’s not for everybody.

More often than not, a radiant ear-to-ear grin bears evidence of his infectious joy. In person, his focus and attention is simultaneously laid back, casual and laser sharp. Not surprisingly, his effect on those who spend time with him is profoundly empowering: he adamantly insists that we all have, within ourselves, everything necessary for healing and flourishing.

An avid environmentalist, May also does consulting work with various large corporations, encouraging responsible business practice—whether it’s using ecologically sound packaging materials, or providing adequate health care benefits for employees.

A 6-tape audio program of May’s work, *Healing, Living, and Being*, will soon be released by Hay House Publishing. For the past 12 years, he has lived in a remote high desert valley near Moab, Utah, where he loves to hike in the red rock canyons.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: *Your own recovery from so many critical injuries sustained in the car accident you were involved in has made medical history, because there is documented evidence that you were able to regenerate bone, nerve, muscle and organ tissue, which is generally unheard of. What can you share with us that might help others to benefit and learn from your experience?*

MAY: Every difficult and painful experience in our lives has enormous potency in it. If there’s a terribly challenging situation you find yourself in, and there is no way around it, then the only way I know is to fully “get with” it. What is often lost for people is the understanding that when there is a great crisis in our lives, almost all of our protective mechanisms, our defenses, our normal reference points,

are stripped away, and that is where the great potential for transformation resides. There’s a rupture in the psyche. What I know about is assisting people to become comfortable in “not knowing,” and letting life reveal to and interact with them.

When I was 21-years-old, I was facing, from a medical point of view, certain death, and a terrible one at that; and if I didn’t die, I would be in such extreme pain that I would wish I had. The only way to be with the situation was to surrender to it. But surrendering, to me, didn’t mean passivity. It meant, “This is what is. Now what?” Instead of spending all my energy wrestling with *why*, I looked at how to be with the enormity of a situation that I had no idea how to handle.

In the weeks just before the accident, way back in 1972, I had been trying to practice Zen meditation, and reading spiritual books, and trying to do the right things, and crying for God. I had reached a place where I said to God, “I don’t know how to know you. I’ll do anything to know you.” That’s a really big piece, “I’ll do anything.” I don’t know if I’m capable of saying that again in my life, because I know the implications now, but I truly meant it.

Events will only happen in our lives to the extent that our conviction and our willingness to be with them, and all that might come with the package, is there. So if you commonly say, “I’ll do anything to be healed, or to be with this man, or with this woman, or to be happy,” maybe the reason most of those things don’t happen is that you don’t really mean it; you just want the results. In an acute situation, that’s understandable. But to live that way will never bring a deep life for you, and that will be sad.

Whether or not my plea created the space for the accident to occur, I don’t know. But I am quite cer-

tain that I needed a large energy to meet the vastness of what I was longing for. My experience is that life will use whatever is available. I had a lot of fire in me, and I was impatient. People try to tell us that we need to learn to be more patient. I say, “nonsense.” Learn to use your impatience, or whatever you have. Don’t try to be other than what you are. Use your anger, your fury, your passion, your devotion. By that I don’t mean using it unconsciously, letting it ramble any way that your upbringing has, perhaps inappropriately, channeled it; but my impatience is why I am walking. If I had more patience, I wouldn’t have my legs. On the other hand, if someone is quiet and patient by nature, and it’s authentic to them, then maybe that’s how their contribution, or their healing, will come.

One time years ago, when my friend and mentor, Jack, found me crying, I begged him to teach me to be less sensitive. “No,” he said, “I’m going to teach you to use that sensitivity.”

PT: *You get many requests from people wanting to apprentice with you, to learn what you have learned, or to study techniques so that they, too, can heal others and be healed themselves. What is your response to them?*

MM: I get letters from a lot of very genuine and sincere people. But for anyone to think that they need me for anything is a mistake. I do teach workshops, but the invitation, as I see it, is to come and learn from me as you might learn from an artist. Don’t think that I have anything so superduper, so special, so unique that you can’t get enough of it by just being with me for a couple of days every once in a while; go and learn from your own life. If you think someone outside of you “has it” then you are on the wrong road with me; you are on the wrong road with yourself.

I’ve never used any techniques in any formal way, only in as much as they might come out of an authentic experience of what the journey was to be with someone. Techniques and tools are really only useful if you are not in touch, and then maybe they just help you to get in touch with that zone in yourself where the spirit of life is free to express itself.

Really, in a manner of speaking, the healing is a

“front.” People are captivated, fascinated, intrigued by healing, and everybody needs it, including spiritual teachers; everybody wipes out. But that just gets people in the door. To me, the real healing is freedom. The healing is using whatever situation needs to be healed in one’s life as the means of freedom.

Most people don’t realize that the voltage, the energy they need for healing is totally right within the trauma, the crisis, the confusion, or the doubt that is bringing them pain. That’s what is so astounding: you don’t have to look for the energy for the healing. It might have to be discovered, but it’s right in your life, it’s not “out there.” Often healing doesn’t mean gathering energy; it means releasing the energy that is there already because that is what is going to restore someone. Or if they don’t feel that they have any strength, I’m looking at finding out where it’s all leaking.

The image of a leaky container fits a lot of what I feel happens with people’s energy. For example, wherever we have unfinished business, by which I mean something that evokes fear, pain, shame, or a whole host of other emotions that we feel we have to close down from, you can be sure there is a big energy leak. Energy follows attention. If we are unwilling to go someplace with our attention, it’s like there’s a boulder in a river, and the water will flow around it. That component of us doesn’t have a chance to be whole.

