



ANNIVERSARY 1995

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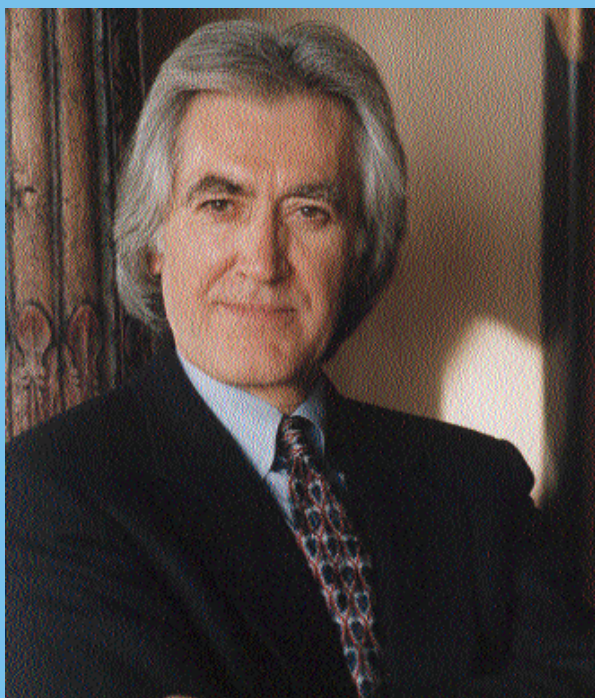
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*Prayerfulness is not doing, it is being, it's a state of consciousness. Its hallmark is love, compassion, and deep caring. It goes beyond words and activity. It may involve doing nothing, just being silent.*

—Larry Dossey, Page 41

*In the modern world, we have to work and earn our living but we should not get entangled in a nine-to-five existence where we live without any view of the deeper meaning of life. Our task is to strike a balance, to find a middle way, to learn not to over-stretch ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations but to simplify our lives more and more.*

—Sogyal Rinpoche, Page 54

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: LILLIES IN THE LOTUS POND, RICK  
INSIDE COVER: RICK.

LARRY DOSSEY PHOTOGRAPH: ATHI-MARA

# From the Editor..

*My religion is very simple—my religion is kindness* —Dalai Lama

Words of wisdom are embedded throughout this issue, building on practices of love, self-acceptance, meditation, and prayer. Sogyal Rinpoche (page 54) reminds us how precious life is. He says that although death is a vast mystery, it is certain that we will die and it is uncertain when or how we will die. He reasons that we are afraid of death because we do not know who we are. When we are without our familiar props, we are faced with ourselves, a person we do not know. He prescribes a quiet inner life and simplicity as keys to discovering who we are.

The basic practices of love, self-acceptance, meditation, and prayer strengthen our essential relationships, with our inner self and with the absolute or divine. Nurturing these relationships is fundamental to spiritual development whether we are new to spiritual practice or well on our way.

Nathaniel Brandon (page 26) sees self-acceptance as a refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with ourselves. To be self-accepting is to be a compassionate friend to ourselves. For many of us, being a loving friend to ourselves takes conscientious awareness.

“Kindly self discipline” added to self-acceptance helps us to fulfill life dreams. According to Peg Thompson (page 38) kindly self discipline arises from caring for and being responsible for ourselves. It assumes that we have personal worth and meaning. It sees who we are now and envisions who we may become. It links us with what Angeles Arrien (page 30) identifies as the way of the visionary. She prompts us to promote our spiritual development by identifying and communicating our creative purpose in life and acting from our authentic self.

We know that meditation and prayer supply us with meaning and peace, the wellspring of happiness. Kyogen Carlson (page 86) defines happiness as much more than being in a good mood. A truly happy life also includes equanimity and peace of mind, a sense of perspective in the face of both success and failure, love and loss. Meditation’s greater purpose is to help us stay in

touch with our own center, a place deep within ourselves that we feel to be still and peaceful, solid and stable, and dynamic and powerful. He defines meditation as the practice of finding the still point of balance within your own being, in the midst of all kinds of conditions.

In our interview, Larry Dossey (page 41) discusses the scientific evidence proving that prayer is an effective healing power. He gives us insight into the vast mystery of prayer.

In our competitive, materialistic culture we are often pressured to perform and discouraged from investing in our inner lives—our connection with the divine. Bryan Robinson (page 34) notes that we often look for peace in the wrong places. Attention to our inner lives improves the quality of our outer lives. “Overdoing it” keeps us stuck in the external world and in the cycle of never feeling good enough. Replacing busyness with a rich spiritual life heals us. Connecting with our inner selves allows us to accept and love ourselves, and unconditional love heals our relationship within as we begin treating ourselves as worthy, loving, and competent.

Peter Russell (page 50) advocates simplicity and non-attachment to material comforts as ways to provide the peace that we each seek. To stop abusing our world, we need to stop valuing material well-being as the primary source of our inner well-being. In doing so, we become free to care more fully for other people and for all living beings.

May this wealth of information and insights sustain you on your journey.

Welcome to Lotus.

*Mary NurrieStearns*  
Mary NurrieStearns



**As we  
change  
ourselves,  
we also  
change the  
world.  
LOTUS**

# Lotus

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## Reflections



### *From Our Readers*

#### **N U D I T Y   I S B E A U T I F U L**

I am writing to respond to Pamela DeRensis and all the other Puritans who were “righteously offended” by the cover of the Summer 1994 issue; the one with the wholesome nude couple on the cover. Grow up, please.

My belief is that the nude human body is a beautiful work of art and at the same time is a wondrously complicated being. The Goddess instilled in this unique creature the faculties that would allow us to enjoy each other on many different levels. Ironically those same faculties allow us to denigrate and pervert what is wholesome, natural, and innocent. The human being is the only creature that after birth gets covered with clothes. Granted there is a practical place for clothes, but why would God, Goddess, Great Spirit in its infinite wisdom create such a miraculous creature, flawed at birth? Nudity, as with many other aspects of human behavior, is cultural, is learned.

I’m borrowing the following from the excellent book, “Touch Therapy” by Helen Colton: If you were to suddenly come upon a

strange woman in the bath in various parts of the world, here’s what she would probably do:

A Mohammedan woman would cover her face. A Laotian woman would cover her breasts. A Chinese woman (before the revolution) would hide her feet. In Sumatra the woman would conceal her knees. In Samoa she would cover her navel. In the Western world she would cover her genital area.

The message is clear, the nude body is not inherently offensive unless WE make it so. Let’s unmake and unlearn 200 plus years of faulty programming on nudity and touch and replace it with an acceptance of healthy nudity and caring ethical touch.

Nudity and touch are not necessarily connected, but our Puritan forefathers and foremothers left their unmistakable fingerprints on these two areas of behavior that warp us still. I encounter it everyday.

Some people simply do not want to learn, their long held convictions might be proven wrong, they fear that they might actually enjoy the freedom of nudity or the sensuousness of ethical caring touch.  
—Daniel Vasquez, Phoenix, Arizona.

John Kennedy

Moksha

*Reflections*

*DO YOU MAKE  
LOVE WITH YOUR  
CLOTHES ON?*

In response to Pamela G. DeRensis (Letters Summer '95)—I just received *Lotus* as a gift, and have finally got to see that “controversial” cover. I have to ask, just WHAT is offensive about this photo? I find it sweet, with a poignancy and vulnerability that is so much a part of a trusting, loving relationship.

I had assumed that readers of *Lotus* would be relaxed, accepting, spiritual types, embracing all of God’s beautiful Creation, humans included. I am very surprised that many are apparently frightened and uptight about our bodies, God’s gift to us, and about loving sexuality. The cover did not exploit, was not gratuitous, and there are no “offensive” parts showing. All it tastefully shows is two adults embracing. For goodness sake, why do you feel a need to put this in a brown paper bag? What is YOUR image of sexual intimacy? Do you make love with your clothes on? If you think this is “smut,” take a stroll through the back room of our local news-stand and see what “smut” really is.

Some feel that the human body itself is “offensive.” I feel sorry for people with this phobia. I know from experience that the world is a very threatening place for them. I was prudish, myself, as a teen. I was so embarrassed by my own body that I once wore a sweat-shirt all summer, for fear my budding female shape might show! It was an

## *Reflections*

awful way to live, and I eventually had to make a conscious effort to open my mind to other possibilities, to face my fears. It was difficult at first, but now I am comfortable with my body and with sexuality. I find the world a much less threatening place and can now enjoy such tastefully done photography as the Summer 1994 cover. I hope the people at *Lotus* continue to use their good judgment and to trust their instincts.

And Pamela, I'm afraid that you have a problem, one that seems to be particularly unique to Americans. Many of us have been raised in a culture that puts such a tight lid on normal, healthy sexuality that innocuous images such as this become inflammatory. Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate your conditioned response, determine how it originated, and decide if it is still operating in your best interests. Just as those with phobias of cats, heights, or open spaces can learn to de-sensitize themselves until they can live normal lives, I am sure you can, too.—*Cathy Taibbi, Jonesboro, Georgia.*

### *VERY TOUCHING*

Intentional psychological and spiritual practices have played major roles in helping me view and relate with my body differently. I used to be neglectful and angry with my body. I now see my body both in terms of its fragility and its beauty and strength. One thing I've discovered about my body is that it won't go away. My moods however change as clouds play in the skies

Mount Madonna

Element Books

## Journey Into

## Mable Dodge

### *Reflections*

on a windy day. By immediately attending to my body's messages, such as its needs, I feel more in sync with my body and as a result, more connected and self-congruent.

The state of inner-connectedness I experience greatly affects the way I connect with and experience other people. I've extremely aware of others' relationships with their bodies, often noticing when others are stiff and disconnected.

I practiced psychotherapy on and off for about 5 years. During that time, I subscribed to a couple of different psychotherapy journals in family therapy. Over this past year, I purchased a few editions of *Lotus* magazine. I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate *Lotus*. Not only have I read some very touching personal accounts, but I've read several articles that are so relevant to my own path. I especially appreciate that your magazine does not contain hoards of advertisements that are so distracting and basically, a "turn off."—*Barbara Claman, Oakland, California.*

### **WOULD LIKE TO FIND A GROUP**

I love your magazine and I want to find some groups to attend with my husband. We would like to find a group for inner growth and self awareness that we both can attend as a couple. Maybe one of your readers might know of some groups in this area. We are in the Houston, Texas, area.—*Carra Kiener, Rt. 3 Box 129, Rabon Chapel Road, Montgomery, Texas, 77356.*•



# Conscious Notes

by Elaine St. James

## BE HONEST WITH PEOPLE

When Jack calls, tell him the truth. Simply say, "You know, Jack, I appreciate your asking, but I really don't feel like having dinner out on Saturday night. I've been going out too much lately, and I'd really rather stay home and spend time with the kids."

If Jack is your friend, he'll understand, even if he might not be happy about it. If he's not your friend, it doesn't matter. If you have a hard time saying no, however, this will still be difficult for you. Practice. Role play, either on your own, or perhaps with your support group.

Remember, you're taking responsibility for your life now, especially the time you need for your inner life. Take a close look at how much time you could save for yourself next week, if you started this week being honest with people by saying no to the things you don't really want to do.

Obviously, there are some social situations where a little white lie is simpler to deal with, not only for you but for the other party as well. But for family and friends



TONY STONE/DAVID HANOVER

with whom you're closely connected, it'll be much more liberating for both of you if you simply and honestly convey your feelings. How much you decide to disclose will depend on the circumstances.

You can apply this same philosophy of honesty to any situation you find yourself in. Own up to how you really feel about not doing something. If you express your feelings with sincerity, people will accept them.

---

## GET OUT OF RELATIONSHIPS THAT DON'T SUPPORT YOU

We humans, for the most part, still maintain

our herd instincts. It's comforting to be one of the pack, and to have family, friends, and loved ones near by to help us grow, at least at the start of our journey.

But it sometimes happens that the people we are closest to don't really support us. Look around you, not just at your

spouse and the family members you're involved with, but at all the relationships and associations you have in your life. The lack of support can be so subtle. We can hang out for years with someone we love and think of as a friend before we begin to realize that the rela-



TONY STONE/CHRISTOPHER BENSELL

tionship isn't really helping us and, in fact, has been holding us back.

It's easy to be deceived by the comfort a longtime relationship appears to offer you. There's a certain ease that comes with familiarity and from knowing each other's history, and from the history the two of you have built together, even when it's been tumultuous.

But there comes a time when you have to ask some hard questions: Does that person really love you, or are they hanging on to you because of their own lack or their own needs? They may say they love you, but do they make you feel loved? Are they really happy with you in your successes, or do they always manage to put you in the wrong? Do they love you enough to let you go on to bigger and better things, even if it means they get left behind?

Non-acceptance and subtle put-downs can be powerful deterrents to your growth. If you're not getting the love and support you need from the relationships in your life, it'll be much harder for you to achieve inner simplicity.

If you're moving on, sometimes there is really no choice but to leave behind those who may

not be ready to move on with you.

Often you simply have to retreat with a smile, and gradually but resolutely reduce their presence in your life.

Realize that all the family ties and friendships in your life are there for a purpose, but

then have the time and energy to concentrate on loving, supportive relationships.

---

## DO THE THINGS YOU FEAR

One of the great inhibitors of our lives is fear. If you suspect that fear has been holding

would like to do but haven't done because you were afraid to. Be honest, and really think about this. No one else ever has to see this list but you.

What would your life be like if you left the town you grew up in to seek your fortune out in the real world, instead of staying home where everything is safe, cozy, and guaranteed? What would your life be like if you gave up the company job, and started your own business as you've always wanted to do?

What would your life be like if you quit the job you can't stand and went back to school to get trained in a field you really love? What would your life be like if you got out of a relationship that wasn't working, and created the space for one that *would* work for you?

You may be starting to realize that the things you want to do are the things you should be doing, even if the thought of doing them may be terrifying for you. They are things you came here to do and to experience and to be. Not doing them is holding you back from being the totally full and realized person you can be.

If you can't energize yourself to do the things you fear, there are many seminars you can take



TONY STONZ/IBRIAN/AGILEY

they aren't necessarily meant to last forever. It takes a certain grace to recognize when the time for a disabling relationship is over and, even if the other person doesn't recognize it, to bow out and move on. You'll

you back from the things you want to do, there is something you can do about it.

Set aside a couple of hours in the next few days, or take some time right now, to make a list of all the things you

## Conscious Notes

and retreats you can attend that will provide you with an opportunity to do some seemingly terrifying feats—like walking across a bed of burning coals or climbing to the top of a telephone pole and jumping off—that serve as metaphors for the real-life fears we all have to face.

Few things will liberate you faster and move you more quickly along your inner path than doing the things you fear.

---

### ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CAN'T CHANGE

Taking responsibility for your life also means accepting the things you can't change.

If you're short and want to be tall, or you're an endomorph and wish you were an ectomorph, if you were born with some impediment or acquired one along the way, or if you find yourself in any particular set of circumstances that are absolute, immutable, and irreversible, then you basically have two options. You can rant and rave and curse and indulge in remorse or guilt or self-pity. Or you can go with the hand you were dealt and play the game the best you can.

You can be open to the possibility that those who say we have chosen our circumstances are correct, and then set about figuring out what you can learn from your life by making the most of it.

When you look at the personal limitations someone like Helen Keller had to deal with and the extent to which she overcame them—not to mention the tremendous contribution she made with her life—you can see that it is possible to cooperate with the inescapable.

Movement Studies Institute

WindStar

Blue Dolphin

# Conscious Notes

Going within to find the meaning of our lives does not mean seeking to avoid the challenges our circumstances present. Rather it means finding the grace to learn how to live our lives to the fullest extent possible—whatever that is for us—and in the acceptance, to move on to the highest level of growth we can.

---

## CHOOSE TO IGNORE AN INSULT

There is a Chinese proverb that says it is better to ignore an insult than to have to respond to one. There is such wisdom here.

Think of the troubles you could avoid and the stress you could eliminate if you made the decision to ignore a slight offense or a minor defamation, or an unintentional snub—or even an intentional one. Our reactions to the

situations of our life are elective and we get to do the electing.

The next time someone is flip with you, fail to notice it. It's a choice. Or choose to laugh. (But do this later, on your own.)

This is not to say you should become a rug and let everyone walk all over you. But you may well find as you continue along your path that it's much more exhilarating to keep your head clear for contemplating the big picture and not to sweat the little stuff.

Ignoring an insult is a very effective way to keep from getting bogged down in someone else's negative energy, or even in your own.

---

## STOP JUDGING OTHERS

One of the problems that comes from being raised in a patriotic and chauvinistic culture like

ours is that we are bred from birth to believe in our own superiority.

It's not only patriotism that instills this conviction. Our religions, our ethnic backgrounds, our educational and cultural training, and the media advertising we are exposed to teach us, sometimes inadvertently, that we're supposed to be better than the next guy.

Often we go through life believing it's natural to look down on other people because of the way they dress, where they live, the work they do, the amount of money they have in the bank, and whether or not they use deodorant soap.

This pervades every area of our lives. We are bombarded daily with hundreds of judgments, many of which we're not even consciously aware of.

When we start to glimpse the

Stars Edge

possibility that we're here for reasons other than owning a house on two acres and a four-wheel drive vehicle, we get the opportunity to take a look at our judgments and to see how they get in the way of our inner growth.

Once you start to understand that you're here for some other purpose, then you have to make the connection that we're all here for some other purpose, even if we don't all realize it, and even if we don't know what that purpose is yet.

At some point we begin to get the picture that we're all in this together, and that we're each doing the best we can with what we've got. It's not our place to judge where someone else is on their path.

The process of learning to suspend our judgment about other people and situations can be particularly arduous because we have so much training to overcome. But, as with other habit patterns, overcoming it starts with the awareness of how judgmental we are in every area of our lives.

Once we begin to see how often we subtly dismiss others because they don't live up to our standards, we can slowly start to let go of our judgments and get back to trying to figure out what we came here to do. And then get on with it.

---

## LEARN TO ENJOY SOLITUDE

There are few things as powerful as solitude to help you get in touch with your inner self—especially when that solitude is accompanied by silence and the elimination of outside stimuli such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other popular forms of escape.

If you haven't started already, begin to enjoy solitude. Get comfortable with being alone. This is time you can spend on your own thinking, reading elevating stuff, communing with nature, getting in touch with your intuition, smiling, laughing, crying, forgiving, and contemplating the questions of the universe.

This doesn't mean you need to move to a cave in the wilderness.

bly in an organized retreat situation where everything but the inner search will be taken care of for you.

Be creative in coming up with ways you can spend time in solitude on a regular basis. I have a friend who for years spent his lunch time in a deserted cemetery. It was the most convenient quiet place he could find near his office. He claims it got him comfortable



TONY STONE/PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE

Far from it. People and relationships are a vital part of both our inner and our outer growth. But we all need time to recharge every now and then, not only to nourish our spirit, but so that we have new energy to give to others.

If solitude feels threatening to you, start in small ways, perhaps with a lunch date with yourself in a quiet setting, such as a pew in an open but vacant chapel. Expand that to a Saturday afternoon alone, possibly in a secluded garden or some other place where you won't be disturbed. Then plan a private weekend retreat at home or possi-

not only with being alone, but also with the idea of death, a beneficial concept to have under your belt when you're examining the big issues of your life.

Solitude gives you the opportunity to confront your inner self in ways that few other endeavors can. Out of your times of solitude come serenity, peace of mind, and unparalleled opportunities to connect with your soul. •

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# CHOOSING TO LIVE

J A C Q U E L I N E K R A M E R

**A**fter dragging myself through half of a bedtime story I kissed my eight year old daughter good-night, apologized for not being able to read any longer, and fell exhausted onto my bed. Bit by bit I had been forced to give up pieces of my life as I helplessly watched the energy drain from my body. First I gave up a social life to come home from work or school and rest, then I gave up graduate school. Eventually I had to let go of my job, a job which I loved, singing in nursing homes.

I had gone to numerous doctors but nobody had a clue as to what the problem was. The last doctor I had seen suggested I try “Parents without Partners,” assuming that my problem was psychosomatic. Lying in bed, I couldn’t care less if the problem was psychosomatic or purely somatic. I could barely move or talk and my body ached with endless flu symptoms. Descending to the border between life and death, I had given up everything except raising my daughter. There, lying in bed, watching the life force drain from my body, I felt the presence of death at my shoulder. Death did not seem frightening but somehow strangely comforting. As I surrendered to the decline, from deep within came a voice remind-



ing me that I must raise my daughter and fulfill my dream of recording an album. At that moment I chose to live.

The ascent from those depths was slow and arduous and required a larger degree of self-discipline than I had ever practiced. It’s funny how, when I made the decision to live, the resources and people to help me get well came pouring in. It’s as if the universe were waiting for me to make that decision.

First came a doctor who specialized in immune problems. He ran a battery of tests, asked question after probing question and after the results of the tests returned, diagnosed me with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. He did not simply throw the blanket diagnosis of CFS on me. He took each symptom, one by one, and worked with it. For a massive candida overgrowth, he put me on a special diet and treated me with anti-fungal medications. For a hypothyroid, my body actually attacking its own thyroid gland, he prescribed Levothyroid. For viruses, he prescribed vitamin B12 injections and anti-viral enzymes. After my body became a little stronger, he put me on medication to kill the parasites in my intestines.