Unfinished business “bites” us every day of our lives, especially in our intimate relationships. We experience that as not being able to feel sexual energy, or by our relationships turning dull, or by revisiting the same power plays over and over with different partners. Most people think that if they can just find the right lover, they won’t have to experience those dynamics anymore. But life is ruthless, love is ruthless: love wants to be complete, and it will continue to bring something up in our lives so that it can be re-integrated. We might hope that falling in love will solve everything, but when we do get into an intimate relationship, whatever is unfinished, “uncooked,” unresolved in our lives, comes up in spades. Life wants us to be complete so that full circuits of energy can come through us.

PT: *You’ve spoken of freedom as being of*

primary importance to you. How does that enter into your teaching?

MM: For me, in consciousness there is no virtue in what we do; there is just either freedom or not. Absolute honesty with ourselves about “what is,” about where we are, is where the freedom is. Are you operating out of habit only, out of a pattern that you don’t have a relationship with? Or are you operating out of a place that is quite aware, step by step? Taking back responsibility for our lives is a very bold and uncertain step; it’s not for everybody.

If you don’t have a grounding in what I would call a level of vast ethics, by which I mean freedom for everyone and everything being your priority, then you will get into how to manipulate fields and forces to get what you want, or what your tribe wants. And eventually that will just add suffering to almost everyone. You might be immune from it for a while, and your heirs might be immune for a while, but without a larger awareness, I don’t think you can be doing much good for folks, for anyone, in the long run.

So how do you cultivate those principles, those dynamics—the manifestation of healing in a manner that to the best of our possibilities is liberating to all? That is the core of what I try to teach, and why I don’t really teach the “way-out stuff,” the magical-sounding material, except to a more intimate atmosphere of students. I try to teach more practical things that will help someone to develop. It is always about coming back to life itself, and to the mystery, and letting that be your real home.

There’s a development of a certain form of empowerment that can be valuable. It’s about recognizing what your capabilities are, recognizing who you are as an individual identity, and seeing that you can create, make a difference, change things. But if your value system isn’t developed, it will go awry, very quickly and easily.

To bring principles of freedom into the day-to-day world, everything is a choice, every moment. I can’t bypass that; I can’t let something be easier when it’s going to violate the truth. Whatever I do, in business or in my life, I have to make sure it’s not a violation of anyone or anything.

The more we grow in consciousness, the more we know, the more we have a responsibility to life.

In a sense, life can only give you more if you are responsible to what it has already given you. More of what’s real, that is. You could get more money, more fame; more of those would fuel the illusion of self-importance. It isn’t even necessarily a matter of integrating what we have learned thus far and living it, because we are all going to mess up from time to time. It’s being honest, naked with yourself, meeting yourself where you are, and being very real about it, and forgiving yourself.

The way you forgive yourself is by a true conviction, or a vow, to not repeat whatever hurtful or dishonest thing you have done. Or the moment you find that you have done it again, make amends. If you can’t actually make it right with a person, make it right with the universe by nullifying the energy and offering up a “sacrifice” so to speak. Where the sacrifice comes in, is that refraining from a certain reaction or behavior might mean being humiliated or uncomfortable, or even in pain, to keep your vow. The ritual is important only from the point of view of helping the process to be grounded in three-dimensional activity, and helping you keep that focus and attention. The ritual itself will not remedy the situation. It’s your heart, your consciousness and commitment that will transmute the energy, either for you or for that person, or even for another being, at another time and place, who is in a moment making a choice to do something similar, and chooses to not harm another person because that energy comes into consciousness. That’s one way we can all truly be in service, to transmute the energies that we have inappropriately put out there, whether we knew better at the time or not. But when we do know, that’s real responsibility.

It literally is the truth that sets you free, and that’s not metaphysical truth, or esoteric truth, or some philosophical version of truth. It’s truth as it is, day to day.

PT: What would you say about relationship to God, to mystery?

MM: I feel that a person’s relationship to God is a very intimate, private one. What I feel I have to offer is to help people create a container in their lives to develop that love relationship with the mystery—that deep, naked intimacy—so that they can

discover it for themselves. I don't think that it's right to tell others too much about how it all works, or who I think God is, who they really are. If it's spoken because you are friends and you are exploring that together, fine. But otherwise, there can be a disempowerment, a sense that I know and they don't. That kind of relationship creates a dependency, a priesthood, and that's archaic, at least for our culture. It isn't that there can't be keepers of certain knowledge, people who have developed themselves particularly far, but there is so much knowledge to be had in those areas, it is foolish to imagine that somebody has it all.

To me, to try to tell someone how to be with their relationship to God or mystery is like going into someone's bedroom, uninvited. I don't go for that, unless there is a real trust established, a real permission, and the invitation is totally conscious.

PT: How do you feel about the way spirituality is generally presented these days, in the new age forum?

MM: I have some serious concerns. If consciousness doesn't expand simultaneously in all directions, we will inadvertently create harm. So much teaching seems to be geared to acquisition, more pleasure, more success. That establishes a highly narcissistic culture, in which as long as people are getting what they, personally, want, they think everything is fine. Also, the prevailing concept seems to be that we are in a state of health, or wealth, or abundance, because of our state of consciousness, and that if we don't have the idealized version of whatever that is, we are somehow not in the grace of the universe, and we are interfering with the universe showering us with all we need. To me, that is such a deceitful teaching. It leads to more separation, and also to the damaging belief that if someone else doesn't have everything they need, they must not be spiritually ready for it.

I'm concerned that something unhealthy is being bred in our consciousness. Some teachings dishonor humanity, as if our humanness, our vulnerability, even our illness, is wrong. That is not offering a road to freedom. Most of the teachers are in a position to help people awaken, at least to the first level, of how they can be free, and to make

them aware of how they can fall back to sleep. But I feel students are often being lulled into a nice dream, even while they are also being offered a great deal of extraordinary information and many worthwhile options.

Many people who have had expanded awareness and increased energy experiences have not learned to embody that. They have developed a relationship with what some people might call an "energy body," and there is an almost addictive quality, if they can get "out of the body" and out of psychological challenges in their lives, and live in another domain that is compartmentalized.

Our nervous system is designed so that our bodies can be the sensing organism for the universe getting to know itself. Without the physical body being a real participant in our consciousness work, we're missing a big chunk of why we're really here. The major matrix of consciousness of being here on earth has a lot to do with being in the body. It's vital to take care of the body so that it can totally participate in the ecstasy.

PT: The public has been "knocking at your door" for a long time now, but you have remained quite secluded, out of the public eye in recent years. What has prompted you to start saying "Yes," by offering more opportunities for people to study and spend time with you lately?

MM: Well, I feel that it's time. Truthfully, I have a very large desire to give not because I feel I should, or because I'll get rewarded for that. It's what I want, and I am rewarded for it: I get to be in the presence of other people opening up to themselves, to God, to healing. People ask me where my energy comes from. It's from that—the meaningful purpose I engender in my work—that is the real source for me. I'm more interested in my immortality being what I did in the world, rather than living forever. I want my actions to have been truly real. I want to jam in as much as I can, and hope that somewhere, sometime, it makes a difference, and I don't need it to be recognized that it was Mitchell May. I hope I'll be surprised by where I am or am not, in forty years, because I am so absolutely surprised at where my life is now. •



In the Silence of the Heart

M O T H E R T E R E S A

In the silence of the heart, God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.

There is a very holy priest, who is also one of the best theologians in India right now. I know him very well, and I said to him, "Father, you talk all day about God. How close you must be to God!" And you know what he said to me? He said, "I may be talking much about God, but I may be talking very little to God." And then he explained, "I may be rattling off so many words and may be saying many good things, but deep down I do not have the time to listen. Because in the silence of the heart, God speaks."

We cannot put ourselves directly in the presence of God if we do not practice internal and external silence.

In silence we will find new energy and true unity. Silence gives us a new outlook on everything.

The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us. In that silence, He will listen to us; there He will speak to our soul, and

there we will hear His voice.

Listen in silence because if your heart is full of other things, you cannot hear the voice of God. But when you have listened to the voice of God in the stillness of your heart, then your heart is filled with God.

The contemplatives and ascetics of all ages and religions have sought God in the silence and solitude of the desert, forest and mountains. Jesus Himself spent forty days in the desert and the mountains, communing for long hours with the Father in the silence of the night.

We too are called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with God, together as a community, as well as personally. To be alone with Him—not with our books, thoughts and memories, but completely stripped of everything—to dwell lovingly in His presence, silent, empty, expectant and motionless. We cannot find God in noise or agitation.

In nature, we find silence—the trees, flowers and grass grow in silence. The stars, the moon and the sun move in silence.

Silence of the heart is necessary so you can hear

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 79



Conscious Self-Talk

BEVERLY POTTER

You live with an ever-present companion—you! You spend more time with yourself than with anyone else. In fact, you spend all your time with yourself. This internal companion talks to you continuously, virtually nonstop—even when you're sleeping! As a consequence, you have more influence over yourself and more ability to create your future than anyone else. This internal companion is you talking to you, inside your mind. You are the creator of your internal environment. You guide yourself, criticize yourself, give to or withhold from yourself, belittle or support yourself. The internal you feels like a distinctly different person speaking to you, but it is really you inside, talking to you. How you react to a worrisome situation is largely deter-

mined by what you tell yourself about it. Through this internal dialogue, you make decisions, set goals, feel happy or sad, relaxed or anxious, hopeful or lost.

Worrywarts talk to themselves in ways that leave them feeling anxious, afraid and inadequate. They talk to themselves in ways that magnify trivial mistakes, making a big fuss needlessly over picayune problems. Worrywarts have selective vision, they focus on FUD—Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt—in virtually every situation, keeping themselves in a constant state of anxiety and dread. Their “fuddy” self-talk creates a psychological environment that is toxic and taxing.

Smart worriers actively soothe themselves when they feel anxious, depressed or annoyed. This enables

TS/BARBARA MAURER

Learning the language of self-support takes time, practice and dedication. Self-nurturing is not that hard, really. The key is to imagine how a good friend would talk to you, and then talk to yourself that way.

them to bounce back quickly from disappointments and setbacks. Their self-talk creates a psychological environment that is supportive and hopeful.

The way that you talk to yourself traps you in worrywarting. To break out, you must stop talking to yourself in ways that make you feel anxious, small and helpless, and start being supportive and encouraging in your self-talk. Psychologists call self-talk that is soothing and brings you back to balance “compassionate self-talk” and “the language of self-support.”

Talking to yourself compassionately can be learned. Like learning any new language, learning the language of self-support takes time, practice and dedication. Self-nurturing is not that hard, really. The key is to imagine how a good friend would talk to you, and then talk to yourself that way. The hard part is breaking “fuddy” self-talk habits and actually talking to yourself in a compassionate and self-supportive way.

IMAGINE WHAT A FRIEND WOULD SAY

Think of a worry you’ve been dwelling on lately. For this practice, pick an easy worry, not something that is terribly distressing, just something that has been mildly nagging. For a few moments, listen to how you talk to yourself about this worry. Concentrate on what you say about the worrisome situation and how you say it. Notice the exact words you use. Write the worry out in your journal just the way you tell it to yourself. Label this “fuddy-talk.”