I came home from the diagnosis shocked to

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 22*

## Eupsychia

### *Transformations*

*Continued from page 20*

discover I had a disease that was considered incurable but relieved to have a name for what was going on inside my body. I resolved to do everything I could to become well again. Healing myself became my career. Along with the allopathic medications, I found an acupuncturist who could treat my symptoms as well as my heart. He was tender and soft, encouraging me to grieve losses that had been denied. I also went into therapy to grieve the innocence taken from me at the hands of early sexual abuse. I would walk into the therapist's office and begin crying until the hour was up, then I would go home and cry some more. I felt as though I had fallen into an endless tunnel of grief and sadness. I had no assurances that I would ever be happy again but I was committed to following my grief, wherever it led me. A new friend appeared to give me my weekly injections and my parents offered to help me financially.

I surrendered to the grief, to the fatigue. I slept, gazed out my window, became simple. I let my life fall away, making effort only to take care of my daughter and myself. Slowly my energy returned, only to be pulled out from under me once again. Each time I gained some energy I had a million things I wanted to spend it on. Through the harsh lessons that relapse provided I learned to bring that energy back into myself, to recharge my battery. Part of the reason I became so fatigued in the first place was my disregard of my limits, both physically and emotionally. I needed to learn ways to create and sustain appropriate boundaries. My body becoming a host to bacteria, viruses, parasites, and candida yeast was a metaphor for my lack of boundaries. I had become a one-celled creature hotel!

For the next year my life was devoted to healing. I relaxed into

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 25*

## North Star

# Grant Me Serenity

S A N D R A T O N E Y

I have always believed that God has a plan for everyone. Five years ago, I married a very troubled man, not out of love, but out of the hope that perhaps I could help him. We had a very stormy relationship. In fact nothing brought me more misery than being with Jake. Still the night before my wedding, I prayed to God that if I were not supposed to marry Jake, could God please send me a sign. Back then, I expected a voice to tell me straight out, "Don't marry this man!" I now see that God has many ways of guiding us through difficult times. We have to have enough faith to see his plan.

After marrying this man, he took me across the country to live, far away from my family. He tried everything in his power to lessen my faith, to break me. I attended several different churches. I even convinced him to go with me sometimes, but none of them was good enough for him. I finally found one that had a very old minister; he seemed wise enough to recognize that we had many problems. He started calling on us regularly. My husband didn't seem to mind, although he always changed the subject away



from religion. I never confided in the minister how miserable I really was.

Jake was very domineering. He treated me so poorly. I retreated from life, scared to do or say anything that might upset him. Almost scared to live! I grew to despise him more than I thought I could despise another human being. Finally one evening, after a very painful episode between us, I decided to confide in my minister friend. I called Jake from work, very upset, to tell him where I would be (because I would pay dearly if I didn't). When I arrived at the parsonage, Jake's car was there. I couldn't believe it! I went in, very distraught, and the minister treated me like a mental ward patient. He told me that whatever happened, I must stay in my marriage. God did not approve of divorce. I would be sinning if I ended my marriage. I was trapped! I will never know exactly what Jake told him before I got there. Whatever it was, it convinced my pastor that I was unstable and needed to be told what to do. And so he did.

The next year of my life, I lived in fear and hate. I hated my husband, my marriage, and my life. I could



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### *Transformations*

*Continued from page 23*

see no way out. My husband controlled my life more and more. He would take the spark plugs out of my car when he went to work so I couldn't go away. If I were "disrespectful" to him, he would lock me in the bedroom. Hate took over my whole being. I fantasized about killing him. Plotted how I would do it. How I could make it look like an accident or self-defense. God was not a part of my life during this period. But yet, I could still hear the minister's voice warning me against divorce, against sin.

And then one day, my whole life changed. I can still remember the date, the time, even what the weather was like that day. We went to a festival. He decided that we would both climb over a fence so we would not have to pay to get in. I refused to do it. It was illegal. He was furious! He dragged me back to car and started driving fast, reckless, and dangerous. I knew that I was going to die. I just closed my eyes, and for the first time in a long time, I prayed. I just wanted to get home alive. He cursed me repeatedly, told me I was nothing, cut my heart out with the things he said. We pulled into the driveway and the car stopped. My prayer had been answered. He went into the house and locked the door. I took a walk, sobbing, and the whole time a verse was playing over and over in my mind, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to

change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Suddenly my whole life opened up. What had I been doing? I realized that, even though the minister said divorce was a sin, wasn't hate also a sin? I had been so afraid to sin by divorce that it never occurred to me that prolonged hatred was much more damaging to the soul. God could forgive me for a marriage that never should have been. I knew this verse saved my life. I could get out of my situation; I could change it. Two days later, I packed up a few belongings while Jake was at work, and a friend drove me to the airport. I was finally free! I quoted the verse over and over to myself as I packed, as I was driven to the airport, and as I rode the airplane back home.

I am now married to a wonderful man. We have faced many things and I am sure that God intended for us to be together. This was his plan. I think my marriage to Jake had to be part of the plan because I needed to learn that true faith isn't just a voice that comes to me in the night, saying yes or no to my important decisions. It is a life-long process that has to be practiced every day of life. So every night before I go to sleep, I pray the prayer that made me see the light and saved my soul, "God grant me the serenity..."•

## *Transformations*

*Continued from page 22*

it, learned how to read my body, learned how to love myself, learned how to say no, and how to surrender to life's circumstances without pushing for something different. By the end of the year my energy had returned enough for me to record an album. I was able to do more things with my daughter and even started dating.

That was three years ago. I am now in a wonderful new relationship which is much richer and deeper than those I got into when I didn't have good boundaries and self-love. I am raising my teenage daughter and meeting each challenge as it presents itself. I have since recorded a second album and have been singing with a big band. Having discovered the power of massage to heal, I decided to go back to school and become a massage therapist. I have learned that one of the things my body and psyche was hungry for was loving touch, that I needed both to touch and be touched to maintain radiant health and happiness.

The experience of going down to the depths of my hurt, anger, and fear and bringing them up into the light has made me a deeper, richer person. I am grateful for the wisdom I've gained on my arduous journey. It is not something I would choose or wish on anyone yet paradoxically it has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. •

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# Self-Acceptance

NATHANIEL BRANDEN

*Without self-acceptance, self-esteem is impossible. In fact, it is so intimately bound up with self-esteem that one sometimes sees the two ideas confused. Yet they are different in meaning, and each needs to be understood in its own right. Whereas self-esteem is something we “experience,” self-acceptance is something we “do.” Stated in the negative, “self-acceptance is my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship to myself.” The concept has three levels of meaning, and we will consider each of them in turn.*

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### THE FIRST LEVEL

To be self-accepting is to be on my own side—to be *for* myself. In the most fundamental sense, self-acceptance refers to an orientation of self-value and self-commitment that derives from the fact that I am alive and conscious. As such, it is more primitive than self-esteem. It is a pre-rational, pre-moral act of self-affirmation—a kind of natural egoism that is the birthright of every human being and yet one that we have the power to act against and nullify.

Some people are self-rejecting at so deep a level that no growth work can even begin until and unless this problem is addressed. If it is not, no treatment will hold, no new learning will be properly integrated, no significant advances can be made. Psychotherapists who do not understand this problem or do not detect its presence will be baffled as to why certain clients, even after years of therapy, show no important improvement.

*Self-acceptance is my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship to myself.*

An attitude of basic self-acceptance is what an effective psychotherapist strives to awaken in a person of even the lowest self-

To be self-accepting is to be on my own side—to be *for* myself. In the most fundamental sense, self-acceptance refers to an orientation of self-value and self-commitment that derives from the fact that I am alive and conscious.

esteem. This attitude can inspire an individual to face whatever he or she most needs to encounter within without collapsing into self-hatred, repudiating the value of his or her person, or relinquishing the will to live. It entails the declaration: "I choose to value myself, to treat myself with respect, to stand up for my right to exist." This primary act of self-affirmation is the base on which self-esteem develops.

It can lie sleeping and then suddenly awake. It can fight for our life, even when we are filled with despair. When we are on the brink of suicide, it can make us pick up the telephone and call for help. From the depths of anxiety or depression, it can lead us to the office

of a psychotherapist. After we have endured years of abuse and humiliation, it can fling us finally into shouting, "No!" When all we want to do is lie down and die, it can impel us to keep moving. It is the voice of the life force. It is "selfishness" in the noblest meaning of that word. If it goes silent, self-esteem is the first casualty.

### THE SECOND LEVEL

Self-acceptance entails our willingness to experience—that is to make real to ourselves without denial or evasion—that we think what we think, feel what we feel, desire what we desire, have done what we have done, and are what we are. It is the refusal to regard any part of ourselves—our bodies, our emotions, our thoughts, our actions, our dreams—as alien, as "not me." It is our willingness to experience rather than to disown whatever may be the facts of our being at a particular moment—to think our thoughts, own our feelings, be present to the reality of our behavior.

The willingness to experience and accept our feelings carries no implication that emotions are to have the last word on what we do. I may not be in the mood to work today; I can acknowledge my feelings, experience them, accept them—and then go to work. I will work with a clearer mind because I have not begun the day with self-deception.

Often, when we fully experience and accept negative feelings, we are able to let go of them; they have been allowed to have their say and they relinquish center stage.

Self-acceptance is the willingness to say of any emotion or be-

havior, “This is an expression of me, not necessarily an expression I like or admire but an expression of me nonetheless, at least at the time it occurred.” It is the virtue of realism, that is of respect for reality applied to the self.

If I am thinking these disturbing thoughts, I am thinking them; I accept the full reality of my experience. If I am feeling pain or anger or fear or inconvenient lust, I am feeling it—what is true, is true—I do not rationalize, deny, or attempt to explain away. I am feeling what I am feeling and I accept the reality of my experience. If I have taken actions of which I am later ashamed, the fact remains that I have taken them—that is reality—and I do not twist my brain to make facts disappear. I am willing to stand still in the presence of what I know to be true. What is, is.

To “accept” is more than simply to “acknowledge” or “admit.” It is to experience, stand in the presence of, contemplate the reality of, absorb into my consciousness. I need to open myself to and fully experience unwanted emotions, not just perfunctorily recognize them. For example, suppose my wife asks me, “How are you feeling?” and I answer in a tense, distracted manner, “Rotten.” Then she says sympathetically, “I see that you are really feeling depressed today.” Then I sigh, the tension begins to flow out of my body, and in an altogether different tone of voice—the voice of someone who is now real to himself—I say, “Yes, I am feeling miserable, really miserable,” and then I begin to talk about what is bothering me. When, with my body tensed to resist the experience of my feelings, I had answered

“Rotten,” I was denying my emotion at the same time that I was acknowledging it. My wife’s sympathetic response helped me to experience it, which cleared the way for me to begin to deal with it. Experiencing our feelings has direct healing power.

I can acknowledge some fact and move on with such speed that I only imagine I am practicing self-acceptance; I am really practicing denial and self-deception. Suppose my supervisor is trying to explain why something I have done on the job was a mistake. She speaks benevolently and without recriminations, and yet I am irritable, impatient, and wish she would stop talking and go away. While she is talking, I am obliged to stay with the reality of having made an error. When she is gone I can banish the reality from my consciousness—I *admitted my mistake, isn’t that enough?*—which increases the likelihood that I will make the error<sup>3</sup> or one like it again.

Self-acceptance is the precondition of change and growth. Thus if I am confronted with a mistake I have made, in accepting that it is mine I am free to learn from it and to do better in the future. I cannot learn from a mistake I cannot accept having made.

*I cannot forgive myself for an action I will not acknowledge having taken.*

If I refuse to accept that often I live unconsciously, how will I learn to live more consciously? If I refuse to accept that often I live irresponsibly, how will I learn to live more responsibly? If I refuse to accept that often I live passively, how will I learn to live more actively?

I cannot overcome a fear whose reality I deny. I cannot correct a problem in the way I deal with my associates if I will not admit it exists. I cannot change traits I insist I do not have. I cannot forgive myself for an action I will not acknowledge having taken.

A client once became angry with me when I attempted to explain these ideas to her. “How do you expect me to accept my abysmally low level of self-esteem?” she demanded indignantly. “If you do not accept the reality of where you are now,” I answered, “how do you imagine you can begin to change?” To understand this point, we must remind ourselves that “accepting” does not necessarily mean “liking,” “enjoying,” or “condoning.” I can accept what is—and be determined to evolve from there. It is not acceptance but denial that leaves me stuck.

I cannot be truly for myself, cannot build self-esteem, if I cannot accept myself.

### THE THIRD LEVEL

Self-acceptance entails the idea of compassion, of being a friend to myself.

Suppose I have done something that I regret or of which I am ashamed and for which I reproach myself. Self-acceptance does not deny reality, does not argue that what is wrong is really all right, but it inquires into the context in which the action was taken. It wants to understand the why. It wants to know why something that is wrong or inappropriate felt desirable or appropriate or even necessary at the time.

*Accepting, compassionate interest does not encourage undesired*

*behavior but reduces the likelihood of it recurring.*

We do not understand another human being when we know only that what he or she did is wrong, unkind, destructive, or whatever. We need to know the internal considerations that prompted the behavior. There is always some context in which the most offensive actions can have their own kind of sense. This does not mean they are justified, only that they can be understandable.

I can condemn some action I have taken and still have compassionate interest in the motives that prompted it. I can still be a friend to myself. This has nothing to do with alibiing, rationalizing, or avoiding responsibility. After I take responsibility for what I have done, I can go deeper—into the context. A good friend might say to me, “This was unworthy of you. Now tell me, what made it feel like a good idea or at least a defensible one?” This is what I can say to myself.

Just as when we need to reproach or correct others, we should wish to do so in ways that do not damage self-esteem—since future behavior will be shaped by self-concept—so we should bring this same benevolence to ourselves. This is the virtue of self-acceptance.

#### AN EXERCISE

By way of introducing clients to the idea of self-acceptance, I often like to begin with a simple exercise. It can offer a profound learning experience.

Stand in front of a full-length mirror and look at your face and body. Notice your feelings as you

do so. I am asking you to focus not on your clothes or your makeup but on *yourself*. Notice if this is difficult or makes you uncomfortable. It is good to do this exercise naked.

You will probably like some parts of what you see more than others. If you are like most people, you will find some parts difficult to look at for long because they agitate or displease you. In your eyes there may be a pain you do not want to confront. Perhaps you are too fat or too thin. Perhaps there is some aspect of your body you so dislike that you can hardly bear to keep looking at it. Perhaps you see signs of age and cannot bear to stay connected with the thoughts and emotions these signs evoke. So the impulse is to escape, to flee from awareness, to reject, deny, disown aspects of your self.

Still, as an experiment, I ask you to stay focused on your image in the mirror a few moments longer and say to yourself, “Whatever my defects or imperfections, I accept myself unreservedly and completely.” Stay focused, breathe deeply, and say this over and over again for a minute or two without rushing the process. Allow yourself to experience fully the meaning of your words.

You may find yourself protesting, “But I don’t *like* certain things about my body, so how can I accept them unreservedly and completely?” But remember “accepting” does not necessarily mean “liking.” “Accepting” does not mean we cannot imagine or wish for changes or improvements. It means experiencing, without denial or avoidance, that a fact is a fact. In this case, it means accepting that the face and body in the mirror are

your face and body and that they are what they are.

If you persist, if you surrender to the reality of what is, if you surrender to awareness (which is what “accepting” ultimately means), you may notice that you have begun to relax a bit and perhaps feel more comfortable with yourself and more real.

Even though you may not like or enjoy everything you see when you look in the mirror, you are still able to say, “Right now, that’s me. And I don’t deny the fact. I accept it.” That is respect for reality.

When clients commit to do this exercise for two minutes every morning and again every night for two weeks, they soon begin to experience the relationship between self-acceptance and self-esteem. A mind that honors sight honors itself. But more than that, how can self-esteem not suffer if we are in a rejecting relationship to our own physical being? Is it realistic to imagine we can love ourselves while despising what we see in the mirror?

They make another important discovery. Not only do they enter a more harmonious relationship with themselves, not only do they begin to grow in self-efficacy and self-respect, but if aspects of the self they do not like are within their power to change, they are more motivated to make the changes once they have accepted the facts as they are now.

We are not moved to change those things whose reality we deny.

And for those things we cannot change, when we accept them we grow stronger and more centered; when we curse and protest them, we disempower ourselves.

TURN TO PAGE 84



TONY STONE

# The Way of the Visionary

A N G E L E S   A R R I E N

*When we follow the way of the Visionary, we are able to make the truth visible. In indigenous societies visionaries may be shamans or artisans but what is more important, these societies encourage all members to seek and express truth.*

*The principle that guides the Visionary is telling the truth without blame or judgment. When we express the inner Visionary, we know and communicate our creative purpose and life dream, act from our authentic self, are truthful, and honor the Four Ways of Seeing.*



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#### CREATIVE PURPOSE AND LIFE DREAM

All cultures respect the importance of vision and its capacity to magnetize or open up the creative spirit. The archetype of the Visionary is familiar to us all as that sometimes quiet but relentless reminder not to forget our life dream or purpose.

Many native cultures of the Americas hold a belief that each in-

dividual is original medicine, nowhere duplicated on the planet; therefore it is important to bring one's creative spirit, life dream, or purpose to earth. Not to do so precludes healing from coming into our family and our professional lives. Our work is to come fully forward with our gifts, talents, and resources and to meet our tests and challenges. Gandhi recognized this simple truth when he said, "My life is my message."

#### AUTHENTICITY

When we remember who we are, we bring our authentic selves forward. Many times however we are forced at an early age to hide our true selves in order to survive. At some point this hiding becomes unnecessary yet we find it hard to

break the habit. Every day we choose anew whether we will support the authentic self or the false self.

Among some native cultures of the Americas, the term "Sacred Hoop" is synonymous with the term "authenticity" or being connected with one's spirituality. These peoples say that whenever we have the experience of being ourselves, we are "in our Sacred Hoop"; and when we have come home to who we are, we "sit inside our Sacred Hoop."

Ed McGaa, Eagle Man of the Oglala Sioux, reminds us in "Rainbow Tribe" of the power of ceremony and of returning home to self when he says, "The Great Mystery is obviously Truth. How close a people can come to the Creator's



Harmony will decide the reach of the power within a ceremony.”

The majority of the spiritual traditions cite two patterns that can take us out of our Sacred Hoop, out of our true nature. Psychiatrist Roger Walsh in his book “Staying Alive” describes those patterns as the *patterns of denial* and the *patterns of indulgence*. Every human being, regardless of cultural conditioning and family imprinting, experiences these patterns at some time.

We express denial in our lives when we avoid certain people or issues and when we see things only as we want them to be rather than to accept them as they are. Underneath every denial pattern is the underlying fear that we will not be able to handle conflict and a deep human need to maintain peace, balance, and harmony at all costs. In deep denial, we will abandon ourselves to keep the peace rather than communicate our feelings directly.

We express indulgence when we dramatize or sensationalize our experience. Often we exaggerate a situation or an issue in order to seek attention. Underneath this pattern is a high need for approval and acceptance that is ruled either by the fear of not being seen or the fear of being seen. People who make scenes, throw tantrums, or blow things out of proportion actually have a strong need for acceptance. Because they are terrified of their own feelings of insecurity or vulnerability, they use exaggeration as a way to hide those feelings.

It is the Visionary who knows how to dissolve the polarities and paradoxes that are found in pat-

## BELL WORK

*In most cultures the musical instrument that is equated with spirituality or calling people together is the bell. Archetypally, the bell serves as a sonic voice calling us back to remember our authentic purpose or “calling.” Cross-culturally, the bell is a way to connect us to the spiritual aspects of ourselves. In some shamanic traditions, people tie bells to their ankles and wrists to serve as a reminder to bring tribal dreams, visions, and prayers to Mother Earth. Tibetan bells, Hindu bells, Oriental gongs, African bells, and bell choirs are ways to reinforce life dreams, prayers, visions, and spiritual inspiration.*

terns of denial and indulgence. The thirteenth-century Persian poet Rumi (in “Open Secret” translated by Barks) describes this process:

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing  
and rightdoing there is a field.  
I’ll meet you there.*

We can free the field of creativity that exists within each of us by moving out of ideas of wrongdoing or rightdoing. When we can answer “yes” to the question, “Is my self-worth as strong as my self-critic?” then we are ready to engage our creative expression beyond patterns of denial or indulgence. Rumi suggests that the field of unlimited creativity is always available when we are connected to our authenticity.

### TRUTH-TELLING

It is the Visionary’s way to maintain authenticity and stay within the Sacred Hoop by telling the truth without blame or judgment. *Truth-telling* is a universal value that collapses patterns of denial and indulgence. Leslie Gray, from Oneida, Powattan, and Seminole lineage, who bridges the disciplines of Native Ethnic studies and psychology, says that in some native cultures speaking the truth is called “speaking with spirit tongue.” Author William Schutz, in “The Truth Option,” states that communication of truth makes for interpersonal richness. To present ourselves fully to each other, “and to have the most satisfying human relations, we must be both aware and honest.”