Imagine telling this worry to a dear friend. What would that friend say to be supportive and encouraging? What would your friend say to soothe you and bring you back to balance? Pay attention to the words you imagine your friend would use, and how he or she would say them. Write down what your friend would say in your journal. Label this “friendly-talk.”

How does the way you imagine a friend would talk to you about the worry compare with how you actually talk to yourself about the worry? If you are like most worrywarts, you have a double standard—one for friends and one for yourself. The way you talked to yourself was probably harsh, judgmental and critical. You probably focused on the dire aspects of the worrisome situation and questioned your ability to handle it. How did you talk to yourself when you imagined you were a friend talking to you about the worrisome situation? You were probably comforting and supportive when talking to yourself the way a friend would. You probably soothed yourself by telling yourself that things are not as bad as you make them out to be and pointing out how you have the ability to meet this challenge.

SWITCH TO FRIENDLY SELF-TALK

Try this. Return to the worry you used in the earlier exercise and think about it as you normally do. When you hear the fuddy self-talk say, “STOP!” very loudly inside your head and imagine seeing a stop sign in your mind. Then *immediately switch* to friendly self-talk and say the supportive statement you wrote in your journal.

Expect fuddy-talk to sneak back in. Don’t berate yourself for slipping. Instead when it does, yell “Stop!” imagine the stop sign again, and immediately switch to friendly-talk again. The fuddy-talk will come back again and again. That’s the way the mind works. Each time it does, yell “Stop!” silently to yourself, imagine the stop sign, and pull yourself back to friendly-talk.

THE MIND IS LIKE A WILD ELEPHANT

The Seeker and Shaman Woman were reviewing the events of the day. “I know that worrying makes my life hell, Shaman Woman,” said the Seeker. “But why can I

not control my mind?"

"Your mind is like a wild elephant that you must master," said the Shaman as she handed the Seeker his tea. "When you tether the elephant, it flaps its ears, slaps its tail, and tries to run away."

"That's just what my mind does. It runs wild whenever I try to control it," the Seeker said excitedly. "What should I do when it runs away, Shaman Woman?"

"Don't scold the elephant for running," answered the Shaman. "Simply grab the chain and pull it back. Again and again the elephant will run away—and again and again you must pull it back. Eventually, the elephant will be tamed when it learns that you are the master."

"Then will my wild mind obey me?" the Seeker asked.

"Then you will have great power," the Shaman replied, "because, once tamed, both elephants and minds will work for you."

It takes a long time to master your wild mind, especially if it is used to running on, out of control. Don't get angry at yourself for running back to the worry. Be patient with your wild mind as you firmly pull your attention back to friendly-talk.

BE SUPPORTIVE AND ENCOURAGING

Worrywarts fuss over what's wrong and what's missing. There is always something to worry about because you can always find fault with something, no matter how good it is. Constant criticism is demotivating and beats you down. Sadly, this is precisely what worrywarts do to themselves with their fuddy self-talk; they punish and hurt themselves.

A supportive friend focuses on the positive and what's working. A friend builds you up by pointing out progress and what you've done right. This fosters optimism and positive feelings. Talk to yourself the way a friend would. Use friendly self-talk to give yourself credit for steps you have taken to become a smart worrier. Avoid judging your progress or the degree of your efforts—that's fuddy self-talk. Instead, praise your efforts and improvement, even when they are small. Give yourself credit and encourage yourself with friendly self-talk. Develop a habit of actively challenging worrisome thoughts and assume a critical stance

toward their assumptions in a friendly way. Remind yourself that you are a valuable and lovable person even if you don't do everything perfectly.

PRACTICE FRIENDLY SELF-TALK

There will always be difficulties, potential for accidents, and risk of failure. How you think about life's perils is really the change point. *You can learn another way to think*—another way of talking to yourself. The way to begin this process of transforming yourself into a smart worrier is by catching when you talk to yourself in a fuddy way and countering those negative, irrational and illogical views with friendly-talk.

YOU CAN LEARN TO TALK MORE FRIENDLY TO YOURSELF

You can break free of worrywarting and learn to worry smart. You are not sick, and there is nothing to get over. It's just a matter of learning another way to talk to yourself. Worrywarting is a bad habit—one that took years to learn. Change will not take place spontaneously. It will take time and effort to learn to talk in a friendly way to yourself. Don't be so demanding and hard on yourself. Just remember: talk to yourself the way a supportive friend would.

Be patient with yourself because it takes many weeks, months, even years to refute your fuddy self-talk. Over many years, you've evolved a personal mythology that governs your perceptions, your feelings and your actions. But it is a mythology—a belief system. The way you talk to yourself is a kind of ongoing self-indoctrination. Replacing the fuddy self-talk with friendly self-talk feels uncomfortable at first—just the way any new behavior does when you're breaking an entrenched habit. The irony is that most of the time the friendly self-talk is far more accurate than is the worry. Yet, you've listened to the fuddy self-talk so long that it seems true because it is so familiar. But fuddy thinking and worrywarting are self-limiting mental habits—habits you can change. •

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Book Reviews



BARBARA NEIGHBORS DEAL

Balancing Heaven and Earth, A Memoir by Robert A. Johnson with Jerry M. Ruhl. HarperSanFrancisco, 1998. 307 pages. Hardbound.

As co-author Jerry Ruhl says in the Preface, "This book is about the evolution of consciousness as told through one remarkable life." Ruhl deserves much of the credit for this equally remarkable book; Johnson felt his writing days were over (after producing such long-term best sellers as *He: Understanding Masculine Psychology*, *She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, and eight other Jungian classics. Ruhl constructed this memoir from conversations with Johnson, journals and lectures.