To tell the truth without blame or judgment is the capacity to say what is so. The following examples

illustrate how we can say what is so without abandoning our ideas or feelings. Each statement carries no blame or judgment and each reflects ways to “speak with spirit tongue.”

*“I’m jealous and afraid of losing you.”*

*“I feel so judgmental and critical right now that I don’t trust what will come out of my mouth.”*

*“I’m disappointed with this situation because I had unrealistic expectations.”*

*“I’m feeling insecure right now and need your reassurance.”*

*“I’m so angry and upset right now that I need to take space.”*

*“I don’t know where I stand with you.”*

*“This mode of communication doesn’t work for me.”*

*“I’m really excited about this new job, but I need more clarification on these tasks.”*

Communication that carries integrity always considers timing and context before the delivery of content. So often we know exactly what we want to say but we do not consider whether it is the right time or the right place in which to deliver the content of our communication. Direct communication—giving voice to what we see without blame or judgment—means we must consider the alignment of appropriate word choice, tone of voice, and body posture.

#### THE FOUR WAYS OF SEEING

It is important to honor the *Four Ways of Seeing: intuition, perception, insight, and vision*. Many indigenous

cultures recognize that intuition is the source that sparks external seeing (perception), internal viewing (insight), and holistic seeing (vision). For these societies, paying attention to these modes of seeing is a way to honor the sacred. We extend respect to our own visionary processes when we give voice to what we see or sense. The Visionary archetype impels us to bring our voice and creativity into the world.

The human resource of vision (the internal archetype of the Visionary) opens the creative spirit and pulls our voice and authenticity into the world. In “The Courage to Create,” psychoanalyst Rollo May states what shamanic traditions have practiced for centuries. “If you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself.”

The Visionary archetype—the relentless power within us that constantly extends an invitation to be who we are—requires the expression of authenticity, vision, and creativity. Writer Gertrude Stein tapped this archetype when she told emerging writers of her time, “You have to know what you want to get. But when you know that, let it take you. And if it seems to take you off the track, don’t hold back, because perhaps that is instinctively where you want to be. And if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will go dry.”•

*From the book “The Four-Fold Way” by Angeles Arrien. Copyright 1992 by Angeles Arrien. Printed by arrangement with Harper Collins San Francisco, a division of Harper Collins Publishers.*

## What’s Not Wrong

THICH NHAT HANH

We often ask, “What’s wrong?” Doing so, we invite painful seeds of sorrow to come up and manifest. We feel suffering, anger, and depression, and produce more such seeds. We would be much happier if we tried to stay in touch with the healthy, joyful seeds inside of us and around us. We should learn to ask, “What’s not wrong?” and be in touch with that. There are so many elements in the world and within our bodies, feelings, perceptions, and consciousness that are wholesome, refreshing, and healing. If we block ourselves, if we stay in the prison of our sorrow, we will not be in touch with these healing elements.

Life is filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. Our breathing for example can be very enjoyable. I enjoy breathing every day. But many people appreciate the joy of breathing only when they have asthma or a stuffed-up nose. We don’t need to wait until we have asthma to enjoy our breathing. Awareness of the precious elements of happiness is itself the practice of right mindfulness. Elements like these are within us and all around us. In each second of our lives we can enjoy them. If we do so, seeds of peace, joy, and happiness will be planted in us, and they will become strong. The secret to happiness is happiness itself. Wherever we are, any time, we have the capacity to enjoy the sunshine, the presence of each other, the wonder of our breathing. We don’t have to travel anywhere else to do so. We can be in touch with these things right now.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.



TONY STONE

# Breaking Our Patterns of Overdoing It

BRYAN ROBINSON

*Tears streamed down my cheeks. Emotionally exhausted and slumped in my seat, all I could do when the flight attendant asked me if I wanted something to eat was wave her away with my hand. I had lost so much weight I looked like a refugee from Dachau. During the takeoff, I didn't care if the plane crashed. Nothing mattered. I was on my way for a sunny week in Jamaica to escape the pain of breaking up a 14-year relationship. My life was crumbling under my feet, and there was nothing I could do about it. I felt like half a person. I didn't care if I lived or died. That was the spring of 1983.*

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I didn't know it at the time but I was living out the critical thinking patterns that I had learned growing up in my family. A few years later I would learn that these patterns had been in my family for three generations.

My grandmother was a compulsive overeater who died from a stroke attributed to her obesity. Her son, my father, was an alcoholic who died from cirrhosis of the liver. I swore I would never be like my "old man." I lived my first 30 years priding myself on the fact that I had "licked" the family disease because I had neither chemical nor food addictions. What I wouldn't discover until mid-life was that my family's faulty thinking had been passed down to me and had burrowed itself into the very core of my soul. My general outlook on life was polluted and my relationships eventually became contaminated. I saw myself as a victim of a bad life and a bad relationship.

"Why do all these horrible things keep happening to me?" I whimpered. "Maybe a trip to the Caribbean will ease the heartache."

All I could think about was how to get even with the third person who came between me and my beloved. I carried the hate and resentment as if they were excess luggage. I was so consumed with rage I lay awake until three or four in

Through meditation and affirmations, I was able to let go of my anger and resentment as I lay on the Jamaica beach. I started to notice changes in my life. The nightmares subsided. I felt an inner calm that I had never experienced before.

the morning, plotting and avenging my damaged emotions. Unknowingly all these negative obsessions hurt no one but myself.

My faulty thinking caused me to try everything to cope with my pain, except the things that could help me. I clung to my resentments, saw only misery and despair, blamed everybody else for my hardships and the breakup of my relationship and tried a change of scene to escape my pain. It never occurred to me that there was anything more I could do. My only option, as I saw it, was to react to life, rather than take action. In so doing I dis-empowered myself by playing the victim. I became cynical, negative and pessimistic—all of which ricocheted, slapped me in the face, and multiplied my misery and despair.

Through meditation and affir-

mations, I was able to let go of my anger and resentment as I lay on the Jamaica beach. I started to notice changes in my life. The nightmares subsided. I felt an inner calm that I had never experienced before, and I slept like a baby for the first time in weeks. I realized that there was something I could do to change my life. I realized that no matter how dismal things appear to be I don't have to be a victim. I learned that I cannot control everything that happens around me, but I can always take charge of what I think, feel, and do. This same awareness has helped me get in touch with my overdoing it, to slow down and to take better care of myself because I know I deserve it.

Everyone wants to live a happy life. But why are so many of us miserable so much of the time, constantly searching for serenity and calm with little success? Because we're looking in the wrong place.

An ancient tale about Nasrudin, who lost the key to his house on the way home one night, illustrates this point beautifully.

Nasrudin was down on all fours under the street lamp searching frantically for his key when a stranger came by and asked him what he was looking for. Nasrudin told him he had lost the key to his house. So the stranger, being a kind man, got down on his hands and knees and helped look for it. After hours of searching, the stranger asked, "Are you sure you dropped the key in this spot?" Nasrudin said, "Oh no! I dropped it way over there in that dark alley." Frustrated and angry, the stranger lost his temper, "Then why are you looking for it here?" Nasrudin replied, "Because the light's better here under the street lamp."

Those of us who overdo it are

# Real Love

THICH NHAT HANH

We really have to understand the person we want to love. If our love is only a will to possess, it is not love. If we only think of ourselves, if we know only our own needs and ignore the needs of the other person, we cannot love. We must look deeply in order to see and understand the needs, aspirations, and suffering of the person we love. This is the ground of real love. You cannot resist loving another person when you really understand him or her.

From time to time, sit close to the one you love, hold his or her hand, and ask, “Darling, do I understand you enough? Or am I making you suffer? Please tell me so that I can learn to love you properly. I don’t want to make you suffer, and if I do so because of my ignorance, please tell me so that I can love you better, so that you can be happy.” If you say this in a voice that communicates your real openness to understand, the other person may cry. That is a good sign, because it means the door of understanding is opening and everything will be possible again.

Maybe a father does not have time or is not brave enough to ask his son such a question. Then the love between them will not be as full as it could be. We need courage to ask these questions, but if we don’t ask, the more we love, the more we may destroy the people we are trying to love. True love needs understanding. With understanding, the one we love will certainly flower.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.

like Nasrudin. Our supercharged lives are stuck in fast forward and focused on the external world. We do not have an internal life. Overdoing it keeps us disconnected from ourselves, subtracts from our human value and prevents us from knowing who we are. We are so defined by what we do we don’t know who we are on the inside. The only way out of this dilemma is to redefine ourselves from within.

If unhappiness and discontent are created on the inside, doesn’t it make sense that to change our lives we must start there? As we learn to refrain from overdoing it we focus on an *inner* life, not an outer life. Wayne Dyer in his book “You’ll See It When You Believe It” puts it this way:

*We live inside, we think inside, our humanity resides within, yet we spend time ceaselessly looking outside of ourselves for the answers because we fail to illuminate the inside with our thoughts. We resist the principle that thought is everything we are because it seems easier to look outside.*

Once Nasrudin looks in the alley, he will illuminate his life and find his key. Once we look within ourselves, we achieve illumination and discover how to break our patterns of overdoing it.

Twenty-two-year-old Sheila worked for a computer company in New York City. She was bored and weary of the grind of morning rush hours, daily routines, and afternoon traffic jams. She had few friends and was generally unhappy with her life. Finally with her mother’s encouragement, Sheila decided to go to California to “find herself.” After a few months she decided that Los Angeles “was not

what it is cracked up to be” so she moved to Seattle.

Unfortunately moving across the country won’t help us find ourselves. We carry our old habits like luggage wherever we go. If we wake up feeling positive and optimistic in Detroit, we wake up feeling positive and optimistic in the Mediterranean. If we wake up anxious and pessimistic in Buffalo, we wake up anxious and pessimistic in the South Pacific.

Those of us who feel incomplete and unfinished often look outside to fill the void. We stuff our lives with projects, computer printouts, deadlines, unhealthy relationships, and material possessions. We become addicted to acquiring power and get consumed with making it to the top. We aim for worldly achievements, approval, and financial rewards. We become enslaved by greed, competition, and material gain as we try to heal our past insecurities and feelings of inadequacy.

We look in the wrong place when we constantly *do* in order to *be*. We are often so busy “getting there,” we forget we are already “there” and that there is nowhere else to go. All we really have is ourselves, and discovering the treasure of self is the key. All we need do is look within. It is this inner transformation that improves the quality of our lives.

Overdoing it keeps us stuck in the external world and in the cycle of never feeling good enough. Replacing constant busyness with a rich spiritual life can heal busy habits. Being puts us in touch with our inner world and takes us out of the future and puts us into the present. We discover how to *be* by living in the now and looking within and connecting with our own inner selves. Being allows us

to accept and love ourselves unconditionally, *exactly* as we are. Once we face, accept, and love ourselves, we no longer have to overdo to feel better about ourselves.

Healing from overdoing it comes from realizing that we cannot control anyone or anything but ourselves and that we can be responsible only for ourselves.

Only through interior change will you find what you have been looking for. It is not out there; it is inside of you. Everything comes from the way you think about yourself. If you want to change your life, change the way you think about yourself first. Everything else follows.

Inner healing occurs only through unconditional love. When you treat yourself as a worthy, loving, and competent human being, others begin to treat you that way and the world begins to operate that way for you. Harmony in the world begins with harmony within yourself. You will allow yourself to be led from within once you realize you are your own best guru. That's why "guru" is spelled, "Gee-You-Are-You."

#### SELF-NURTURANCE

When we put everyone's needs before our own, our needs get pushed to the back burner. Sometimes we resent not having time for ourselves. Self-nurturance is one of the most important qualities we can develop. It has helped me love myself unconditionally, to treat myself with kindness and caring as I would anyone I care about. It has allowed me to approach life with more calm, hope, and optimism.

No one can give us free time but ourselves. During quiet, reflective moments we can gain clarity and receive answers to life's challenging problems. Self-nurturance can

include listening to soft music, walking barefoot in a summer rainstorm, reading inspirational material, sitting by the ocean watching the waves, meditating in a quiet place or doing something we enjoy that we haven't done in a long time.

The answers within us always come when we put ourselves under the proper conditions. Meditation, prayer, contemplation, and mental relaxation all help us receive the answers we need. These activities help us connect with our intuitive parts that guide us from the heart instead of the head—that show us how to *be* instead of *do*. Relying on this "inner knowing" is just as important as using common sense. It's okay to listen to our gut when it says stop, take care, or slow down. As we eliminate overdoing it from our lives, we learn to listen with our hearts instead of our heads because this is how the intuitive self speaks to us and guides us.

When we reserve special time for self-nurturance, we send ourselves the message that we are important and worth our own care and attention. We create this time for ourselves by getting up 15 minutes earlier, going to bed 15 minutes later or taking 15 minutes at lunch time. We can always find time for ourselves if we really want it.

The first rule of thumb is to provide ourselves with a mental sanctuary where thoughts and items of doing are not present. We can create this inner place of calm, harmony, and contentment anywhere and any time. There is a power within us that brings peace, emotional and physical healing and serenity. With the help of this power, we can create the best life that we can envision. This power governs the universe and makes

trees grow and flowers bloom. With a power this strong we can create the best life possible. We can always go to this inner sanctuary to become refreshed, relaxed, and recharged.

#### HOW DO YOU GET TO THIS SANCTUARY?

Find a quiet place to sit, cross-legged or in a chair for about 15 minutes. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Let your body relax. Let go of any thoughts that interfere with this process. Feel all the tension in your body slowly drift down your arms and out through your hands and fingertips. Feel all the tension move down your spine, down your legs, and out through your feet and toes.

Let your mind rest and your heart be your guide. Your sanctuary can be anywhere and contain anything your heart desires to bring you peace and serenity. As you begin to feel relaxed, create in your mind a safe haven. It can be a void of warm darkness or one of your favorite places at the seashore or in the mountains. Or it can be a place of your own creation where you've never been before. See this place in detail in your mind and create item-by-item all the things around you that will make this *your* sanctuary. This is a place you can return to any time you choose. After you have a clear vision of your sanctuary, spend some time there. Before opening your eyes, make a mental note of it so that you can return to it as often and for as long as you like. •

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TONY STONE/TERRY VINE

# Essentials for Fostering Our Spiritual Growth

P E G T H O M P S O N

*As with any journey, our search for our own spiritual path requires preparation. When we travel, we prepare by planning and gathering everything we will need. If we are to sustain our spiritual journey, there are five essentials we must provide ourselves: kindly self-discipline, safety, an environment of empathy and trust, dialogue, and community.*

*Peg Thompson, Ph.D., is a psychologist and social worker who leads spiritual groups for women. From the book "Finding Your Own Spiritual Path," by Peg Thompson. Copyright 1994 by Peg Thompson. Printed by arrangement with Harper Collins San Francisco, a division of Harper Collins Publishers.*



**P**aradoxically, these requirements are also the results of spiritual growth. Our self-discipline helps us claim the time and energy we need to explore our connection with the sacred. As we explore, our sense of safety increases. As we grow in self-awareness, our sense of empathy and trust deepens. As we become more willing to share, our community of dialogue expands.

#### KINDLY SELF-DISCIPLINE

When we prune a tree, we remove small, weak branches to strengthen it. Without pruning, these branches may break off, exposing the tree to life-threatening diseases or insects. In the life of the spirit, self-discipline is like pruning. It directs our energy into some areas and not others. It protects us from pursuing too many activities superficially. It empowers us to move spirituality to a place of priority among our other commitments. It encourages us to grow strong.

What kind of discipline allows us progress on our spiritual path? It is kindly self-discipline—discipline that arises from a sense of care and responsibility for ourselves. Kindly

Kindly self-discipline, safety, empathy, trust, dialogue, and community foster spiritual growth. We must begin where we are, wherever that is. Small steps will lead to larger steps. Luckily, there is no timetable for healing. There is no hurry; we have a lifetime.

self-discipline honors our internal rhythms, our preferences, our commitments, our energy level, our style of engagement. It assumes our personal worth and meaning. It sees who we are now and envisions who we may become. It meets challenges that enhance our sense of vitality. It is willing to risk and to wait for results. If you have a great deal of difficulty summoning up this kind of discipline, you may find it useful to explore your family's patterns of correcting children's behavior.

In troubled families, discipline

may be problematic in three ways. Harsh discipline can create a climate of power in which someone wins at another's expense. Because it focuses on character rather than on behavior, harsh discipline does not allow the child to learn. Inconsistent discipline makes the consequences of any behavior wildly unpredictable. Finally, inadequate discipline creates an environment of chaos, meaninglessness, and even despair.

A family with harsh, inconsistent, or inadequate discipline wounds the spirit by placing outcomes above people. Members are neither seen nor counted; therefore, their very sense of self can be hurt repeatedly. True conversation cannot happen because fear or chaos dominates. Thus problems with discipline interfere with safety, love and trust, dialogue, and community.

Simply knowing what you learned in childhood may free you to go easy on yourself in your journey toward spiritual growth.

#### SAFETY

Safety provides us with a sheltered environment in which to grow. It allows us to keep our emerging spiritual self from being exposed to harsh or harmful people and experiences. If in our experience safety cannot be assumed, we will find it threatening to open ourselves to the holy. If our spirit is to grow however we must find a way to do just that.

Let me suggest two principles that may be helpful. First, you will probably want to find a place to read where you can be assured of uninterrupted time for reflection: a



# Investing in Friends

THICH NHAT HANH

Even if we have a lot of money in the bank, we can die very easily from our suffering. So, investing in a friend, making a friend into a real friend, building a community of friends, is a much better source of security. We will have someone to lean on, to come to, during our difficult moments.

We can get in touch with the refreshing, healing elements within and around us thanks to the loving support of other people. If we have a good community of friends, we are very fortunate. To create a good community, we first have to transform ourselves into a good element of the community. After that, we can go to another person and help him or her become an element of the community. We build our network of friends that way. We have to think of friends and community as investments, as our most important asset. They can comfort us and help us in difficult times, and they can share our joy and happiness.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.

restaurant, a library, a cozy spot in your kitchen or den.

Second, if you decide to use a journal it will be important to ensure that no one else has access to it. Knowing that someone else might read your most personal reflections is inhibiting. You may begin to write what that person wants to hear or will be impressed with; or, expecting criticism or judgment, you may not write all of your truth.

Ensuring your privacy may take some thought and planning. It may simply require telling your partner, children, parents, or others in your home that it is important that your journal be just for you. Some of you may need to find a place to lock up your journal or keep it outside your home.

## EMPATHY AND TRUST

As children, we learned how to relate to ourselves from the way our parents and other adults treated us. If they mistrusted us, we learned to doubt ourselves. If they ignored us, we acquired a tendency to neglect ourselves. If they humiliated us, we developed the habit of shaming ourselves. If they criticized us, we learned to scold ourselves.

If this has been your experience, you may treat yourself harshly or be only dimly aware of your inner world. To grow spiritually, you will need to practice listening to your thoughts and feelings without criticism, building up a relationship of empathy as you go.

Empathy allows us to trust ourselves to make decisions in our best

interests. We can set a pace and a depth of exploration that do not leave us feeling empty or overwhelmed. We can welcome the unfinished, confused, angry, upset, unruly, and resistant parts of ourselves as indispensable companions on our spiritual journey.

We can also create a climate of empathy and trust by calling up memories of times when we were cared for by loving people. Even those of us with the most violent or neglectful of childhoods nearly always can name at least one such person. It may have been an aunt or uncle, a sibling, a grandparent. It may have been a teacher, a minister, a coach or camp counselor, a neighbor. As adults, we may also have felt cared for by a significant other, therapist, sponsor, friends, family members, or even strangers.

## DIALOGUE

Spiritual growth flourishes in dialogue with others.

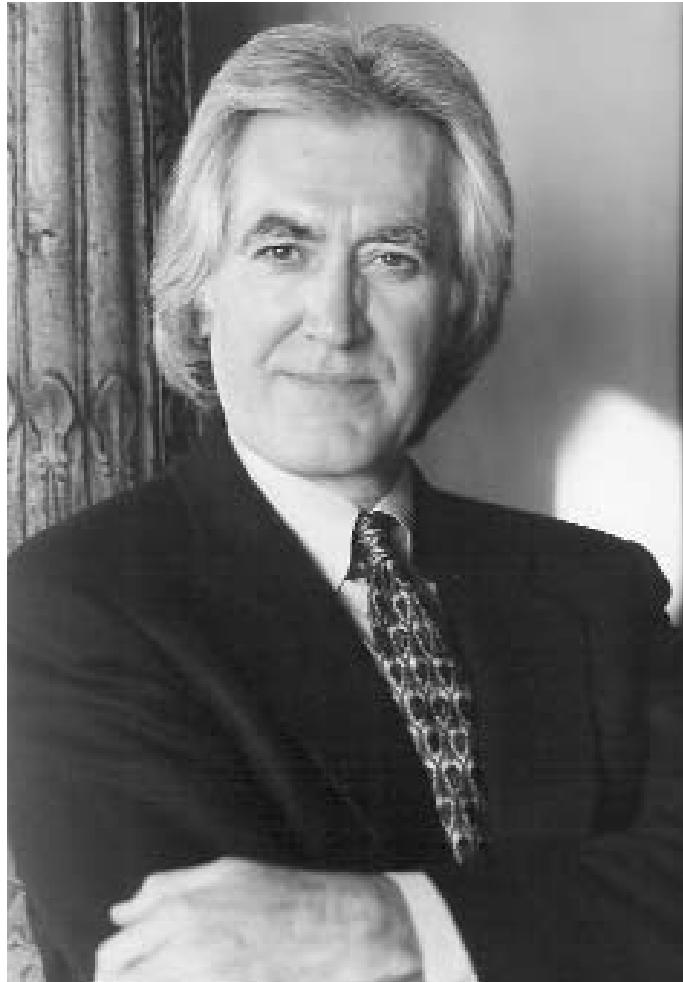
We may fear dialogue for any number of reasons. If we were silenced in early life, we may not know how to put into words what is in our heart. We may be afraid we will sound childish or inappropriate. We may not believe that we will be heard. We may expect to be condemned. If we come from a family that is rigid about religion, we may anticipate that others will tell us the “right” way. These fears and expectations may cause us to try to journey alone, without talking to others and without hearing their stories.

If traumatized as adults—for example by rape or battering—we

TURN TO PAGE 72

# The Power of Prayer

AN INTERVIEW WITH LARRY DOSSEY M.D.  
BY MARY NURRIESTEARN



Prayerfulness is not doing, it is being, it's a state of consciousness. Its hallmark is love, compassion, and deep caring. It goes beyond words and activity. It may involve doing nothing, just being silent.

*Larry Dossey, M.D., is the author of "Space, Time and Medicine," "Beyond Illness," "Recovering the Soul," and "Meaning and Medicine." He lectures internationally and in 1988 was invited to deliver the annual Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture in New Delhi. He is the only physician ever invited to do so. He is former Chief of Staff of Humana Medical City Dallas and current co-chairman of the newly established Panel on Mind/Body Interventions, Office of Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health.*

*LOTUS: As a physician, why did you want to study prayer as a healing agent?*

LARRY DOSSEY: Actually I didn't. I came into this area kicking and screaming. Like most physicians, I felt that prayer was not in the same league as surgery. However, I became interested in the dynamics of consciousness in the 1980's when a study came out involving prayer in the coronary care unit at San Francisco Hospital. I was shocked by the findings. I realized that if I pursued the workings of consciousness I had to look into this area. I did not want to because of the religiosity but as I became involved, it became clear that prayer went far beyond religion and connected with the spiritual issues I had long been interested in. I began to explore the research, what constituted prayer, and the ability of prayerful states of mind to effect people. "Healing Words" is not a religious tract. I don't belong to any religious organization. It's an attempt to understand the place of spirituality in human life and how consciousness works.

*LOTUS: "Healing Words" is an investigation into prayer. What is prayer?*

LARRY DOSSEY: I have talked to thousands of people about that question and as far as I'm concerned, prayer doesn't fit with the view most people have in our culture. The broadest definition of prayer is communication with the absolute. For most people in the United States this involves speaking words to a personal God, a male patriarch. I invite people to define for themselves what they mean by communication and by the absolute, which may mean

Prayer certainly is effective. What is frustrating is that in any individual case, you cannot predict how effective prayer will be. Prayer is shown to be effective by looking at the effects across a group of people. In the heart attack study, four hundred people were involved and prayer statistically worked.

God, Allah, Buddha, or a sense of majesty order and duty in the universe. I am nervous about defining prayer along cultural lines, so I simply say that prayer is communication with the absolute, and let people work with that definition any way they wish.

*LOTUS: Is prayer a healing agent?*

LARRY DOSSEY: When people pray they can become healthier.

There are legendary stories of people with horrible diseases who did not seek other treatment. They prayed and the disease went away. Was prayer a healing agent in those instances or was it coincidental that they prayed and got well? This can be tested in the laboratory and the answer is yes. Prayer functions in healing ways and is connected with healing. Studies which demonstrate this number up to one hundred and fifty. About two-thirds of these studies show that prayer exerts a healing effect. This cannot be easily explained by chance. The effect is real; it occurs in even lower organisms. Prayer works to effect healthier states in bacteria, fungi, germinating seeds, rats and mice, and on and on. Research shows that prayer and prayerful states of mind that involve love, compassion, and empathy are connected with healing.

*LOTUS: How effective is it?*

LARRY DOSSEY: It depends upon the situation. The effectiveness is demonstrable in studies on human beings. In the study on people with heart attacks, fewer people who were prayed for died. They required fewer potent drugs and none wound up on a mechanical ventilator. Prayer certainly is effective. What is frustrating is that in any individual case, you cannot predict how effective prayer will be. Prayer is shown to be effective by looking at the effects across a group of people. In the heart attack study, four hundred people were involved and prayer statistically worked. You don't know in any given case if prayer will heal a heart attack. You pray and you see, which is what we do with penicillin and surgery and anything else in

medicine. You never know what is going to work. You use something and see what happens.

This brings up the issue of faith. Is it going to work? You can't know for sure. So you better have faith that it might work or you probably won't even use it. Even though science answers the question, "Does it work," mysteries remain. Prayer is worth trying because it does work.

**LOTUS:** *In your chapter, "Saints, Sinners, Health, and Illness," you point out that great spiritual leaders have suffered painful deaths. What's the significance of that fact?*

LARRY DOSSEY: You can be spiritually advanced and become very sick. We should look at this phenomenon seriously because there is widespread assumption in our culture, particularly in the new age movement, that if we do our spiritual work and stay on our path, we should expect good health. People say things such as, "If I had done my work the biopsy would have come back negative, not positive. I had some work to do and didn't do it." There are many variations of this but basically the idea permeating our culture is if you become spiritual enough, you should not get sick. This is not always the case. I talked about saints and mystics who had terrible diseases to remind people that we can be spiritually perfect and still have problems. This is what the book of "Job" in the Bible is about. Job was perfect yet he had a terrible disease; his ten children died; and he lost his wealth. I don't want to depress people but I don't want them naively to assume that good health is always a reward for living

a life of spiritual perfection. Why saints and mystics get sick is a mystery. It may have to do with karma. Perhaps some actually choose illness to challenge themselves to burn off any remaining attachment or ego in their lives. The point is that spiritually advanced people do get sick, whatever the reason. There is an epidemic of new age guilt where people blame themselves and internalize failure for becoming ill. If saints and mystics get sick that ought to say something about the rest of us. Even the Buddha died of food poisoning. If the Buddha, which means literally "The Awakened One," can die of something as ordinary as that, it is a lesson for the rest of us.

**LOTUS:** *What is the difference between prayer and prayerfulness.*

LARRY DOSSEY: Prayer usually involves some sort of ritual. It is often a verbal request or statement to communicate to the absolute or the divine. It is an activity, something we do. Prayerfulness is not doing, it is being. Prayerfulness is a state of consciousness. Its hallmark is love, compassion, and deep caring. It goes beyond words and activity. It may involve doing nothing, just being silent. Prayerfulness can be a conscious state of living. Prayerfulness is an attitude that deserves more attention. It is a way of being that actually permeates who we are. We can live in this state twenty-four hours a day. Great saints such as St. Francis did this. For me it is the deepest way of being in prayer. I think it is far more genuine than what we call prayer. I want to bring out this distinction to shift from the idea that prayer is always something you do.

**LOTUS:** *How does prayer*

*related-healing or prayerfulness fit into medical science?*

LARRY DOSSEY: If something affects human bodies with changes in physiology, it ought to be the concern of medicine. We as doctors ought to pay attention, particularly as prayer can prevent illness, can heal, and even prevent death-as these studies indicate.

**LOTUS:** *You describe prayer as a non-local manifestation of consciousness. What does non-local mean?*

LARRY DOSSEY: Non-local refers to the relationship of the mind to the body. A local concept means that my mind is localized to my brain and to the present moment. A non-local perspective means that my mind might not be localized to my body or even to the present. Almost all of the mind-body methods that we hear about today are local. They involve an individual using consciousness to make a healthful change in his or her body. Meditation, imagery, and visualization are examples. Non-local techniques involve the use of one person's mind to affect someone else at a distance (who doesn't even know about it). Basically that is what prayer is, distant intercessory prayer. There are non-local consciousness studies in transpersonal imagery, imagery beyond the person. It has been shown by experiment that the images of one individual can affect the physiology of a distant person, even when the distant person is unaware that this is being done.

**LOTUS:** *Can you give an example?*

LARRY DOSSEY: Sure. You have one person at one end of the

campus and another person, quite far away, down the hall in the same building or possibly on the other side of the earth. One individual forms images visualizing that the other distant individual's physiology is going to change. For instance, she might image that this distant person will become more tranquil and relaxed. This effect can be measured by looking at the electrical conductivity of the skin, which is controlled by the autonomic nervous system, so you can tell when the effect has taken place in the recipient of this image. One person makes the image and the other person's body changes. This has been demonstrated in various experiments. This is not explainable by a local perspective that my mind affects only me; it doesn't do anything to anybody else. Here is a mind acting non-locally at great distance. You can also separate people by great distance and wire each of them to an EEG machine to make a brain wave recording. They initially show different EEG tracings with no correlation to each other. When they come together in love and empathy and develop a heart connection at a distance, their EEG patterns, brain wave tracings, resemble each other and often become identical. This demonstrates the ability of love to transcend enormous distance and affect the physiology of another individual.

There is another fascinating non-local manifestation of the mind called non-local diagnosis. Medical intuitive Caroline Myss works with Dr. Norman Shealy. Caroline is able to diagnose from almost two thousand miles away when Dr. Shealy provides her with the first name and birth date

of the patient. She is ninety-three percent accurate. Being done non-locally with that degree of accuracy is medically important. Internists don't do that well even with the advantage of the patient being present, with the aid of lab tests, medical history, and physical exams. This is stunning.

The distant effect of prayer is one of the most non-local demonstrations of consciousness I know of. I leave the idea of God and Goddess out of this. I call this effective consciousness but invite readers to include God or Goddess in the loop if they wish.

*LOTUS: You said in your book that empathy or heart connection underlines many non-local events.*

LARRY DOSSEY: It is important to bring that out. In studies on distant intercessory prayer, if the individual praying does not have a sense of connectedness and bonding with whatever he or she is praying for and if feelings of empathy, deep caring, compassion, and love are not present, these experiments do not work. In testimonials throughout history of great healers, almost all of them say to heal at a distance you have to care.

This is not just a cold exercise, a cute laboratory trick we are talking about. This is a heart thing, a matter of caring and compassion. Studies show that love is tremendously important, whatever religion the individual professes. Prayers of any religion work in the laboratory so long as the individual loves. Fundamentalists often react negatively to this. Fundamentalists in all religions think that they cornered the market on prayer, that their prayers work and others don't. When tested this is not the

way it turns out. Love penetrates all the religions. Christians can find great comfort in this because we have always said that "God is love."

*LOTUS: What about prayer and ethics? Should you pray for a person without his or her permission?*

LARRY DOSSEY: This is a sensitive area. People need to make up their own minds about this. As long as one has compassion, empathy, integrity, and good intent, I think the problem solves itself. If you approach prayer with the thought, "May the best thing happen for this person," or "May thy will be done," and do not try to impose any particular outcome, I think your ethical bases are covered. You are not trying to impose your ethical trip on anyone if you do a non-directed type of prayer. You can leave it up to the intelligence of the Universe or to God or Goddess to answer the prayer or not. That is how I approach the ethics of this question. If you want to approach a specific outcome, the ethics are a little more clouded as you are imposing your preferences on an individual which may conflict with that person's preferences. I know some atheists at heart who despise the idea of being prayed for. That does not stop me for praying for them personally, because I simply pray, "May the highest good be obtained for that person."

Also, the issue of urgency comes in here. How urgent is this situation? If your child is walking to the brink of a cliff, you do not obtain written consent before you yank your child back from disaster. You simply act out of instinct, love, and caring. There are situations like that with everyone we love. People

get sick, have accidents, and tragedies happen. You do not have opportunity in every case to sort out whether or not they are willing to have you pray for them. You have to follow your heart. As long as you are guided by compassion and the highest good, you are justified in praying without consent.

*LOTUS: Where do prayers go?*

LARRY DOSSEY: The old answer would be that they go up to God, and God sends the effect to the person being prayed for. This strikes me as an image of a communications satellite. You bounce prayers off God who reflects them down to their destination. I believe that is a hopelessly inadequate image. God is omnipresent, present everywhere. If God, the Divine or the Absolute, is present everywhere, there is no need for prayers to go anywhere. God is in all places, is infinite, is even within the prayer making the prayer. Prayers don't have to travel anywhere. We are all linked in non-local unity. At all times, there is level of who we are that is at one with everyone's consciousness. Part of that reality includes an indwelling divinity in us all. Because I believe unity, not separateness, is fundamental reality, I don't think that prayers travel anywhere.

*LOTUS: You also said, "If prayer were sent, or if energy were involved, travel would weaken this energy and prayer's effects would be shielded."*

LARRY DOSSEY: I am not a fan of energy explanations. Prayers don't behave like energy. All subtle forms of energy that we know of become weaker the farther they go from the source. You can shield all

## Human volition, desire, and emotion can set the stage for change in the physical world. What we think, feel, and do changes what occurs.

known forms of electromagnetic energy. You can not shield prayer. This has been tried, and prayer gets through as if the barrier were not there. It does not become weaker with distance it is not a function of distance. There is nothing known that can stop, block or reduce its effect. We need another word. We do better to call prayer "Factor X" than energy. The words energy and subtle energy have become part of the vocabulary in thinking about these things but don't describe what is happening. I would rather call it "love" or "consciousness."

*LOTUS: What about using prayer intentionally.*

LARRY DOSSEY: There is something about the way consciousness exists in the world which allows volition, intention, caring, and compassion to make a difference in how the physical world behaves. Human volition, desire, and emotion can set the stage for change in the physical world. What we think, feel, and do changes what occurs.

The physical world is not on automatic. I don't know why the world is arranged this way; I didn't design the universe; I just work here. I really like science because you can do neat, clean experiments and test your ideas. The ability of a compassionate loving attitude of one person to effect another person at a distance occurs. That is intentionality manifesting in a very significant way. Why does that happen? That is simply how the world works.

*LOTUS: What are the best ways to pray?*

LARRY DOSSEY: Only two ways have been looked at that I know of, directed and non-directed prayer. Directed is where you pray for a specific outcome. Non-directed is the "thy will be done, may the best thing happen" approach. The bottom line is that both methods work. It isn't that one works and the other doesn't. It is important to figure out which is right for you. You have to go beyond formulas and books and look into who you are. There is a profound relationship between one's innate psychological temperament and the method of prayer that seems right. Extroverted people usually feel comfortable with directed prayer, the "go get'em, make it happen" prayer. Introverted people feel better with the "may thy will be done, may the best thing happen" approach. They are less likely to put their wishes out front. Complications can develop if you try to instruct an introvert in an extroverts' way to pray or vice versa. When you instruct introverts in an extroverts' of prayer, they say, "This isn't working out for me. I must be doing something wrong. This

doesn't feel right." When you instruct extroverts in an introvert's way of praying, they say, "This is too passive. I can't sit still here. This isn't working." You have to connect the prayer strategy to who the person is. We ought to be flexible about this. Books and weekend seminars give the same old tired instructions. They treat people as cookie cutter clones, advising that there is one right way. We as therapists ought to honor who people are and be flexible.

One medieval prayer book talked about two different ways of praying, the way of Mary and the way of Martha.

The way of Martha was the extroverted, directed, action-packed way. The way of Mary was the inner-directed, quiet way of prayer. The author said that both ways were appropriate. You have to discover which is right for you.

**LOTUS:** *Can prayer hurt or harm?*

LARRY DOSSEY: People don't want to look at the shadow side of life. People want to keep God's skirts clean and don't want to link the idea of deity with authorization of evil. This has been a problem theologically in western Christianity for two thousand years. We have invented every conceivable way to get around this problem. Can evil exist even in prayer? We invented the devil for evil. People can analyze this any way they wish but again, this is something you can test.

You can study ten test tubes of bacteria. Five get prayed for and five do not. The person who prays is a long way off. One study was done with the person fifteen miles from the test tubes. He prayed that

There isn't a perfect way to select a doctor. My shorthand method is that if after going to a doctor the first time you feel worse than you felt before you went you probably should not select that doctor for your physician. Doctors are supposed to make you feel better.

they become healthier. When bacteria become healthier, they grow faster. This growth was measured. The five test tubes he prayed for grew faster. That was a positive effect. Then the individual was instructed to do the opposite. Their growth was retarded. Prayer made them grow slower. These studies showed that an individual has the ability to enhance or harm the healthiness of something simple like a bacterial system. This is also true with fungi. You can't test this scientifically with human beings. No experimental review committee

at any hospital or any medical school would give permission to possibly harm anyone in an experiment. That is illegal.

Can you find anything in human life to suggest that prayer can hurt? I asked anthropologists this question. They know about cultures outside of their own so I figured if anybody knew about this, they would. The most interesting answer was from Michael Harner, author of "The Way of the Shaman." Harner lived for many years in the Amazon. He said that this is taken to be a natural event in tribes who live in the Amazon. They know that prayer can harm as well as hurt. Native American shamans in northern New Mexico also say prayer works both ways and assume there is a dark side to prayer. They call it distant hexing. Some people in the Caribbean call it "voodoo." Almost all cultures, other than western European cultures, believe that you can use these mental capacities for harm at a distance. The most dramatic example I came across was the custom of death prayer. In one case the Kahuna people in Hawaii prayed to death an individual on a distant island who was causing trouble in another culture and wouldn't respond to any correction. So based upon laboratory experiments with lower organisms and observations in other cultures, I believe there is a light and a shadow side to prayer. It is a sobering reminder to be careful about how we think and feel about other people.

**LOTUS:** *You said that many healers who use prayer admit its potential for harm and operate out of the ethic to use their abilities only for good.*

LARRY DOSSEY: There are dark shamans who cast spells who do the opposite but I don't want to leave it there. All the cultures who believe in this negative aspect also believe that you don't have to be vulnerable for this sort of thing. They all have protective devices and counter prayers to protect against negative non-local influences. Northern New Mexico Native Americans have colorful, exotic rituals and ceremonies to purge, cleanse, and protect. I have not seen any culture who didn't believe in these things. Even Christians have a way of protection. One of the final phrases in the Lord's Prayer says, "Deliver us from evil."

*LOTUS: We have been discussing the power of prayer. You also said that the physician's belief system powerfully influences the patient's response to therapy. How do we select a doctor?*

LARRY DOSSEY: There isn't a perfect way to select a doctor. My shorthand method is that if after going to a doctor the first time you feel worse than you felt before you went you probably should not select that doctor for your physician. Doctors are supposed to make you feel better. Ask yourself how you feel about this individual. Stand on your own two feet and do not be dominated by somebody in a white coat with a bunch of diplomas on the wall. Bear in mind that you are the patient. This is becoming tricky in this age of HMO's where you have an approved list of physicians to go to. The doctor of your heart's desire may not be affiliated with your particular HMO, so use common sense. If you have to stick with a doctor and there's no way you can arrange for one of

your choice, develop some understanding with yourself. Develop your own agenda for this relationship and be hard-headed and bottom-lined about it. Use that doctor for technical expertise and get your other needs met elsewhere. If your doctor doesn't pray for you or come from a position of love and empathy, get that elsewhere. Get it from friends, a prayer group, a church congregation or a circle of women or men; but get it. Do not leave that base uncovered. Doctors don't have to provide it all. We ought to require that they be technically expert but they are humans on their own path of understanding. Some are far along and some are not. I'm a big fan of prayer groups. Frankly if I had a serious medical problem, I wouldn't depend on my doctor to cover all those bases. I would get on every prayer list I knew, which I valued, in addition to seeking out a technically talented doctor.

*LOTUS: What lies ahead as far as prayer, and healing, and medical science are concerned?*

LARRY DOSSEY: This is a great time to be involved in medicine. At long last doors are opening, providing opportunities for many factors and influences to enter medicine. We are getting over intellectual indigestion in medicine toward the spiritual. Data shows that prayer and religious practices do exert positive effects on health and it is becoming part of medical dialogue. I know that things are loosening up because I am invited to talk to medical schools and hospitals across the country. I know what is on the minds of thousands of physicians. We will eventually see prayer and religious practice

brought into the medical mainstream and given honored recognition as something you do to improve health. Currently, more than thirty out of one hundred medical schools in the United States have courses in alternative therapy. Many of these courses talk about the data you and I have discussed. They inform young physicians that religious practice is a very important health factor. With time we will give an increasingly honored place to these factors in healing. The end result will be a restoration of the spiritual in healing, the way it was before we sanitized medicine.