The overarching theme of this book is what Johnson calls "slender threads." In classical Jungian thought, this concept is called synchronicity (the apparent synchronization of events that appear to have no causal relationship in common.) Johnson puts it like this, "It is an audacious notion to put forth in this age of science and willful determination that one's existence is somehow inspired, guided, and even managed by unseen forces outside our control. Whether called fate, destiny, or the hand of God, slender threads are at work bringing coherence and continuity to our lives. Over time they weave a remarkable tapestry. What are these slender threads? Being in a particular place at just the right time, meeting someone who steers you in an unforeseen direction, the unexpected appearance of work or money or inspiration just when they are most needed. These

are the mysterious forces that guide us and shape who we are. They are the patterns that give meaning to our experiences."

Johnson's story begins with a tragedy: at age 11 his right leg was crushed against a brick wall by an out-of-control car. While almost bleeding to death in the hospital, he had a near-death experience that became the touchstone for his life. "...suddenly I was in a glorious world. It was pure light, gold, radiant, luminous, ecstatically happy, perfectly beautiful, purely tranquil, joy beyond bound... It was all that any mystic ever promised of heaven, and I knew then that I was in possession of the greatest treasure known to humankind." Medical science brought him back, but as ecstatic as that experience was, it also became the source of a lifelong sense of not belonging here, of aching for that Golden World. "No one can look upon even the antechamber of heaven without a life-

time of regret at what has been lost." As a result of subsequent infections and gangrene in the leg, it had to be amputated below the knee.

Johnson's life is recounted, through a difficult childhood and parents with whom he didn't connect, and finding his true family, whom he refers to as "Godparents" in the classical sense—those people who nurtured him, who listened to and encouraged him in his spiritual and emotional growth. Gifted musically, he became a competent organist and learned to repair instruments.



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Reviews

During World War II his disability kept him from military service, but he worked for the Red Cross in winter and at a fire lookout tower in summer, where he learned about solitude and explored his loneliness.

The great longing for the Golden World brought him to many of the world's renowned, including a time in Ojai with Jiddu Krishnamurti. Those interested in Krishnamurti would find this a fascinating chapter in Johnson's life. Johnson was a young man at the time, and at first was very taken with Krishnamurti. But as he didn't seem to be able to use Krishnamurti's teaching to come any nearer the Golden World, he concluded, "I realize now that different truths are important for different stages of life, and Krishnamurti made the awful mistake of indiscriminately introducing an old person's wisdom to people of all ages and stations in life." It was, however, his first (at least vicarious) contact with India, a place that would summon him for some 25 winters later in his life. As he left Krishnamurti, a friend suggested he visit Dr. Fritz Kunkel, a noted Jungian analyst (one of those slender threads again) and he began to realize the value of attending to his dreams.

An unstructured trip to Europe in 1948 led to a visit to Switzerland, and enrollment at the C.J. Jung Institute in Zurich. Through responding to another series of slender threads, he learned, "The concept of listening to the will of God is difficult for many modern people to follow, as it collides with our love of freedom and our insistence on free will. However I must declare that, with respect to the most important aspects of my life,

I am not free. I am safest when I let go of trying to control my life and instead follow the slender threads. This is a religious perspective in the sense that the human ego must surrender to something more powerful than itself."

While that statement is one of the most profound discoveries, echoed by every mystic who has walked the planet, I must take issue with one thing. Throughout the book, the words "religious," and "religion" are used when "spiritual" and "spirituality" are intended. Johnson (or Ruhl) makes no distinction between religion, which is the realm of churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, and the spiritual, which is the realm of intimate personal experience of God.

While studying at the Jung Institute, Johnson began the analysis required by the training, with Carl Jung's wife, also a noted analyst. When Mrs. Jung related one of Johnson's dreams to her husband, Johnson received a call from Dr. Carl Jung: "Get out here at once, I want to talk at you." Talk at him he did, and interpreted the dream, saying, "You have been claimed for an inner life... You must learn to accept that whatever you need will turn up for you..." reinforcing his already strong understanding of the slender threads.

Johnson's story continues through building a practice in Jungian analysis in Los Angeles, more adventures in transformation, and a time spent working in a monastery. On a trip to India, he had another immersion in his Golden World. This one, as an adult, confirmed for him the existence of that world, and empowered him for the next steps of the journey. He relates a charming

Reviews

event, visiting the remote village home of an Indian friend, the villagers decide he is the village saint, come back from the dead to care for them. They deduced his sainthood from the fact that "he doesn't eat very much, he doesn't talk very much, and he doesn't do very much."

Johnson's memoir introduces us to a remarkable man, indeed. His insights about the slender threads and the Golden World will be an inspiration and challenge to any thoughtful reader.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP EXPLORATION:

1. What is my understanding of the "slender threads?"
2. How have the slender threads manifested themselves in my experience?
3. What does the "Golden World" mean to me?
4. How can I better balance "heaven and earth," or live the heavenly while still being of value on earth?

Spiritual Notes To Myself, Essential Wisdom for the 21st Century
by Hugh Prather. Conari Press,
1998. 151 pages. Paperback.

Prather is a United Methodist minister, lecturer and counselor, called by the *New York Times* "an American Kahlil Gibran." This book, a "modern-day book of proverbs," *Spiritual Notes To Myself*, follows admirably in the steps of Prather's first book, *Notes To Myself*, which was a best seller two decades ago. While his first book sprang more from his psychological insights and the focus on personal growth and self-improvement, this new offering turns to the transcendent and takes the reader on a journey both humorous and thought-



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provoking. The first “note” made me laugh aloud: “Sometimes I get the feeling God has pets, and I’m not one of them.”

There are several underlying themes to these journal entries, among them are the spiritual life as a way of service, the challenge of the ego to the life of the spirit, and the need for stillness and peace as a starting point for decision-making. Many of his musings touch on Oneness. “There is a way to have a growing fulfillment, a deepening peace, and an unreasonable happiness free of circumstances and events. It lies in recognizing our oneness with all living things. To me God is what binds us together. This is another way of saying God is love. We simply are not separate. We do not have little private thoughts that affect no one but ourselves. All of that is an illusion, albeit a powerful one. Yet it will remain the hard fact of life until we feel, experience, and immerse ourselves in the stream that runs through us all.”

Beyond simply thinking about spirituality, Prather sounds a call to action: “Sacred scriptures and inspired writings can point the way, but finally you have to walk where they are pointing. This you can do with the aid of a system or by listening to the stillness within you. Either way is fine, but ultimately you must stop searching and simply do it.”

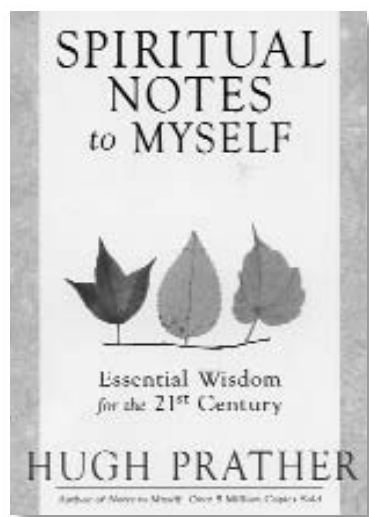
The journal entries touch on many subjects, including guidance and discerning the will of God, the nature of the ego, ego vs. identity, and forgiveness. Other topics include healing, marriage, children, aging, and ego and oneness. Prather refers several times to *A Course in Miracles*, and some of those practical teachings shine

through his notes.

To give you a flavor of this book, I’m going to let Prather speak for himself.

A note to possibility thinkers and treasure mappers (if you’ve been exposed to several flavors of “metaphysical” thought, you’ll get this): “Jesus’ life didn’t go well. He didn’t reach his earning potential. He didn’t have the respect of his colleagues. His friends weren’t loyal. His life wasn’t long. He didn’t meet his soul mate. And he wasn’t understood by his mother. Yet I think I deserve all those things because I’m so spiritual.”

On the way things work out: “How the world strikes me is not precisely how it strikes anyone else



Even my own interpretations are unstable. Many past ‘defeats’ I see now as past improvements, and many ‘victories’ I see as spiritual failures. There are few if any aspects of my life that I am wise enough to change ‘for the better.’”

Events as message: “God speaks to us in a thousand voices, each with the same clear message: ‘I love you. Please trust me on this one.’”

On forgiveness: “Forgiveness is the decision to out endure the ego. Therefore, don’t try to forgive all the time; just forgive in the moment. Two minutes from now the grievance may come back. Simply forgive again in the moment. If you keep surrounding someone in light, soon your ego—which hates light—will stop handing you the grudge. That’s because the ego is mere shadow and flees when you remember that you are the light of the world.”

And more: “One of the most spiritual songs ever written was ‘Keep Those Dogies Rollin’ from the TV series, “Rawhide.” Now, you’re probably not from Texas as I am, but I can tell you don’t want to tackle one of those young steers when they’re rollin.’ That’s also the key to mental discipline—‘keep them movin’ along.’ The ego is a little cattle drive of thoughts that runs nonstop through the head. But tackle one of those thoughts and you’ve got yourself a problem, maybe even a stampede of emotion. Just let all the thoughts mosey on by.”

This is enough to give you a flavor of this book. It strikes me as an excellent resource for those who may be reaching the limits of “churchianity” and who are ready to tackle some deeper issues. The last note is a good place to end the book and this review. Prather relates an odd conversation with a young man from Idaho who, midway through a lunch meeting, stood and said, “I think God has a message for you; I’ll go to the bathroom and get it.” Prather says, “I smiled matter-of-factly, not knowing how they prayed in Idaho.” The man returned with this: “God did have a message. It was ‘Row your boat gently down

Reviews

the stream.” Prather realized that two weeks earlier his wife, Gayle, had asked him to consider the spirituality of the lyrics of that children’s song. He concludes a meditation on each word of the song with this: “Life is but a dream—it’s merely a dream. If you loathe a dream, or fight it, or worship it, your mind remains locked on it. But when you dream gently, when you float in the dream, and when you take the dream as it comes—remembering that your boat is in it but that you are not—then you infuse the dream with many merilities. Merilities are the waking state! Thus will you float into the vast ocean of God’s great meriment, where you are free even of rowing, and the smile of God is your smile forever.”

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP EXPLORATION:

1. What practical steps am I taking to move my spiritual journey from inner to outer, from thought to action?
2. If I’m currently keeping a spiritual journal, “notes to myself,” what ongoing value does it have for me? If not, do I need to begin journaling?
3. Looking back on Prather’s experience of past events proving to be other than what he’d judged them to be when they occurred, do I have the same experience? What events seemed like disasters that ultimately proved to be blessings? What events seemed like fulfilled dreams that ultimately proved to be disasters? And what do I learn from this?•

Barbara Neighbors Deal, Ph.D., is a literary agent and writer in Ojai, California.

Forgive

Continued from page 9

ness of this moment. Reflect on the qualities of mind that are the opposite of anger, such as forgiveness, love and emotional warmth. Let these feelings grow and expand in your awareness. Now, remember those who have caused you pain or anger in the past, whether purposefully or accidentally. Think of them by name, if you can. Direct these feelings of warmth and love and forgiveness to each of them individually. Repeat the following words slowly and mindfully as you visualize each of these people in your mind.