My belief is that science and spirituality will stop trying to exterminate one another and join forces. It is about time. It is urgent that harmony develop between science and religion. Someone said that the 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be at all. I believe there is some truth to that. Time is not on our side. Urgency is evident if you look at what is happening to the planet, our culture, our families, our schools, and our government. Unless we spiritualize our science and our institutions we are going to be in serious trouble. There are groups just as extreme and dogmatic in the spiritual as in the scientific domain. We must struggle for balance between these two extremes. The challenge for us is to keep the pendulum from swinging from one extreme to the other. We are challenged to find that middle point, a place of integrity, impeccability, and wisdom. I think that science and spirituality can come together. And frankly, I'm having the time of my life. •



A CONVERSATION WITH  
ROBERT AITKEN ROSHI AND BENELECTINE  
BROTHER DAVID STEINDL-RAST

# Practicing Perfection

A BENEDICTINE CHRISTIAN—ZEN BUDDHIST DIALOGUE

*BROTHER DAVID STEINDL-RAST: Like many earnest practitioners, I'm a perfectionist. Coping with this tendency has been a lifelong struggle for me, though it's less of a struggle now than in the past. I've come to my own way of working with this, but I want to ask how you advise people who are stuck in this trap.*

*ROBERT AITKEN ROSHI: I'm reminded of a conversation I had with Yamada Roshi with respect to a person who was studying with both of us. I said, "I think that student tends to be perfectionistic," and he answered, "Well, I think it's wonderful to try to be perfect." I thought about that for a long time and viewed his words in terms of the six Buddhist perfections—charity, virtuous conduct, forbearance, energy in moral development, focused meditation, and wisdom. Perfection of any of these virtues is a perfection of them all.*

*It's interesting that perfection can refer to a process—the process of perfecting one's playing of a piece of music, say, or perfecting a certain shot in tennis. In this sense, it really means making something better and better, not actually achieving an absolute state of perfectness. The word practice is similar. An attorney practices law and a doctor practices medicine. That means that the attorney or the doctor is doing it, not doing it in order to get somewhere but just doing it. Grasping this dual meaning of the term, we can move forward in our perfections.*

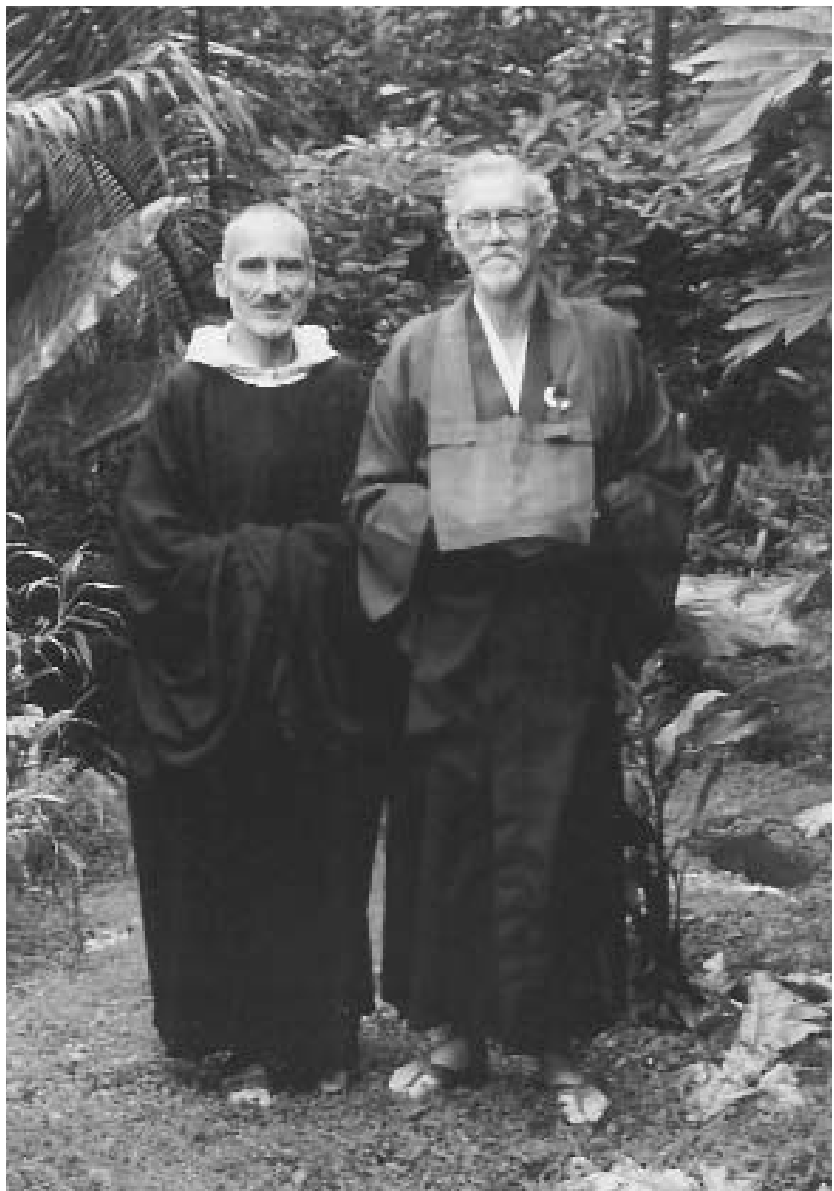
Robert Aitken Roshi's numerous publications include "Taking the Path of Zen," "The Mind of Clover," "Encouraging Words," and "The Gateless Barrier." He is the founder of the Diamond Sangha, an international network of Zen groups, and is the principal teacher at its original center in Hawaii. Benedictine Brother David Steindl-Rast divides his time between living as a hermit in Big Sur, California, and lecturing worldwide. He is the author of "Gratefulness: The Heart of Prayer" and "A Listening Heart" and collaborated with Fritjof Capra on a book of dialogues titled "Belonging to the Universe: Explorations on the Frontier of Science and Spirituality."



DAVID: Very helpful. This would mean for instance that I could say to myself, as a perfectionist, "Don't focus on reaching perfection. Focus on perfectly striving for it."

ROBERT: It's a lesson all of us need to learn. As children, we tend to be perfectionistic, "I want to do it exactly right." One responsibility of parents is to assure children that their best efforts are fine, that Grandma doesn't really care if your letter has lines that go uphill. We're in process of always getting better. If its parents don't help a child understand this, the child will grow up feeling, "That's too difficult for me, so I'm not going to even try. I can't do it well, so I'm not going to do it."

DAVID: I think most of us have both kinds of experiences—parents or teachers who demand perfection and leave us feeling discouraged and others who are encouraging, demanding no more perfection than the perfection of perfect striving. The latter are really our greatest help, for there's no denying that



*Brother David Steindl-Rast, left, and Robert Aitken Roshi, right.*

at every step we come across the imperfections of reality.

My way of dealing with reality's imperfection is to come to a breakthrough that I can only express this way: reality simply has to be perfect. Nothing less will do. But the moment it's at least perfectly imperfect, I can accept it. This isn't a play on words; it's not a little trick I'm putting over on myself. It's my way of expressing the anguish I have to deal with every day and the breakthrough that frees me from it.

ROBERT: This breakthrough, as you call it, is fundamental to realization all things are fine, essentially fine, just as they are. This isn't in any way a denial of my own faults or of poverty and war and the other horrors of the world, though literalists will tend to read it that way.

DAVID: In one sense, we must learn to be "comfortable with ourselves," but to what extent? Being too comfortable with oneself leads

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# The Global Brain

P E T E R R U S S E L L

*One personally memorable symbol of increasing planetary awareness was the Live Aid Concert in 1985. Spurred by the horror of hunger and destitution among fellow beings, a billion people around the world simultaneously watched a concert taking place across the planet. Halfway through, a fly walked across my television screen. As I watched the fly I thought how it was probably aware only of the patch of color beneath its feet. It had no idea of the picture that was created from the million dots upon my screen. Then I realized that I was but a fly on the screen of a planetary broadcast, aware only of myself and the image in front of me. Who knows what picture was being generated across the billion other minds that were tuned in to the same input?*

*Peter Russell earned an honors degree in theoretical physics and experimental psychology and a master's degree in Computer Science at the University of Cambridge, England. He traveled to India to study eastern philosophy and then began research into the psychology of meditation. His prime focus is the exploration and development of human consciousness, integrating eastern and western philosophies. He makes his home in Northern California.*



**T**elevision has brought the world closer in other ways. Portable video cameras in Karachi can transmit events to satellites 22,000 miles above the equator, which relay them to television studios around the Earth, where they are edited, processed, and broadcast “live” to the rest of the world. The eye of the portable video camera has become an eye of the “global brain.”

This capacity for instant social feedback has played a significant role in accelerating the pace of change. The Romanian revolution in December 1989, which seemed to rush itself through in time for the new decade, was very much a revolution by television. The leaders of the revolution had a direct channel of communication to the people, who in turn could watch the news as they made it. Without this instant feedback, the revolution may have taken a great deal longer or never have happened at all.

Nowhere is our accelerating pace of change reflected more clearly than in the increasing amounts of broadcast time dedicated to change itself—i.e., the

**Attachment to the material world as our primary source of happiness lies at the root of much of the craziness that humanity perpetrates upon the world. It is this that leads us to consume.**

“news.” Twenty years ago we had fifteen-minute bulletins, perhaps twice an evening. In the 1980s we became accustomed to one hour news programs on every channel—and at breakfast and lunch time, as well as in the evenings. “News,” claimed BBC chairman Marmaduke Hussey recently, “is our fastest expanding area of programming.” In the U.S.A., entire TV channels are devoted to the news. Ted Turner, the undisputed leader of this trend, has established his 24-hour news station, CNN, on five satellites spanning the globe. Now anyone, anywhere, can tune into the news at any time—and other media barons are in hot pursuit.

Satellite television has not been the only factor behind our increasing globalization. Mobile telephones, fax machines, and computer networks, all fledgling technologies ten years ago, are now household items for many, giving

us instant access to each other, wherever we might be. This increasing ease of communication has had its own impact on world events. In the Tiananmen Square uprising in China in the spring of 1989, students used college fax machines to communicate with each other and send information to colleagues around the world, who in turn faxed back their own reports. Authoritarian control of the news had become a much harder task.

The nerve fibers of the global network have also continued to develop rapidly. The world now has over 900 million telephones: about 17 for every 100 people on Earth. They may not be evenly distributed—Sweden has 64 per 100 people, the U.S.A. has 51 per 100, Europe 22, South America six, and Africa and China only one per 100—yet in every country the number is growing steadily. By the time you read this it will probably have reached a billion.

#### PLANETARY AWARENESS

The 1980s were also the years in which the environment hit the headlines. For two decades a small but growing band of people had been voicing their concern about the damage humankind was causing to its surroundings and the potential disasters that lay ahead. Yet frequently they were dismissed as “unduly alarmist”—or else simply ignored. As far as the media was concerned, the environment was a minority interest.

But in the summer of 1988 global alarm bells rang loud and clear. The news was now full of stories of dolphins dying by the thousands, lethal waste washing up on beaches, holes in the ozone layer, global warming, crop failures, poisoned lakes, dying trees, and burning forests. The global

# The Roots of Anger

THICH NHAT HANH

Anger is rooted in our lack of understanding of ourselves and of the causes, deep-seated as well as immediate, that brought about this unpleasant state of affairs. Anger is also rooted in desire, pride, agitation, and suspicion. The primary roots of our anger are in ourselves. Our environment and other people are only secondary. It is not difficult for us to accept the enormous damage brought about by a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a flood. But when damage is caused by another person, we don't have much patience. We know that earthquakes and floods have causes, and we should see that the person who has precipitated our anger also has reasons, deep-seated and immediate, for what he has done.

For instance, someone who speaks badly to us may have been spoken to in exactly the same way just the day before or by his alcoholic father when he was a child. When we see and understand these kinds of causes, we can begin to be free from our anger. I am not saying that someone who viciously attacks us should not be disciplined. But what is most important is that we first take care of the seeds of negativity in ourselves. Then if someone needs to be helped or disciplined, we will do so out of compassion, not anger and retribution. If we genuinely try to understand the suffering of another person, we are more likely to act in a way that will help him overcome his suffering and confusion, and that will help all of us.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.

mind had become conscious of its body.

Now, as we move through the final decade of this millennium, it is rapidly becoming clear that environmental issues can no longer be ignored. They pose the most serious threat humanity has ever experienced and if not given our full attention, may possibly nullify any plans we have for a party on New Millennium's Eve.

More significantly, it is not only individuals who are beginning to awaken to the urgency. There is a realization that business must move from the profit-oriented goal of economic growth to the ethic of sustainable development, in which "environmental capital" such as soil, forest, and ground and surface waters are given the same importance as financial capital. A growing number of corporate leaders recognize that if there is going to be a world in which business can continue to operate, it needs to be mindful of its own ecology. It should begin to regard itself and the environment as a single system, a closed loop in which everything is ultimately recycled. From this perspective, the value of an enterprise is measured not only in financial terms but also in terms of whether or not it leaves the Earth in as good a state as it found her.

## THE CONSCIOUSNESS CRISIS

Valuable as sustainable economic models may be in reducing ecological damage, they will not on their own be sufficient to meet the challenges ahead. The changes we need to make go far deeper. In order to develop a caring attitude towards the world, we need to develop a new model of ourselves, a new sense of who we are and what it is we really want. We have to move beyond the limited percep-

tion that sees fulfillment only in the joys we can derive from the world around. We must come to value our inner development as much as, if not more than, our material development. In other words, we need a change of attitude, a change of heart.

Recently some political leaders have been extolling the value of such a change in consciousness. For example, Vaclav Havel, former President of Czechoslovakia, speaking to a joint meeting of the U.S. Senate and Congress in February 1990, said that twenty-one years of suppression had given him one certainty.

*Consciousness precedes being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness, and in human responsibility.*

He concluded by arguing:

*Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed—the ecological, social demographic, or general breakdown of civilization—will be unavoidable.*

Perhaps the most important question humanity has to ask itself is whether this trend towards inner awakening is occurring fast enough. The values that dominate are, by and large, those that come from the need to sustain and defend our egocentric sense of identity. We know, for instance, that motor vehicle exhaust is a major contributor to the green-

house effect, the repercussions of which seriously threaten the future of human civilization. Yet few people are willing to forego the luxury of a car—indeed, automobile sales are still on the increase.

It is clear that the destruction of the ozone layer poses an even greater threat—not only to us, but to all life on Earth. Although we may be curtailing the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), other equally dangerous substances are still being produced, used and dispersed into the atmosphere on the grounds that “no satisfactory replacement is yet on the market.” Meanwhile governments are reluctant to impose tighter pollution controls on industry for fear that they may lose their support, and thus their power. Humanity would seem to be caught in a conflict between its self-created needs for security, approval, and power and the need to behave in ways which are life enhancing and in harmony with the environment.

Much of the blame for this self-centered attitude has been put upon our love for money. But this is not the root of the problem; it is only a symptom of a deeper issue. Our true bottom line is our own inner well-being. Behind everything that we do is the belief that it will lead, in one way or another, to greater satisfaction, fulfillment, happiness, or peace of mind.

There is nothing wrong with seeking happiness or peace of mind. It is the natural motivation behind all our thoughts and actions. Where we have gone wrong is in assuming that whether or not we are at peace depends upon what is happening in the world around us. This is why we value money. It gives us the power to change our experience. It buys us security, recognition, stimulus, or whatever

else we think we need. And we believe that if we had these needs fulfilled, then we ourselves would be fulfilled. Yet all too often, we find our salvation to be temporary. Soon these needs arise again and we are driven to exploit the world once more in our pursuit of inner peace.

This attachment to the material world as our primary source of happiness lies at the root of much of the craziness that humanity perpetrates upon the world. It is this that leads us to consume resources we do not need, to treat other people as elements in an equation, to discharge our refuse out of sight, and to mistreat and abuse our own bodies.

Yet our culture continues to tell us that this attachment is not only normal but correct. Much of our education focuses on knowing the ways of the world in order that we may better use it for our own ends. The daily deluge of television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and billboards reinforces the belief that happiness comes from what we do or have. Wherever we turn we seem to find confirmation that outer well-being determines inner well-being. We have in effect been hypnotized into accepting that this external side of the equation is all there is. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote more than 100 years ago in his essay *Self-Reliance*:

*Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater.*

#### THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

If we are to stop abusing our

world we need to let go of our *attachments*. This does not, as people often suppose, mean detachment which implies complacency and not caring, and for some, going without material well-being and comforts. It is quite simply *non-attachment*. Material well-being and comforts are valued for what they are but they are not seen as the sole or primary source of our inner well-being. In a state of non-attachment we no longer believe that what we have or do will provide the peace that we each seek. As a result we are free to care more fully for other people and for all living beings.

Thus the most important fight of all at this crucial stage in our evolution is not the fight against hunger, the fight against inflation, the fight against pollution, or the fight against corrupt governments. Each is very necessary and cannot be relaxed. However, they will not be won until we have also won the fight within ourselves: the struggle between our self-centered mode of thinking and the inner knowing that there is more to life than gratifying our egocentric needs.

The basic wisdom already exists. It is there in the spiritual traditions of all cultures; it has been articulated by the saints and wise people of all times; it is there inside every one of us. It is the truth we each know deep within. The question is how do we tap this wisdom? Can we live it, rather than just talk about it? Can it permeate our minds and hearts, enabling us to put this wisdom into practice? This is the real challenge facing us as we move into the next millennium. •

*From the book “The Global Brain Awakens.” Copyright 1995 by Peter Russell. Printed with permission from Global Brain. (800)846-4562.*



TONY STONE/MATTHEW ANTROBUS

# Impermanence

S O G Y A L R I N P O C H E

*Why is it so very hard to practice death and to practice freedom? And why exactly are we so frightened of death that we avoid looking at it altogether? Somewhere, deep down, we know we cannot avoid facing death forever. We know, in Milarepa's words, "This thing called 'corpse' we dread so much is living with us here and now." The longer we postpone facing death, the more we ignore it, the greater the fear and insecurity that build up to haunt us. The more we try to run away from that fear, the more monstrous it becomes.*

*There is no place on earth where death cannot find us—even if we constantly twist our heads about in all directions as in a dubious and suspect land... If there were any way of sheltering from death's blows—I am not the man to recoil from it... But it is madness to think that you can succeed...*

*Men come and they go and they trot and they dance, and never a word about death. All well and good, yet when death does come—to them, their wives, their children, their friends—catching them unawares and unprepared, then what storms of passion overwhelm them, what cries, what fury, what despair!...*

*To begin depriving death of its greatest advantage over us, let us adopt a way clean contrary to that common one; let us deprive death of its strangeness; let us frequent it; let us get used to it; let us have nothing more often in mind than death... We do not know where death awaits us, so let us wait for it everywhere. To practice death is to practice freedom. A man who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave.*

—Montaigne

*Sogyal Rinpoche was born in Tibet and raised by one of the most revered spiritual masters of this century, Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö. After university studies in Delhi and Cambridge, England, he became translator and aide to several leading Tibetan masters, and began teaching in the West in 1974. He travels extensively, teaching in Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia, and is the founder and spiritual director of Rigpa, a worldwide network of Buddhist centers and groups.*



**D**eath is a vast mystery, but there are two things we can say about it: *It is absolutely certain that we will die, and it is uncertain when or how we will die.* The only surety we have then is this uncertainty about the hour of our death, which we seize on as the excuse to postpone facing death directly. We are like children who cover their eyes in a game of hide-and-seek and think that no one can see them.

Why do we live in such terror of death? Because our instinctive desire is to live and to go on living, and death is a savage end to every-

The pace of our lives is so hectic that the last thing we have time to think of is death. We smother our secret fears of impermanence by surrounding ourselves with more and more goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, only to find ourselves their slaves.

thing we hold familiar. We feel that when it comes we will be plunged into something quite unknown or become someone totally different. We imagine we will find ourselves lost and bewildered, in surroundings that are terrifyingly unfamiliar. We imagine it will be like waking up alone, in a torment of anxiety, in a foreign country, with no knowledge of the land or language, no money, no contacts, no passport, no friends...

Perhaps the deepest reason why we are afraid of death is because we do not know who we are. We believe in a personal, unique, and separate identity; but, if we dare to examine it, we find that this identity depends entirely on an endless collection of things to prop it up: our name, our “biography,” our partners, family, home, job, friends, credit cards... It is on their fragile and transient support that we rely for our security. So when they are all taken away, will we have any idea of who we really are?

Without our familiar props, we are faced with just ourselves, a person we do not know, an unnerving stranger with whom we have been living all the time but we never really wanted to meet. Isn't that why we have tried to fill every moment of time with noise and ac-



tivity, however boring or trivial, to ensure that we are never left on our own in silence with this stranger?

And doesn't this point to something fundamentally tragic about our way of life? We live under an assumed identity, in a neurotic fairy tale world with no more reality than the Mock Turtle in "Alice in Wonderland." Hypnotized by the thrill of building, we have raised the houses of our lives on sand. This world can seem marvelously convincing until death collapses the illusion and evicts us from our hiding place. What will happen to us then if we have no clue of any deeper reality?

When we die we leave everything behind, especially this body we have cherished so much and relied upon so blindly and tried so hard to keep alive. But our minds are no more dependable than our bodies. Just look at your mind for a few minutes. You will see that it is like a flea, constantly hopping to and fro. You will see that thoughts arise without any reason, without any connection. Swept along by the chaos of every moment, we are the victims of the fickleness of our mind. If this is the only state of consciousness we are familiar with, then to rely on our minds at the moment of death is an absurd gamble.

#### THE GREAT DECEPTION

*The birth of a man is the birth of his sorrow. The longer he lives, the more stupid he becomes, because his anxiety to avoid unavoidable death becomes more and more acute. What bitterness! He lives for what is always out of reach! His thirst for survival in the future makes him incapable of living in the present.*

—Chuang Tzu

In the modern world, we have to work and earn our living but we should not get entangled in a nine-to-five existence where we live without any view of the deeper meaning of life. Our task is to strike a balance, to find a middle way, to learn not to over-stretch ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations but to simplify our lives more and more.

After my master died, I enjoyed a close connection with Dudjom Rinpoche, one of the greatest meditation masters, mystics, and yogins of recent times. One day he was driving through France with his wife, admiring the countryside as they went along. They passed a

long cemetery, which had been freshly painted and decorated with flowers. Dudjom Rinpoche's wife said, "Rinpoche, look how everything in the West is so neat and clean. Even the places where they keep corpses are spotless. In the East not even the houses that people live in are anything like as clean as this."

"Ah, yes," he replied, "that's true; this is such a civilized country. They have such marvelous houses for dead corpses. But haven't you noticed? They have such wonderful houses for the living corpses, too."

Whenever I think of this story, it makes me think how hollow and futile life can be when it's founded on a false belief in continuity and permanence. When we live like that, we become, as Dudjom Rinpoche said, unconscious, living corpses.

Most of us do live like that; we live according to a preordained plan. We spend our youth being educated. Then we find a job, and meet someone, marry, and have children. We buy a house, try to make a success of our business, aim for dreams like a country house or a second car. We go away on holiday with our friends. We plan for retirement. The biggest dilemmas some of us ever have to face are where to take our next holiday or whom to invite at Christmas. Our lives are monotonous, petty, and repetitive, wasted in the pursuit of the trivial, because we seem to know of nothing better.

The pace of our lives is so hectic that the last thing we have time to think of is death. We smother our secret fears of impermanence by surrounding ourselves with more and more goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, only to find ourselves their slaves.

All our time and energy is exhausted simply maintaining them. Our only aim in life soon becomes to keep everything as safe and secure as possible. When changes do happen, we find the quickest remedy, some slick and temporary solution. And so our lives drift on, unless a serious illness or disaster shakes us out of our stupor.

It is not as if we even spare much time or thought for this life either. Think of those people who work for years and then have to retire, only to find that they don't know what to do with themselves as they age and approach death. Despite all our chatter about being practical, to be practical in the West means to be ignorantly and often selfishly shortsighted. Our myopic focus on this life, and this life only, is the great deception, the source of the modern world's bleak and destructive materialism. No one talks about death and no one talks about the afterlife because people are made to believe that such talk will only thwart our so-called "progress" in the world.

Yet if our deepest desire is truly to live and go on living, why do we blindly insist that death is the end? Why not at least try and explore the possibility that there may be a life after? Why, if we are as pragmatic as we claim, don't we begin to ask ourselves seriously "Where does our real future lie?" After all, no one lives longer than a hundred years. And after that there stretches the whole of eternity, unaccounted for...

#### ACTIVE LAZINESS

There is an old Tibetan story that I love called "The Father of 'As Famous as the Moon.'" A very poor man, after a great deal of hard work, had managed to accumulate a whole sack of grain. He was

Modern society seems to me a celebration of all the things that lead away from the truth, make truth hard to live for, and discourage people from even believing that it exists.

proud of himself and when he got home he strung the bag up with a rope from one of the rafters of his house to keep it safe from rats and thieves. He left it hanging there and settled down underneath it for the night as an added precaution. Lying there, his mind began to wander. "If I can sell this grain off in small quantities, that will make the biggest profit. With that I can buy some more grain and do the same again, and before too long I'll become rich, and I'll be someone to reckon with in the community."

"Plenty of girls will be after me. I'll marry a beautiful woman and before too long we'll have a child... it will have to be a son... what on earth are we going to call him?" Looking round the room, his gaze fell upon the little window through which he could see the moon rising.

"What a sign!" he thought. "How auspicious! That's a really good name. I'll call him 'As Famous as the Moon'..." Now

while he had been carried away in his speculation, a rat had found its way up to the sack of grain and chewed through the rope. At the very moment the words "As Famous as the Moon" issued from his lips, the bag of grain dropped from the ceiling and killed him instantly. "As Famous as the Moon" of course was never born.

How many of us like the man in the story are swept away by what I have come to call an "active laziness"? Naturally there are different species of laziness: Eastern and Western. The Eastern style is like the one practiced to perfection in India. It consists of hanging out all day in the sun, doing nothing, avoiding any kind of work or useful activity, drinking cups of tea, listening to Hindi film music blaring on the radio, and gossiping with friends. Western laziness is quite different. It consists of cramming our lives with compulsive activity so that there is no time at all to confront the real issues.

If we look into our lives, we will see clearly how many unimportant tasks, so-called "responsibilities" accumulate to fill them up. One master compares them to "house-keeping a dream." We tell ourselves we want to spend time on the important things of life but there never is any time. Even simply to get up in the morning, there is so much to do: open the window, make the bed, take a shower, brush your teeth, feed the dog or cat, do last night's washing up, discover you are out of sugar or coffee, go and buy them, make breakfast—the list is endless. Then there are clothes to sort out, choose, iron, and fold up again. And what about your hair or your makeup? Helpless, we watch our days fill up with telephone calls and



TONY STONE/DENNIS O'CLARE

petty projects. With so many responsibilities—or shouldn't we call them "irresponsibilities"?

Our lives seem to live us, to possess their own bizarre momentum, to carry us away; in the end we feel we have no choice or control over them. Of course we feel bad about this sometimes. We have nightmares and wake up in a sweat, wondering, "What am I doing with my life?" But our fears only last until breakfast time; out comes the briefcase and back we go to where we started.

I think of the Indian saint, Ramakrishna, who said to one of his disciples, "If you spent one-tenth of the time you devoted to distractions like chasing women or making money on spiritual practice, you would be enlightened in a few years!" There was a Tibetan master who lived around the turn of the century, a kind of Himalayan Leonardo da Vinci, called Mipham.

He is said to have invented a clock, a cannon, and an airplane. But once each of them was complete, he destroyed them, saying that they would only be the cause of further distraction.

In Tibetan the word for body is *lü*, which means "something you leave behind," like baggage. Each time we say "lü," it reminds us that we are only travelers, taking temporary refuge in this life and this body. So in Tibet people did not distract themselves by spending all their time trying to make their external circumstances more comfortable. They were satisfied if they had enough to eat, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads. Going on as we do, obsessively trying to improve our conditions, can become an end in itself and a pointless distraction. Would people in their right mind think of fastidiously redecorating their hotel room every time they booked into

one? I love this piece of advice from Patrul Rinpoche:

*Remember the example of an old  
cow,  
She's content to sleep in a barn.  
you have to eat, sleep, and shit—  
That's unavoidable—  
Beyond that is none of your business.*

Sometimes I think that the greatest achievement of modern culture is its brilliant selling of samsara (suffering) and its barren distractions. Modern society seems to me a celebration of all the things that lead away from the truth, make truth hard to live for, and discourage people from even believing that it exists. And to think that all this springs from a civilization that claims to adore life, but actually starves it of any real meaning; that endlessly speaks of making people "happy," but in fact blocks their way to the source of real joy.

This modern samsara feeds off an anxiety and depression that it fosters and trains us all in, and carefully nurtures with a consumer machine that needs to keep us greedy to keep going. Samsara is highly organized, versatile, and sophisticated; it assaults us from every angle with its propaganda and creates an almost impregnable environment of addiction around us. The more we try to escape, the more we seem to fall into the traps it is so ingenious at setting for us. As the eighteenth-century Tibetan master Jikmé Lingpa said, “Mesmerized by the sheer variety of perceptions, beings wander endlessly astray in samsara’s vicious cycle.”

Obsessed then with false hopes, dreams, and ambitions, which promise happiness but lead only to misery, we are like people crawling through an endless desert, dying of thirst. And all that this samsara holds out to us to drink is a cup of salt water, designed to make us even thirstier.

#### FACING DEATH

Knowing and realizing this, shouldn’t we listen to Gyalsé Rinpoche when he says:

*Planning for the future is like  
going fishing in a dry gulch;  
Nothing ever works out as you  
wanted, so give up all your  
schemes and ambitions.  
If you have got to think about  
something—  
Make it the uncertainty of the  
hour of your death...*

For Tibetans, the main festival of the year is the New Year, which is like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and your birthday all rolled into one. Patrul Rinpoche was a great master whose life was full of eccentric episodes that would bring the teaching to life. Instead of cele-

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brating New Year’s Day and wishing people a “Happy New Year” like everyone else, Patrul Rinpoche used to weep. When asked why, he said that another year had gone by and so many people had come one year closer to death, still unprepared.

Think of what must have happened to nearly all of us one day or the other. We are strolling down the street, thinking inspiring thoughts, speculating on important matters, or just listening to our Walkman. A car suddenly races by and almost runs us over.

Switch on the television or glance at a newspaper: You will see death everywhere. Yet did the victims of those plane crashes and car accidents expect to die? They took life for granted, as we do. How often do we hear stories of people whom we know, or even friends, who died unexpectedly? We don’t even have to be ill to die; our bodies can suddenly break down and go out of order, just like our cars. We can be quite well one day, then fall sick and die the next. Milarepa sang:

*When you are strong and  
healthy,  
You never think of sickness  
coming  
But it descends with sudden force  
Like a stroke of lightning.  
When involved in worldly  
things,  
You never think of death’s  
approach;  
Quick it comes like thunder  
Crashing round your head.*

We need to shake ourselves sometimes and really ask, “What if I were to die tonight? What then?” We do not know whether we will wake up tomorrow, or where. If you breathe out and you cannot breathe in again, you are dead. It’s as simple as that. As a Tibetan saying goes, “Tomorrow or the next life—which comes first, we never know.”

Some of the renowned contemplative masters of Tibet, when they went to bed at night, would empty their cups and leave them upside down by their bedside. They were never sure if they would wake up and need them in the morning. They even put their fires out at night without bothering to keep the embers alight for the next day. Moment to moment, they lived with the possibility of imminent death.

Near Jikme Lingpa’s hermitage was a pond which he had great difficulty crossing. Some of his disciples offered to build him a bridge but he replied, “What’s the use? Who knows if I’ll even be alive to sleep here tomorrow night?”

Some masters try to wake us up to the fragility of life with even harsher images. They tell each of us to reflect on ourselves as a condemned prisoner taking our last walk from our cell, a fish struggling

in the net, an animal lining up for its end in the slaughterhouse.

Others encourage their students to imagine vivid scenarios of their own death, as part of a calm and structured contemplation: the sensations, the pain, the panic, the helplessness, the grief of their loved ones, the realization of what they have or have not done with their lives.

*Body lying flat on a last bed,  
Voices whispering a few last words,  
Mind watching a final memory  
glide past:  
When will that drama come for  
you?*

It is important to reflect calmly, again and again, that *death is real, and comes without warning*. Don't be like the pigeon in the Tibetan proverb. He spends all night fussing about, making his bed, and dawn comes up before he has even had time to go to sleep. As an important twelfth-century master, Drakpa Gyaltsen, said, "Human beings spend all their lives preparing, preparing, preparing... Only to meet the next life unprepared."

#### TAKING LIFE SERIOUSLY

Perhaps it is only those who understand just how fragile life is who know how precious it is. Once when I was taking part in a conference in Britain, the participants were interviewed by the BBC. At the same time they talked to a woman who was actually dying. She was distraught with fear because she had not really thought that death was real. Now she knew. She had just one message to those who would survive her: to take life, and death seriously.

Taking life seriously does not mean spending our whole lives meditating as if we were living in

the mountains in the Himalayas or in the old days in Tibet. In the modern world, we have to work and earn our living but we should not get entangled in a nine-to-five existence where we live without any view of the deeper meaning of life. Our task is to strike a balance, to find a middle way, to learn not to over-stretch ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations but to simplify our lives more and more. *The key to finding a happy balance in modern lives is simplicity.*

In Buddhism this is what is really meant by discipline. In Tibetan, the term for discipline is *tsul trim*. *Tsul* means "appropriate" or "just," and *trim* means "rule" or "way." So discipline is to do what is appropriate or just; that is in an excessively complicated age to simplify our lives.

Peace of mind will come from this. You will have more time to pursue the things of the spirit and the knowledge that only spiritual truth can bring which can help you face death.

Sadly this is something that few of us do. Maybe we should ask ourselves the question now, "What have I really achieved in my life?" By that I mean, how much have we really understood about life and death? I have been inspired by the reports that have appeared in the studies on the near-death experience, like the books by my friend Kenneth Ring and others. A striking number of those who survive near-fatal accidents or a near-death experience describe a "panoramic life review." With uncanny vividness and accuracy, they relive the events of their lives. Sometimes they even live through the effects their actions have had on others and experience the emotions their

actions have caused. One man told Kenneth Ring:

*I realized that there are things that every person is sent to earth to realize and to learn. For instance, to share more love, to be more loving toward one another. To discover that the most important thing is human relationships and love and not materialistic things. And to realize that every single thing that you do in your life is recorded and that even though you pass it by not thinking at the time, it always comes up later.*

Sometimes the life review takes place in the company of a glorious presence, a "being of light." What stands out from the various testimonies is that this meeting with the "being" reveals that the only truly serious goals in life are "learning to love other people and acquiring knowledge." One person recounted to Raymond Moody, "When the light appeared, the first thing he said to me was, 'What have you done to show me that you're done with your life?' or something to that effect... All through this, he kept stressing the importance of love... He seemed very interested in things concerning knowledge, too..." Another man told Kenneth Ring, "I was asked—but there were no words, it was a straight mental instantaneous communication—'What had I done to benefit or advance the human race?'" Whatever we have done with our lives makes us what we are when we die. And everything, absolutely everything, counts. •

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TONY STONE/DARRYL TORCKLER

# Finding Balance

E K N A T H E A S W A R A N

*Not long ago I went with friends to a favorite restaurant overlooking San Francisco Bay. We arrived early for lunch, so even though the place is very popular, we got a good table near the window. Soon I was completely absorbed in the scene. Outside the sun was bright and the wind was high. Hundreds of sea gulls were tossing about in the sky, and as many sailboats on the waves.*

*Ekknath Easwaran is the author of several books include "Meditation," "Words to Live By," and "Gandhi the Man." In 1961 he founded the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Berkeley, California, to move, "from education for degrees to education for living."*



I don't know much about sailing, but I couldn't help admiring the skill of some of the sailors. While we watched, one boat was racing towards us over the water with its sail almost dipping into the sea. My heart leapt into my mouth and I wanted to cry, "They're gone!" But the agile crew kept leaning out over the water on the opposite side and the boat never quite turned over.

Others on the water were not so skillful. They would catch a strong wind in their sails and pick up impressive speed but I would see their boats suddenly careen erratically as if they had a life of their own. I could sympathize. How like life in today's restless, unpredictable world where we often feel we are running before the wind in a stormy sea.

Below the restaurant window, scores of other boats were tied up, hugging the shore, their lines slapping idly in the breeze. On their decks, men and women in summer clothes were enjoying drinks, chatting, or reclining in lounge chairs in the sun, perhaps dreaming that they, too, were sailors—all the while their boats tied up comfortably at the dock. Most of us have days like this too: times when we just can't get going, just don't feel like moving.

But as I watched in admiration, a few brave boats were sailing

Slowing down is an important spiritual discipline, especially in our speeded-up modern living and working contexts. Hurry makes for tension, insecurity, inefficiency, and superficial living.

sharply into the wind toward the mouth of the Golden Gate. Watching those frail vessels venturing out into the dangerous waters of the Pacific Ocean recalled to my mind the haunting words of the Compassionate Buddha, "Who wants to cross the sea of life? Is there anyone for the other shore?"

For me, the Buddha has always been an inspiring teacher because he had the skill and the sheer daring to sail boldly into the rough seas of life and reach his goal on the opposite shore. Remembering his words, I was no longer seated in a restaurant in San Francisco with my friends. I was standing at the shore listening to his call, so urgent, so personal. "Jump into your boat! Don't spend your life sleeping on the marina and walking on the beach with the pigeons. Don't you want to sail skillfully on this turbulent sea?"

Most of us have seasons like these three kinds of sailors. At times we surge with energy, so much so that our lives are almost out of control. At other times we face blocks, can't seem to get on top of things, can't seem to move. Often these phases are accompanied by mood swings between high and low, ebbs and flows of self-esteem. And of course there are times when we maneuver gracefully through events which at other times would have hopelessly becalmed or capsized us, navigating unerringly towards our goal. That is life.

According to yoga philosophy, the human personality is a constant interplay of these three elements— inertia, energy, and harmony. All three are always present, but one tends to be dominant at any given time—in a day, throughout a stage of life, over a life itself. And they lie on a continuum of energy. Just as matter can exist as a solid, a liquid, or a gas—ice, water, or steam our own energy—states move in and out of inertia, activity, and harmony.

Inertia of course is least desirable. Energetic activity is much more desirable but without control it only consumes our time and gets us into trouble. Harmony is the state we desire to live in. Fortunately because all three are states of the same energy, each of these states can be changed into another. Just as ice can be thawed into water and water turned into steam, inertia and activity are both full of energy which can be converted into a state of dynamic balance full of vitality and power. •

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TONY STONE/JOHN BONNEY

# The Healing Power of Humor

CONNIE GOLDMAN AND RICHARD MAHLER

*Everyone has heard the truism that laughter is the best medicine,” but the late Norman Cousins actually lived it. At the relatively early age of fifty, the noted critic and “Saturday Review” editor was stricken with a crippling form of spinal arthritis that bears the difficult name of ankylosing spondylitis. Once hospitalized, Cousins was told there was no known cure for the disease and that it was impossible to predict how long he’d remain bedridden. His physician told him to get his affairs in order, and an attending doctor passed a note to another that said, “I’m afraid we may be losing Norman.”*



Connie Goldman, former weekend host for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" and NPR's arts reporter, has been involved with Public Radio for more than twenty-five years. She is the co-editor of "The Ageless Spirit," a collection of interviews with famous older Americans. Richard Mabler, a former "Los Angeles Times" reporter, NPR correspondent, and writer of travel books, is a professional writer and print and radio journalist.



**U**nder the shadow of that grim prognosis, Cousins fell into a deep depression. As he grew more and more depressed, his disease worsened. Doctors told their morose patient that he could use some cheering up. "So I called up my friend Alan Funt, producer of the old *Candid Camera* TV show," Cousins told us in a subsequent interview. He shipped me copies of several episodes and I also sent out for some old Marx Brothers movies." A film projector was set up in the hospital room and a nurse trained to run it. When they were barely into the first reel, Cousins was laughing so hard that his sides ached and his eyes watered. "I discovered that ten minutes of genuine belly laughs had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep," Cousins later wrote in "Anatomy of an Illness," a best-selling book about his experience.

On the second day, Cousins watched more comedies, along with some vintage Laurel & Hardy

Without laughter, he said, we are often cut off from a whole range of life-affirming feelings, including faith, love, determination, and creativity. "A lot of us, it seems, are starved for joy."

clips. He laughed so loudly that patients down the hall complained about all the noise he was making. "But the more I laughed, the better I got," said Cousins.

Within a few weeks, Cousins left the hospital, which seemed to him unnecessarily gloomy and stressful. He checked into a nearby hotel, where he found he could "laugh twice as hard at half the price." When he wasn't viewing his favorite sitcoms, Cousins read about the relationship between laughter and sickness and followed up on a related interest, the connection between stress and certain vitamins. With the consent of his physician, he began supplementing his laughing sessions with massive doses of Vitamin C. These self-administered therapies, plus continu-

ing prescribed medical treatments, apparently contributed to Cousins's complete recovery.

At the time of our conversation, four years before his sudden death from a heart attack, the author was leading a full and active life that included frequent lectures to medical students on the subject of positive emotions and healing. "You can't 'ha ha' your way out of a serious illness," advised Cousins, who was seventy-one when we met in his office at the Medical School of the University of California at Los Angeles. "Laughter is no substitute for competent medical attention, and humor should be part of an overall treatment plan. I always emphasize that I never abandoned what my doctors prescribed." Cousins referred to laughter as "internal jogging," a kind of inner aerobics that gets the body's positive juices flowing. He cited scientific evidence suggesting that a deep, hearty laugh can improve lung respiration, oxygenate the blood, and promote the body's production of endorphins, natural painkillers that enhance our general sense of well-being.

Today the once-theoretical correlations between mood and health are accepted widely in the medical community, and many of the nation's most respectable hospitals employ some variation of Cousins's "humor therapy." Psychiatrist William Fry, who has for more than thirty years studied the physiological effects of laughter, estimates that three minutes of knee slapping guffaws are equivalent in health benefits to about ten minutes of mechanical rowing. Measurable side effects include a tem-



TONY STONZ/CHRISTOPHER BENSEL

porary reduction in blood pressure, pulse rate, and muscle tension. “More important,” said Cousins, “laughter can block the despair, panic, and depression that figure in the onset or intensification of disease.” Without laughter, he said, we are often cut off from a whole range of life-affirming feelings, including faith, love, determination, and creativity. “A lot of us, it seems, are starved for joy.”