I forgive everyone who, I believe, has harmed me in the past. I forgive them whether the pain they appeared to inflict upon me was by thought, word or deed. I forgive them whether their actions were intentionally hurtful, thoughtless or simply accidental. I will no longer hold these things to their account.

I ask them now to forgive me for anything I may have done to cause them pain. I am truly sorry. I send them peace and pray that they will send me peace in return.•

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Our Psyche

Continued from page 59

soul of the universe, now finally acknowledged as one and the same. In other words, it is the point at

which I become and am synchronicity! "After the Way is realized, there is nowhere that is not the mysterious pass," says Ho Yang.

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The road is fraught with danger because we are involved in a rite of passage from outside to inside, from the periphery to the center (of the mandala of wholeness), from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral to the eternal, from the mortal to the immortal. Immortality means beyond the limits of ego and the conditions of our existence. Attaining this center requires the equivalent of ego death. It is a consecration to and initiation into the sacred, i.e., the discovery of one's spirituality. It is the ultimate answer to the question, "Why am I here?" I am here to live out my destiny "on earth as it is in heaven." This sounds trite at first, but look more closely.

"On earth" is the metaphor for my psychological work of building a healthy ego, one that will be an apt instrument for my spiritual work. "In heaven" is the metaphor for the spiritual work of releasing unconditional love, universal wisdom, and healing power into the world. Now look at the three little words that are the bridge between: *as it is*. When I say yes to the "as it is," I create the bridge between earth and heaven, between my psychological and spiritual work, between my ego mortality and my immortal destiny!•

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Wait for God

Continued from page 31

LEARNING TO WAIT

The soul that waits walks with God. In human life, there are many skills to learn: listening and communication skills, organizational and leadership skills, and recreational skills. But the skill which invites a spiritual life is waiting. The Bible confirms this idea through a great promise. "...but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Dear friend, if there is to be a closer walk with God, there must be waiting.

Waiting challenges the typical human being. We are people of action, and resting quietly in prayer seems too passive and unproductive. If God is a great mountain, then let us mount an expedition and scale this great height! This was the reasoning of the people who built and left unfinished the Tower of Babel. The message is clear. The ruins of the tower remind us that God is not achieved through human effort. However, we are not to be passive even though our *action* may appear passive. We can speak our affirmations and denials and ascend the spiritual path to the height of our humanity, but then we must wait. We must become like a child who cannot pass a crevasse in the earth. We must wait for our Father to come, sweep us up into His arms, and carry us to the other side.

The challenge of waiting is that the mind wanders. This is *normal* and to be expected. The waiting skills we are to learn gently bring us back to a steady focus upon Spirit, a resting in the everlasting arms.

They remind us once more to give the gift of our attention to God. Our first action, once we become aware the mind is wandering, is watching. There is no attempt to refocus the mind. We simply watch. It is as if we are following someone and trying to determine where he is going.

What happens when we watch is illustrated by something which often occurs in the household. A child has asked to have a cookie, but the parent refuses because dinner is only a half an hour away. The child is assured that after supper he can have a cookie. While the meal is cooking, the parent sits in the nearby living room reading the evening newspaper. In a short time, the parent hears the ceramic lid of the cookie jar being removed, and therefore rises quietly and stands at the kitchen door smiling and watching the child stuff a cookie in his mouth while reaching into the jar for another snack. In a brief time, the child feels the "weight of the parent's gaze," and stops taking the treat from the cookie jar.

In our interior lives, we watch the thoughts drifting through the mind. Through unconditional observation, the mind will cease its meandering and come to rest, just as the child ceased reaching for a cookie. It is at this point we resist the temptation to label the stray thought as good or bad. It is essential we not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good or evil. The thought is not good or bad. *It is!* Just as the child is not bad because he reaches for a cookie before supper. •

From "A Closer Walk with God," by Jim Rosemergy. Copyright 1991 by Jim Rosemergy. Printed with permission from Acropolis Books.

Getting Your Ego

Continued from page 44

do this; this is foolishness and a waste of important and productive time."

I saw myself begin to be annoyed at him and the situation. Witnessing helped me see that I felt as if I were being controlled, when actually I was about to do the controlling. Seeing all this, I did not try to get Paul to change his plans. I was able to see that he wanted a break from writing, and going out for a while was what he needed to do.

It is your higher self and not your ego that is capable of this kind of observing awareness. The ability of your spiritual self to witness the contents of your consciousness, the continuing movie of your mind, is your saving grace. The detached awareness witnessing enables you to see and break through the automatic thinking, feeling and acting patterns of your ego. These automatic patterns are ways the insecure part of you attempts to control for security. They produce fear and anger. More than anything else, it is fear and anger, stirred up by the ego, that cause distance in a marriage. Interrupting these patterns is essential, and your spiritual self, as witness, makes this possible. •

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Healing

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manifestations come to be. We can never have what we cannot imagine.

Here, we learn the power of creative intelligence. And your keynote will be the recognition that “whatever you say ‘I am’ to has a way of claiming you.” As conscious co-creators, we are learning to “think like gods.” Having the courage of our convictions and the willingness to own the responsibility for what we create becomes our new ideal.

STEP SIX. Our aspiration to serve awakens. And we learn to follow our bliss. No longer so preoccupied with “what’s in it for me?” we actually feel how connected we are to the whole. We are becoming soul-dominated human beings. And our true service to humanity is really quite simple: it’s our willingness to be our authentic selves and to bring forward our true talents and passion to serve this greater whole. In this manner, both our egos and our souls are gratified all at once.

Integrated egos are an essential aspect of our transformational process. A healthy ego learns to sacrifice itself to a greater good. The ego feels high when being a faithful servant to something bigger than itself. It’s the grandest “ego trip” of all! At this stage we experience the marriage of the ego and the soul. Without our personal egos we cannot function on this planet. Egos are masters of the material world. The soul would have no way to embody here on earth—no one to take care of it—without this healthy partner.