The man who laughed his way back to robust health contended that “joyousness is as much a biological need as food is.” Long after his recovery, Cousins continued to nourish himself with regular doses of funny movies and TV shows, along with plenty of practical jokes and wry stories. “I’ve never felt more engaged with life than I do now,” said Cousins, who, at the time of our visit, was happily writ-

ing four books, teaching at UCLA, and playing both tennis and golf regularly. “Without question,” he assured us, “I’m in my most productive phase ever.”

What Cousins discovered was something each of us knows instinctively: the mind is a mysterious, powerful thing, and we seldom take full advantage of its potential. Just as we can learn to manipulate our thinking in order to see a glass of water as being either half empty or half full, so can we choose to focus on either the *benefits* of aging or its *disadvantages*. Our outlook can be dominated either by a fear of future unknowns and upsets or by excitement about undiscovered challenges and opportunities.

This insight brings to mind an anecdote about the late “Power of Positive Thinking” author Norman Vincent Peale, who remained on

the lecture circuit into his mid-nineties. Peale had just finished delivering a motivational speech at a convention of the National Speakers Association. As the sharp-witted senior descended from the podium, a phalanx of dark suited ushers rushed forward, intending to guide him gently back to his seat. “My gosh,” Peale called out as they approached, “you all look like pallbearers coming to get me!” The crowded ballroom rocked with laughter. With that quick, casual remark, Peale displayed a vital ingredient of late-life humor; he showed that he refused to take his advanced age seriously, thus revealing a balanced perspective on a world in which our mortality is assured.

“The best laugh is always on yourself,” reminds Dr. Clifford Kuhn, a practicing psychiatrist and

researcher at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, who conducts humor-sensitivity sessions for patients with chronic diseases.

“And for something to be truly funny,” he adds, “it must have a grain of truth in it.” Peale’s spontaneous quip acknowledged the audience’s unspoken awareness of reality; for at age ninety-two, he was closer to the end of his life than most of us. He died about three years later, still an active motivational speaker at age ninety-five.

Once comedian George Burns, making public appearances well into his nineties, was asked if a man his age could find happiness with a thirty-year-old woman. “No, not often,” Burns dead-panned, clenching a cigar between his teeth. “Only once or twice a night.”

Celebrities who are around for as long as George Burns and Norman Vincent Peale know the importance of peppering their remarks with clever and even risqué observations. Their one-liners can

relax members of an audience who may not think growing older is particularly amusing. Such humor generates empathy—the feeling

unending succession of losses through illness, death, impairment of physical abilities, and so on. How is it possible to remain light-

hearted in the face of mortality? When is it helpful and appropriate to laugh at our own misfortune?

To a great extent, we already know the answers to these questions. We’ve proven that merely by surviving the trials and tribulations of daily life with our sanity more or less intact. As comic actress Carol Burnett has observed, “Humor is tragedy plus time.” Some might argue that if you’re over sixty and can still wake up with a smile, you already know the healing power of laughter.

“ [Humor] is simply in the way we look at the world,” suggests Robert Fulton, a sixty-five-year-old sociologist who founded the University of Minnesota’s Center for the Study of Death, Dying, and Bereavement.



TONY STONE/TIMOTHY SHONNARD

that “we’re all in this together.” Yet it isn’t always easy for us to laugh at the truths of our later years. The painful reality is that by the time we’re sixty, seventy, or older, our lives sometimes start to feel like an

## Meditation on Love

THICH NHAT HANH

The mind of love brings peace, joy, and happiness to ourselves and others. Mindful observation is the element which nourishes the tree of understanding, and compassion and love are the most beautiful flowers. When we realize the mind of love, we have to go to the one who has been the object of our mindful observation, so that our mind of love is not just an object of our imagination but a source of energy which has a real effect in the world.

The meditation on love is not just sitting still and visualizing that our love will spread out into space like waves of sound or light. Sound and light have the ability to penetrate everywhere, and love and compassion can do the same. But if our love is only a kind of imagination, then it is not likely to have any real effect. It is in the midst of our daily life and in our actual contact with others that we can know whether our mind of love is really present and how stable it is. If love is real, it will be evident in our daily life, in the way we relate with people and the world.

The source of love is deep in us and we can help others realize a lot of happiness. One word, one action, or one thought can reduce another person's suffering and bring him joy. One word can give comfort and confidence, destroy doubt, help someone avoid a mistake, reconcile a conflict, or open the door to liberation. One action can save a person's life or help him take advantage of a rare opportunity. One thought can do the same, because thoughts always lead to words and actions. If love is in our heart, every thought, word, and deed can bring about a miracle. Because understanding is the very foundation of love, words and actions that emerge from our love are always helpful.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.

"It's a matter of laughing *with* yourself, not *at* yourself." Fulton can't recall a time when he wasn't able to see at least some irony in every situation, no matter how unsettling. He tells the poignant story of the way his much-younger wife, after a long battle with cancer, died quietly at home in their bed as he sat clutching her hand. When she'd breathed her last, Fulton placed a bandanna over the top of his wife's head, which had gone completely bald during chemotherapy treatments. Sobbing and trembling with grief, he reached out his palm to close her lifeless eyes, still open and staring into space. "As I drew my hand away, one of her eyelids suddenly popped back open," Fulton remembered. "No peeking!" he exclaimed, before he could stop himself. Then, stunned that he had responded in a manner that seemed so inappropriate, Fulton quickly pulled his dead wife's eyelid shut again.

Reflecting later on this bizarre, spontaneous remark, Fulton realized that even though he was completely overcome with sadness, part of him had been able to find some levity in the situation. "I knew my wife would have understood my reaction," he added. "She had a way of always keeping things in their proper perspective."

Fulton believes this ability to laugh at ourselves and our dilemmas is essential if we are to endure successfully the slings and arrows of modern life. "You find your humanity this way," he said. "You acknowledge the world's seeming randomness, unpredictability, and downright absurdity."

Unlike Fulton, many of us take a

fair amount of time before we can laugh at a particularly painful experience. We need to be gentle and consoling with ourselves after a loss. In time, however, laughter often proves to be a balm that soothes our wounds.

This is a truth that our friend Eve Blake came to understand more fully after her seventieth birthday. A writer with a long list of literary credits, she's written scores of TV scripts (including many episodes of *The Lone Ranger* series) and had articles published in *Collier's* and *The New Yorker*. Yet the source of her greatest satisfaction is a short book full of homespun humor and heartfelt advice that she wrote and self-published a few years ago.

"I did show biz work for many years and got utterly sick of it," Eve recalled, as we relaxed on the deck of her home in the Hollywood hills, overlooking the blinking lights of Los Angeles. "I said to myself, 'I'd like to do something worthwhile before I shuffle off this mortal coil.' It took me another eighteen months to figure out that what I wanted to do to make my mark was creative writing and public speaking."

A long-time Democratic Party activist who has kept abreast of local politics for many years, Eve first considered the suggestion that she run for public office. She speaks in the sort of deep, animated voice that commands instant attention. Although flattered by the positive feedback that greeted her tentative campaign feelers, Eve decided she'd be much happier putting together a collection of her own thoughts about aging, which

she believes her peers approach much too pessimistically. "The title of my book, 'Old Age Is Contagious but You Don't Have to Catch It,' simply came to me one day," Eve explained. "Everybody treats 'old age' as if it were an infectious disease, but that doesn't mean you automatically have to come down with it."

Eve takes a joking approach to her subject. She warns older people against becoming "a misery to themselves and a damned nuisance to others," but her underlying message is very serious. "You have a choice in almost any situation you'll ever find yourself," said Eve, "and old age is no exception. You can be depressed and upset or optimistic and hopeful. It's all up to you. That's why keeping a sense of humor is so important as you get older, because most people seem to find more to feel gloomy about. It's as if the calendar gives them an excuse to feel sorry for themselves."

Our friend wrote "Old Age Is Contagious" after her infirm mother asked Eve to help her find a suitable nursing home, anticipating that she'd soon be unable to take care of herself. "Mom and I looked at various places," Eve recalled. "I was very much surprised by what we found." Appalled by the lethargy and boredom she observed in many institutions, Eve saw no justification for allowing older people to settle for less than they were capable and worthy of. "It's not that I disapprove of nursing homes," Eve stressed. "I must tell you that Mother and I found one that we were both very happy with. What bothers me is the idea

that people in these situations are so often conditioned to accept a dull, listless existence as all they deserve."

Eve wanted to demonstrate that growing older doesn't have to be dull and dreary. She collected an assortment of humorous thoughts, quotations, and anecdotes about aging, then wove them into an inspirational speech. It wasn't long before she was invited to deliver her upbeat message to retirement centers, bridge clubs, and community groups. After each presentation, Eve was surrounded by admirers who asked if she'd written anything else on the subject. "Although I was tired of writing, I decided I'd better put something on paper, if for no other reason than to be able to respond to these constant requests."

The practical wisdom in Eve's book is drawn from a life that, like almost everyone's, has seen its share of tragedy. When Eve was fifty-two, her husband died suddenly of a heart ailment. Eve's own health began to falter a few years ago when a bad back threatened to confine her to bed. Chronic insomnia sometimes keeps her awake all night, but she doesn't let it get her down. "What little disability I have is not worth talking about," she insists. "Griping about 'poor me' is not calculated to win hearts. When I encounter self-pity face to face, it provokes in me a desperate desire for a quick getaway."

Eve's conclusion is that we must apply the same skills to "learning humor" that we've used throughout life to master anything new. "A sense of humor is like anything else: you have to work on it if you

don't come by it naturally," she explained. "You have to think about it, develop it, and keep it honed by constant use. You do this by making light of your drawbacks or trying to see the funny aspect of something. Unfortunately, once they're past fifty, most people don't think about changing. They stick to the same old routines and think the same old ways. It takes a lot of work to take a different approach, but it really pays off."

Eve fosters flexibility in her own life by traveling the world as an inspirational speaker. This gives her the chance to meet interesting people and experience new ways of living in places like South Africa and New Zealand. The speaking engagements she sets up are deliberately scheduled in countries Eve is intrigued by, so that they can also be part of a memorable vacation.

"If there's one word of advice that I could offer in connection with retirement," Eve summed up, "that word would be 'don't.' In nine out of ten instances, you don't really have to retire in the stereotypical sense. If you leave one thing, move on to something else, whether or not you're getting paid for it. To be forever interested in the possibilities of one's future is a major youthful trait. In fact, it's basic to the life process."•

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TONY STONE/FRANK HEHL/GETTY

# Why Women Need New Myths

PATRICIA MONTGOMERY

*The English word myth is derived from the Greek word “mythos,” meaning word or story. Myths are narrative patterns that give meaning to our lives. Sam Keen, author of “Your Mythic Journey,” describes myth as “interlocking stories, rituals, rites, customs, and beliefs that give a pivotal sense of meaning and direction to a person, a family, a community, or a culture.” In other words, myth is a belief system that sustains us.*

Patricia Montgomery is an educator, consultant, and writer who lives and works in Portland, Oregon. She has done extensive research on women's midlife transition.



**O**ur culture has all kinds of strong, often unspoken, generally accepted beliefs that shape our lives and dictate our behavior.

One of our cultural beliefs for example is, "All people in our society are free." In reality, some have much more freedom than others. One group (white males) has long dominated other groups (women and minority races) and had a free rein. The theme of domination and subordination is pervasive in many of the old tales. Women's presumed dependency, the expectation that we will care for others at our own expense, and our culture's denigration of "strong" women preserve women's second-class status.

Now the myth gap is beginning to close. With the growth of the women's movement and other societal changes, we're creating new myths and new ways of living that offer visions of equality. As our lives change, so do our myths. We share our stories, and new cultural myths emerge to guide us as well as future generations.

"That's a myth," we hear women say when referring to outworn social customs and beliefs. The women in my classes say they are finding that the myths of previous generations, even their mothers' myths, no longer work for them. They seem irrelevant and

## In creating a personal mythology through our own healing work, we begin to create a cultural mythology in which women are equal, in which women are potential heroes in the renewal of society.

even harmful. Their meanings constrained us as girls, preventing us from becoming all we can be as adults.

Themes in the outdated myths that were passed on to many women are those of self-sacrifice, dependency, and devaluation of personhood. They're revealed in these messages:

- *A good mother sacrifices herself for her children.*
- *A happy family is the "Beaver Cleaver" family.*
- *Women are to be helpmates to their husbands.*
- *Girls are to be seen and not heard.*
- *Nice girls never get angry.*
- *If you're too smart, the boys won't like you.*
- *Be careful.*
- *You don't really feel that way.*

Think back to when you were a little girl. What were your hopes and dreams? What did you think was possible? Did you believe you could be anything you wanted to be? Did you assume your destiny was to grow up, get married, and have a family? What messages were you given about how to lead your life?

Absorbing these childhood messages and living a life according to old myths is deadening and constricting for women today. Again and again, I see women chafing at the boundaries, unwilling to sacrifice some part of their nature in order to conform to expectations. Some of us rebelled to break out of the limiting world that lingers on as women's legacy. Some of us, realizing that our lives have been governed by unwanted messages, started to examine our stories, looking for what worked, what was missing, and what needed to be changed. We discovered messages that were instilled in us, unknowingly and unconsciously, about who we were and how we are to live. Many of us, until the women's movement opened different options and new stories, followed traditional paths. Now we are seeking those less trodden. We're all breaking new ground.

The famed anthropologist Joseph Campbell stated, "There are no models in our mythology for an individual woman's quest. Nor is there any model for the male in marriage to an individuated female." It's up to us. Unless we become conscious of our personal myths and are willing to change them and thus redirect our futures, we remain dominated by the old ones.

We each find a storyline that

describes our life structure. It reveals the underlying pattern, with all the role models, groups, organizations, objects, and places that shaped us. This is our life design.

When we begin to understand our own stories, we learn how the past has shaped us, and at that moment we find that we can break free. The past no longer holds us prisoner, and we can create a future based on thoughtfully chosen values, goals, and ideals. Sam Keen says wisely, "We need to reinvent ourselves, remembering our past, revising our future, reauthorizing the myth by which we live."

In my teaching and counseling work, I have found that many women feel that they are reinventing their lives, seeking unfamiliar paths. These are the women who have broken with tradition. They're forging careers in traditionally male professions; returning to college later, in search of themselves; struggling with depression, low self-esteem, and abusive relationships. They have moved out of victimhood and are taking action, as they envision daring possibilities. These are women who have moved beyond *surviving* to *thriving*.

#### CREATING A NEW MYTHOLOGY

An integral part of reclaiming our power as women is acknowledging the new women's mythology and ourselves as mythmakers. Bookstores today are full of inspiring stories of contemporary women telling about the hard work, realities, and truths of their lives. These are the stories we long to hear. They reveal women who are heroes, who courageously overcome great odds, pain, and despair to find their own power and authenticity. They offer exciting new

perspectives; they reflect and are relevant to women's changing lives.

We are also rediscovering the ancient myths that connect us to our heritage of strength and beauty. Clarissa Pinkola Estes' book, "Women Who Run with the Wolves," is rich in storytelling and full of timeless myths from ancient cultures that honored powerful women. She found that women's oral traditions—the passing on of teaching tales about "sex, love, money, marriage, birthing, death, and transformation"—were lost. Many fairy tales and myths that reveal women's mysteries and power were distorted to suit a male-dominated culture. In their revision we lost the power of our "motherline"—the linear ancestral heritage of women who have gone on before us in all of their wisdom and strength.

Beyond the personal realm, women are searching for myths that connect them with each other and with the community. One of the most powerful things to happen in my women's classes is the bonding. It deepens as we come together week after week. In small groups, we learn to appreciate and value our differences and share in the creation of new stories.

As we foresee a world rich in possibilities, we begin to take the first steps together toward achieving our vision. In creating a personal mythology through our own healing work, we begin to create a cultural mythology in which women are equal, in which women are potential heroes in the renewal of society. •

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## Understanding

THICH NHAT HANH

Understanding and love are not two things, but just one. Suppose your son wakes up one morning and sees that it is already quite late. He decides to wake up his younger sister, to give her enough time to eat breakfast before going to school. It happens that she is grouchy and instead of saying, "Thank you for waking me up," she says, "Shut up! Leave me alone!" and kicks him. He will probably get angry, thinking, "I woke her up nicely. Why did she kick me?" He may want to go to the kitchen and tell you about it, or even kick her back.

But then he remembers that during the night his sister coughed a lot, and he realizes that she must be sick. Maybe she behaved so meanly because she has a cold. At that moment, he understands, and he is not angry at all any more. When you understand, you cannot help but love. You cannot get angry. To develop understanding, you have to practice looking at all living beings with the eyes of compassion. When you understand, you cannot help but love. And when you love, you naturally act in a way that can relieve the suffering of people.

For source, see Appendix, page 84.



## *Spiritual Growth*

*Continued from page 40*

may cut ourselves off from dialogue about spirituality and religion because we feel ashamed. The experience of trauma raises profound questions, questions foreign to people who have not suffered similarly. If we have been the victim of violence or terror, we often feel alone and different. We may fear that dialogue would only heighten our sense of isolation. We may avoid disclosing the shattering of our faith in fear of others' insensitivity or criticism. We may not want to share our innermost feelings about the sacred because they are clouded by despair.

Dialogue has many levels. The most basic is conversation with our self, expressing our thoughts, feelings, and memories in words and listening to them with an attitude of welcome. We are in dialogue when we read books and articles on spirituality or scripture passages, watch television programs, attend lectures, or listen to inspirational tapes. These conversations with "experts," which take place in our inner world, prepare us for interpersonal conversations. From them we learn to know and value what we have to say and to respond to what others tell us.

To thrive however we need to talk about our spiritual life with others with whom we feel some degree of safety, empathy, and trust. We then can risk dialogue,

sharing a little and seeing how it goes before we share more. Gradually we experience a feeling of communion with others. Often this prompts us to seek a community of persons with whom we want to journey.

### COMMUNITY

Spiritual communities provide us with models of spiritual seeking. They support our journey and lend us energy when we get stuck. Yet many of us avoid spiritual communities as we begin a renewed spiritual journey. We do so for good reasons. If our childhood religious community were damaging or alienating, we may refuse to have any contact with spiritual communities. We may be enraged by some religious practices. We may feel intruded on by doctrines that dictate what we must believe. We may feel that religious tradition disallows doubt or questioning. If we were not raised in any religious community, we may feel uncertain about how to belong.

Traumatic experiences in adulthood may also leave us angry at or alienated from religious communities. We may feel discounted by pat remedies: "You must forgive and forget" and "God never gives us more than we can handle." We may feel abandoned when church members fail to ask how we are or do not visit us when we have suffered trauma. We may feel set apart by our experience, unable to connect

with people and traditions that once nourished us.

However most of us reach a point in our journey where we feel that we have gone as far as we can go alone. We become aware of our need for a deeper sense of spiritual identity than that which we can find on a solitary journey. When we feel safe enough, we can allow ourselves to experience the natural desire to share our spirituality in community with others. Belonging to a spiritual community then grows out of our inner longing, not a "should" that comes from outside.

At this point, we can begin to think about what kind of community we need. Fortunately, community is not limited to churches and temples. Millions of people experience Twelve Step groups as spiritual communities. Others find kindred spirits at gatherings where people meet to create rituals for various occasions. Some people meet in informal groups or attend retreats to share their spiritual journey.

Kindly self-discipline, safety, empathy, trust, dialogue, and community foster spiritual growth. We must begin where we are, wherever that is. Small steps will lead to larger steps. Luckily, there is no timetable for healing. There is no hurry; we have a lifetime. The sacred dimension of life is always open to us. •



TONY STONE/PHILIP & KAREN SMITH

# No Right Way

J O N K A B A T - Z I N N

*Backpacking with my family in Teton wilderness, I am recurrently struck by the question of footing. With each step, the foot has to come down somewhere. Climbing or descending over boulder fields, steep inclines, on and off trails, our feet make split-second decisions for us about where and how to come down, what angle, how much pressure, heel or toe, rotated or straight. The kids don't ever ask, "Daddy, where do I put my feet? Should I step on this rock or that one?" They just do it, and I've noticed that they find a way—they choose where to put their feet at each step, and it's not simply where I put mine.*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Preventative and Behavioral Medicine. He has trained groups of judges, Catholic priests, Olympic athletes, and health professionals in mindfulness. The following is from the book "Wherever You Go, There You Are." Copyright 1994 by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Printed by arrangement with Hyperion.*



**W**hat this says to me is that our feet find their own way. Watching my own, I am amazed at how many different places and ways I might put my foot down with each step and how out of this unfolding momentary potential, the foot ultimately commits to one way, executes with full weight on it (or less if it's a hazardous situation), and then lets go as the next foot makes its choice and I move forward. All this occurs virtually without thinking, except at the occasional tricky spots where thought and experience do come into play and I might have to give my youngest child, Serena, a hand. But that is the exception, not the rule. Ordinarily we are not looking at our feet and thinking about each step. We are looking out, ahead on the trail, and our brain, taking it all in, makes split-second decisions for us that put the foot down in a way that conforms to the needs of the terrain underfoot in that moment.