The soul quality we access here is the courage to be free. And the

keynote that holds this step in place is this: service is doing our being. Most of the stress leaves our lives completely when we become free of so much egoistic need so our souls can shine through. All human disease is the soul’s inability to express!

STEP SEVEN. Our biographies become a small piece of our greater story. Now we’ve faced our shadow, forgiven ourselves and others, and stepped out of our limited past as being our only identity. We see that we’ve grown into a larger skin, now containing all the “goods” from our past, but no longer limited by believing we are our conditions. The self we’ve now become is no longer fixated on the same old needs. We are now a different and greater identity who walks upon a higher plane.

The quality we develop at this final stage of our human transformation is that of nonattachment. And the keynote here is “Our spiritual intention guides us home.” We see that we are the journey itself, with nothing to prove, no place to go, only someone to be. We can relax now, and even know moments of enlightenment—which can only come when we are no longer attached to being enlightened. Psyche’s task is to remember that she is divine. She is the feminine principle who lives within each one of us, whether man or woman in gender. It’s time we all remember that it takes a healthy psyche to create a true and viable spiritual life. For psyche is our divine and earthly perceiver, who can “look both ways.” She is the bridge between spirit and matter, our consciousness who makes us whole. •

Transformation

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this dog is in my life. Like the volcano, she is the essence of determination, and by her example she has shown me that I can also conjure up a fierce tenacity when I have my heart set on something, even when it seems insurmountable. My father, in fact, reminded me that as a child, I was similarly dogged, “like a bulldog” that wouldn’t let go until I got what I wanted.

Not that I don’t encounter resistance. I find that regardless of how much progress I made the previous day, I face a fence that seems to have been resurrected overnight by some malevolent elves. A fence constructed of “I can’t do it, I’m not good enough, give up, lie down.” But I often think of Snowy and how she would still be stuck in that backyard if not for her persistence. And in my own desperation to break free, I pull myself up to my writing desk and leap over, one word at a time. •

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Silence

Continued from page 65

God everywhere—in the closing of a door, in the person who needs you, in the birds that sing, in the flowers, in the animals.

What is essential is not what we say, but what God tells us and what He tells others through us. In silence, He listens to us; in silence, He speaks to our souls. In silence, we are granted the privilege of listening to His voice.

To make possible true inner silence, practice:

Silence of the eyes, by seeking always the beauty and goodness of God everywhere, closing them to the faults of others and to all that is sinful and disturbing to the soul;

Silence of the ears, by listening always to the voice of God and to the cry of the poor and the needy, closing them to all other voices that come from fallen human nature, such as gossip, tale-bearing, and uncharitable words;

Silence of the tongue, by praising God and speaking the life-giving Word of God that is the Truth, that enlightens and inspires, brings peace, hope and joy, and by refraining from self-defense and every word that causes darkness, turmoil, pain and death;

Silence of the mind, by opening it to the truth and knowledge of God in prayer and contemplation, like Mary who pondered the marvels of the Lord in her heart, and by closing it to all untruths, distractions, destructive thoughts, rash judgments, false suspicions of others, revengeful thoughts, and desires;

Silence of the heart, by loving God with our heart, soul, mind and strength, and one another as God loves, and avoiding all selfishness,

hatred, envy, jealousy and greed.

I shall keep the silence of my heart with greater care, so that in the silence of my heart I hear His words of comfort, and from the fullness of my heart I comfort Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor. For in silence and purity of the heart, God speaks. •

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Transformations

Continued from page 32

ment is re-direction.

I talk to this "God whose name I do not know." Thanking, not asking. C.S. Lewis observed that prayer changes the one who prays, not conditions.

My GPA literally doubled what it'd been years before. By graduation, I'd received a dozen scholarships and awards. The University of Florida offered a fellowship.

Had someone predicted any of this a dozen years before, I'd have questioned his sanity.

Today I struggle with my dissertation at The University of Iowa's Rehabilitation Counselor Education Ph.D. program.

It's been hard work, and I still wonder how I've accomplished it. But should I also take credit for my heartbeat? For being born into a supportive, caring family?

Einstein observed that the most beautiful encounter is The Mysterious.

Although it remains a mystery why I developed a brain tumor, it seems that it's the best thing that ever happened to me. •

Letters

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have a personal transformation story to share with you and your readers.—Lyn Carroll, San Mateo, California.

BIRTHING THE VISION

First of all, thank you for birthing the vision of your wonderful magazine! I just picked it up this morning for the first time and have already called to subscribe to it. I am especially interested in applying the creative arts to healing, so I was drawn to the article by Candace Hartzler, "Creativity and Healing." I am feeling called from within to step into healing work that utilizes the powerful gifts of the creative arts. Thank you for the insights. Congratulations on both your personal and professional transformation.—Robert Schnitzius, Montara, California.

W O N D E R F U L

I just finished reading an article in the current issue of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, "The Power of Spirit," by Swami Chetananda. It touched me with great peace. Thank you for publishing such a wonderful magazine. You are doing such a wonderful job!—John Newcomb, Green Bay, Wisconsin. •

LETTERS —

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Serve Your World

DAN MILLMAN

Service is an attitude founded on the recognition that the world has supported you, fed you, taught you, tested you, whether or not you earned it. Understanding this simple truth can move you to do what you can to repay a boundless debt of gratitude. Service is both a means and an end, for in giving to others, you open yourself to love, abundance, and inner peace. You cannot serve others without uplifting yourself.—From “Everyday Enlightenment,” by Dan Millman. Copyright 1998 by Dan Millman.

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