This doesn't mean that there is no wrong way to step. You do have to be careful and sense your footing. It's just that the eyes and the

Our feet and  
our breath both  
teach us to  
watch our step,  
to proceed  
mindfully, truly  
to be at home  
in every  
moment,  
wherever our  
feet carry us, to  
appreciate  
where we are.

brain are very good at rapid assessment of terrain and giving detailed directions to torso, limbs, and feet so that the whole process of taking a step on rough ground is one of exquisite balance in motion, even with the complication of boots and heavy packs. There is built-in mindfulness here. Rough terrain brings it out in us. And if we do a trail ten times, we'll each solve the problem of each footstep differently each time. Covering ground on foot always unfolds out of the uniqueness of the present moment.

It's no different in meditation. There is really and truly no one "right way" to practice, although there are pitfalls along this path too and they have to be looked out for. It is best to encounter each moment with freshness, its rich potential held in awareness. We look

deeply into it and then we let go into the next moment, not holding to the last one. Each moment then can be fresh, each breath a new beginning, a new letting go, a new letting be. Just as with our stepping over rocky terrain, there is no "supposed to" here. True, there is much to be seen and understood along this path; but, it can't be forced, any more than you can force someone to appreciate the golden light of the low sun shining over fields of wheat or the moonrise in the mountains. Best not to speak at all in moments such as these. All you can do is be present with the enormity of it yourself and hope others see it in the silence of the moment. Sunsets and moonrises speak for themselves, in their own languages, on their own canvases. Silence at times leaves space for the untamed to speak.

In the same way in the meditation practice, it is best to hold to and honor one's own direct experience and not worry too much about whether *this* is what you are supposed to feel or see or think about. Why not trust your experience in this moment just as you would trust your foot to find a way to keep you balanced as you move over rocks? If you practice this kind of trust in the face of insecurity and the strong habit of wanting some authority to anoint your experience (however minuscule, and it usually is) with his/her blessing, you will find that something of a deepening nature does happen along the path. Our feet and our breath both teach us to watch our step, to proceed mindfully, truly to be at home in every moment, wherever our feet carry us, to appreciate where we are. What greater gift could be bestowed upon us?•

# Journey into Wholeness

## A Calendar of Up-Coming Workshops, Seminars and Events.

*"As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to light a candle in the darkness of mere being."— C. G. Jung*

PICTURES SUPPLIED BY JOURNEY INTO WHOLENESS



### AUGUST

#### 3-6 IMAGINATION AND THE ARTS

Exploring the mystery of imagination and the arts through plenary sessions, workshops, conversation forums, presentations, and special activities. Presenters include Jeanne Achterberg, Anne Simpkinson, Angeles Arrien, Don Campbell, Stanislav and Christina Grof. Sponsored by the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. (800)937-8728.

#### 4-6 INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Designed for those new to the formal practice of Zen as well as those seeking to clarify or intensify their practice. Led by Abbot John Daido Looi and senior students and offered each month by Zen Mountain Monastery, Mt. Tremper, N.Y. For the complete program catalog call (914)688-2228.

#### 7-13 INTERNATIONAL MACROBIOTIC SUMMER CONFERENCE

A week of summer fun, exercise, entertainment, and vegetarian meals that

lodge, make pottery, river raft and experience the silence of a vision quest in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Chaco Canyon. Presented by Creative Energy Options. (215)643-4420.

#### 13-20 SPIRITUAL RENEWAL WEEK

A special week of inspiration. Topics include Meeting Life's Challenges with Joy, Learning How to Love, and Keeping Your Spiritual Momentum Going. Classes meet outdoors in the amphitheater of The Expanding Light located in the scenic foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. (800)346-5350.

#### 18-20 WOMEN'S HERBAL CONFERENCE

Leading women herbalists share their wisdom of the plants and natural healing methods. Presenters include Dr. Rosita Arvigo, Rosemary Gladstar, Gail Ulrich and Jeannine Parvati Baker. Sage Mountain, Barre, Vermont. (802)479-9825.

#### 18-20 FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

A Kirkridge event with Julianna Simon and Sidney Simon, a father-daughter team and experienced counselors, that offers an honest and healing environment to explore this relationship. Kirkridge, Bangor, PA. (610)588-1793.

#### 25-27 CHOICES IN ACTION

Hosted by singer/songwriter John Denver with journalist Rolland Smith, the Windstar Foundation presents Choices for the Future Symposium in Aspen, Colorado. Presenters include Matthew Fox, John and Ocean Robbins, Julia and Kenny Loggins, Chungliang Ai Huang, Brother David Steindl-Rast, and many others. For information and registration call (970)927-4777.

#### 26 WALKING THE HIGH GROUND

Starting at Topanga State Park walk along the scenic high ground of the Santa Monica Mountains on the trail famous for its breathtaking views. The University of Santa Monica's annual event for students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends. For more information about this event, and the University, call (310)829-7402.

revolves around a natural health program, Bryant College, Smithfield, Rhode Island. Classes include Cooking with Natural Foods, Women's Health Issues, and Healing the Environment, as well as on-going Tai Chi, Chi Kung, Yoga, and Shiatsu Massage. Sponsored by The Kushi Institute. (413)623-5741.

#### 10-13 WHOLENESS EMBODIED

Creating Peace From the Inside Out. Speakers include Christiane Northrup, Nathaniel Branden, Joan Borysenko, Ashley Montagu, Chungliang Ai Huang, and many more. Presented by Association for Humanistic Psychology at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. (415)864-8850.

#### 11-19 POWER OF THE SOUTHWEST

An adventure into the Native American culture with Sylvia Lafair, Herb Kaufman, and Doug Conwell. Participate in a sweat

## S E P T E M B E R

### 4-9 FIVE-DAY SOUL RETRIEVAL TRAINING

With Sandra Ingerman. Participants to study the issue of soul loss from a shamanic perspective. Cortes Island, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: Hollyhock Farm (604)935-6533. Presented by Foundation for Shamanic Studies, Mill Valley, California. For other programs offered by the Foundation call (415)380-8282.

### 6-10 ALTERNATIVES '95

Alternative Approaches to Traditional Healing Modalities: Bringing new attitudes and practices into our lives and work, Scottsdale, Arizona. Presenters include Ilana Rubinfeld, Lucia Capacchione, Tian Daytona, and Michael Lee. Sponsored by U.S. Journal Training, Inc., with Sierra Tucson and Onsite. (800)441-5569 or (305)360-9233.

### 14-17 THE JOURNEY TO OUR SOURCE

An experiential weekend workshop led by Jeremiah Abrams, Matthew Fox, Gabrielle Roth, and Jacquelyn Small, including an optional breathwork experience on Thursday and Friday. Orlando, Florida. Presented by Eupsychia. (800)546-2795.

### 15-17 DRAWING THE LIGHT FROM WITHIN

A seminar designed for those who think they cannot draw with Elisabeth Boeke. Discover the richness of your inner life and your ability to have it emerge onto paper. Presented by Journey Into Wholeness, Balsam Grove, North Carolina. (704)877-4809.

### 15-17 MEETING OUR EARTH

Hyemeyohsts Storm and Swan Storm, Earth Teachers, share information about the Medicine Wheels, which bring healing, balance, power and wisdom into our lives and reveal the vital balance of male and female within our nature. Presented by Mount Madonna Center, Watsonville, California. (408)847-0406.

### 20-24 IN BLESSED FULLNESS

Gradually, like the turning of a season, there came to be among women an ancient knowing, a powerful compassion and deep longing. The 7th Annual Women's Harvest Celebration with Dr.

Tough Traveler

Omega  
new

T R A N S I T I O N

## Calendar

Susan Rangitsch, Sacred Circle, at the Feathered Pipe Ranch, Helena, Montana. Sponsored by Integritas, Inc. (406)542-2383.

woodlands and quiet contemplation. Meals provided. Presented by Sage

year. This October workshop begins the series in Psychotherapy and Health. October 27-29 begins Worklife and Health. Nov 10-12: Creativity and Health. Nov 17-19: Cross Cultural Practices and Health. For details and a complete schedule contact Creative Energy Option. (215)643-4420.

### 10-24 SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO NEPAL

This tour will include storytelling and writing with Laura Simms, guided tours with Ian Baker, harvest festivals honoring Tantric Goddesses, traditional sacred dance classes, and exploring myth and ritual in one's own life. Quest Tours. (804)977-7344.

### 14-15 GOD, SEX AND THE BODY

A Ritual Theater Lab with Gabrielle Roth. Be prepared to move and sweat your prayers in a



## OCTOBER

### 4-8 BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS ON LOVE

A mindfulness retreat with Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh focuses on traditional Buddhist practices that help cultivate love in ourselves and others. Participants are invited to come as families. Children ages seven and older are welcome to attend and participate. Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY. (800)944-1001.

### 5-7 THE FAMILY, ADDICTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

A special conference focusing on understanding and treating family and relationship issues in the addictions. Topics include family dynamics, codependency, sexuality, and healthy relationships. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Presented by Institute for Integral Development. (800)544-9562.

### 5-8 SACRED STONE PEOPLE'S LODGE

A four day sweat lodge intensive offers four consecutive sweat lodges, one each night, using the power of the ceremony to open our inner beings. There will be time for wandering in the



Mountain, Barre, Vermont. (802)479-9825.

### 6-7 THE ART OF HEALING

How to live between office visits, a workshop with Bernard Siegel, MD. Presented by Oasis Center, Chicago, Illinois. For more information, and other workshops, call (312)274-6777.

### 6-8 THE MASTER TEACHER SERIES

In-depth learning programs for personal growth as well as professional development. Each series is four weekends with one weekend each season of the

weekend of dancing and theatrical exploration. Find where sexuality and soul meet. Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, New York. (914)266-4301.

### 14-15 WOMAN WISDOM

This celebration of women's mysteries revolves around the cycles of nature and the sacred stages of womanhood. A nine month training which consists of six weekends beginning with this October workshop, combining shamanism, movement, myth, ceremony, art, meditation

PICTURES SUPPLIED BY JOURNEY INTO WHOLENESS

and more. Presented by Heart of the Goddess Wholistic Center and Gallery, Sue King (610)695-9494.

**15-29 JOURNEY TO THE BLACK MADONNA: SOUTHERN FRANCE**

In the cathedrals of Europe, and particularly in Southeastern France, are sculptures known today as "The Black Madonna." Journey with Lorna Roberts to explore the mystery and the spirit of this archetype. Triquetra Journeys. (212) 727-1898.

**19-22 AMERICAN DANCE THERAPY CONFERENCE**

For professionals to learn more about dance/movement therapy as a powerful and effective treatment tool. At the Rye Town Hilton, Rye Brook, New York. Presented by American Dance Therapy Association (410)997-4040.

**22-26 KANUGA FALL CONFERENCE**

Exploring Jungian psychology for the spiritual journey with Robert Johnson, Alice Howell, Michael Meade, and Peri Aston. Hendersonville, North Carolina. Presented by Journey Into Wholeness. (704)877-4809.

**22-29 MIRRORS RETREAT**

Shamanic healing and acting, a dramatization of the ego-soul struggle that exists in each psyche. Dance, theater, and ritual with Gabrielle Roth, teacher/explorer and shamanic healer. St Helena, California. For more information contact Right Hand Productions. (415)388-0431.

**N O V E M B E R**

**1-5 HEALTH CLASSIC**

A rainbow of health, fun, sun, and study in San Diego, California. Keynote speakers include Michio Kushi, Joan Borysenko, and over 30 health and environmental teachers. Gourmet vegetarian meals included. Fifth Annual Fall Health Classic. (805)969-0444.

**3-5 CONSCIOUS AGING: A CREATIVE AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

This conference helps us to move beyond our personal and cultural denial into a new vision of aging. Presenters include John Bradshaw, Christiane Northrup,

Avatar

Heart of the  
Women Wisdom

REIKI PLUS

Caban Alliance

AHP

Raven

Yasodhara

Charles

Ilana Rubinfeld, and Liliás Folan. Contact Omega Institute, (800) 944-1001.

3-5 POWER OF SOUND SCHOOL

Explore the fields of sound therapy, healing with tone and voice, drumming and auditory stimulation with Don Campbell. The school meets four weekends during the year. Available in 3 locations: Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco. Institute for Music, Health and Education. (800)490-4968.

5-21 ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES: BALI & BORNEO

Explore bridges between people of different cultures and between humans and other creatures. Beginning with the ritual of daily life in Bali and traveling to the deep forest of southern Borneo. Children and young people are welcome. Joan Halifax, Upaya, Santa Fe, New Mexico. (505) 986-8518.

10-12 MUSICIANSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

The first weekend of 3 intensives for the 1995-96 teacher training program sponsored by Music For People, a four-year program held in New Haven, Connecticut, includes homework and a supportive network to keep candidates inspired and active between classes. Bonnie Insull. (603) 352-4941.

11-12 ADDICTION AND RECOVERY

A Journey of the Dissatisfied Soul. What is meant by the spiritual nature of addiction and recovery in individuals and contemporary culture. Speakers include Marion Woodman, Mindy Fullilove, Fionnula Flannigan, Fred Holmquist, Sam Naifeh, Garrett O'Conner, and Julian White. Pacifica Graduate Institute. (805)969-3626 ext.103.

17-26 EARTH AND SKY

A pilgrimage and seminar at the Pacific Ocean in Mexico. Experience Huichol Indian Shamanism, healing, and ceremonial celebration with shamans Dona Josefa Medrano and Brant Secunda at a villa footsteps from the ocean—near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Dance of the Deer Foundation. (408)475-9560.

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Mayan Traditional Elder and Day-keeper, Hunbatz Men, will teach on the meanings at nine of the Sacred Ceremonial Centers of the Maya in this journey across the Yucatan Peninsula. Travel in Mexico and accommodations included. Offered by Caban Alliance (503)741-9640.

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4-10 PSYCHOLOGY OF HEALTH, IMMUNITY AND DISEASE

Specific applications and sources of inspiration to foster the further use of mind/body medicine. Presenters are Stanley Krippner, Christiane Northrup, Bernie Siegel, Frances Vaughan, and many others. Sponsored by The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. (800)743-2226.

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Natural and holistic approaches to health. An in-depth knowledge and understanding of the principles and therapeutic applications of mind-body medicine and ayurveda with Deepak Chopra, M.D, and David Simon, M.D. San Diego, California. Quantum Publications. (800)757-8897.

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## Happiness

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Zen meditation is the practice of sitting very still once or twice a day. In temples the periods are 30 to 50 minutes long, but just a few moments done regularly is good, too. In the Soto Zen tradition, meditation is done facing a blank wall. This practice is called *zazen*, and while it is very simple, it has profound effects difficult to describe. Even someone who has never tried the practice can imagine what sitting still everyday would be like. The effort it takes to sit really still is amazingly revealing, for each desire to fidget, each time our minds wander off, tells us something about ourselves. One function of meditation is to open our eyes to seeing ourselves, and everything around us, in the clearest possible way. But its greater purpose is to help us be in touch with our own center, a place deep within ourselves that we feel to be still, peaceful, and full of bliss; or sometimes it is solid, immovable, stable; and sometimes dynamic, powerful, and flowing. It can be all of these things, and more.

When you get away from it all in the mountains or the desert, or out on a sailboat perhaps, where it is quiet and peaceful, where the phone doesn't ring and there are no deadlines, it is very easy to feel at peace with the world and to know who you are. At such times, everything seems possible. But when you are harried and busy, and especially when things go wrong, you can experience a kind of identity crisis. At times like these it is easy to lose track of who you are and what you really feel. This is because we have a tendency to identify ourselves with our objectives, goals, careers, etc., and where we

think we are going in life. When those things are in chaos and not working out at all, who are we? One way to describe meditation is taking the time to remember who we are in complete silence. Someone once said that those who are the most successful in their careers are those who are best able to keep their work in perspective. Meditation is a practice that puts your whole life—everything—into perspective. So I suppose you could say that it is a key to being successful, in the deepest sense, in life itself.

Meditation is a discipline because you cannot depend upon quiet mountainsides or a trip to the seashore for your peace of mind. Besides, you quickly find out that when you are really distracted, even that won't work. Meditation is the practice of finding the still point of balance within your own being in the midst of all kinds of conditions. Its purpose is not to escape, not to duck responsibility or involvement in daily life, but to know with certainty exactly where the center of your own being is. When we remember who we are in silence, we bring tremendous strength and insight to daily life. The perspective gained through meditation in ordinary daily life is a key to a truly successful life, but it is also a powerful means of progressing on the spiritual path. It brings inner peace of mind and helps us discover how to live in harmony with everything around us, at home, at work, and even in the difficult social and political world in which we find ourselves. •

*Kyogen Carlson was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, is a Buddhist priest trained in Soto Zen here in America. Ordained in 1972 by Roshi Jiyu-Kennet, the Abbess of Shasta Abbey, (a Zen monastery in northern*

*California), he received full authorization to teach in 1978. Copyright 1994 by Kyogen Carlson. From the book "Zen In the American Grain," by Kyogen Carlson. Printed with permission from the publisher Station Hill Press.*

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## Perfection

Continued from page 49

to complacency. How do you draw the line here?

ROBERT: I'd put it this way: I'm not yet as I should be, according to my own vision of myself. If I can be comfortable with that, then I've found the way, the middle way.

DAVID: What you're saying implies two elements: one, recognizing the imperfection for what it is, with the implication that you'll try to overcome it, and two, accepting it, for the time being, as where you are.

ROBERT: It also implies accepting my life as a life of practice and being comfortable with that. Practice always carries the implication of "Not yet, not enough yet."

DAVID: Process is the key word; as you mentioned earlier—perfection as process. In Christian tradition, we've made the mistake for a long time of viewing perfection as something static, thinking that the unchangeable is really perfect, that change isn't compatible with perfection. But that is absolutely not true. In music, in dance, and in our own maturation, the perfection lies in the change, lies in the process. In our daily life and our daily practice, we have to gain an appreciation of the not-yet as an aspect of perfection. •

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## Self Acceptance

*Continued from page 29*

### LISTENING TO FEELINGS

Both accepting and disowning are implemented through a combination of mental and physical processes.

The act of experiencing and accepting our emotions is implemented through (1) focusing on the feeling or emotion, (2) breathing gently and deeply, allowing muscles to relax, allowing the feeling to be felt, and (3) making real that this is *my* feeling (which we call *owning* it).

In contrast, we deny and disown our emotions when we (1) avoid awareness of their reality, (2) constrict our breathing and tighten our muscles to cut off or numb feeling, and (3) disassociate ourselves from our own experience (in which state we are often unable to recognize our feelings).

When we allow ourselves to experience our emotions and accept them, we sometimes can move to a deeper level of awareness where important information presents itself.

One day a client began re-proaching herself for feeling anger at her husband because he was leaving on a two-week business trip. She called herself irrational, she called herself stupid, she told herself it was ridiculous to feel that way, but the anger persisted. No one has ever talked herself (or anyone else) out of an unwanted emotion by hurling insults or delivering a moral lecture.

I asked her to describe her feeling of anger, to describe where in her body she experienced it and how exactly it felt to her. My goal was to have her enter the feeling more deeply. Annoyed and irritated by my request, she demanded,

"What good would that do? I don't want to feel the anger, I want to get rid of it!" I persisted, and gradually she began to describe feelings of tension in her chest and a tight knot in her stomach. Then she exclaimed, "I feel indignant, I feel outraged, I feel, how can he do this to me?" Then to her astonishment, the anger began to dissolve and another emotion emerged in its place—*anxiety*. I asked her to enter the anxiety and describe it, and again her first response was to protest and ask what good it would do. I guided her to experience the anxiety, to immerse herself in it, while being a witness to it, describing everything she could notice, and directed her to discover if perhaps it would speak to her. "My God!" she cried. "I'm afraid of being left alone!" Again she began to rebuke herself. "What am I, a child? Can't I be on my own for two weeks?" I asked her to go more deeply into the fear of being alone. She said suddenly, "I'm afraid of what I might do when he's gone. You know—other men. I might get involved with another man. I don't trust myself."

By now, the anger was gone, the anxiety had dissolved, the fear of loneliness had faded away. To be sure, a problem remained that had to be dealt with, but now since it was admitted into conscious awareness, it was *capable* of being dealt with. •

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## APPENDIX

*Lotus Notes on page 33, 36, 40, 52, 67, 71: are from the book "Peace is Every Step," Copyright 1991 by Thich Nhat Hanh. Reprinted with permission from the publisher Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc.*

# Happiness

K Y O G E N C A R L S O N

*When asked, most people would say that what they really want out of life is simply to be happy and fulfilled. But when we try to list the elements that would comprise these goals, they aren't so easy to figure out. Happiness in life is much more than just being in a good mood. Consider the way some people like to cry at movies. Superficially, this makes no sense, yet they find it emotionally satisfying. Elements of a rich, full, satisfying life include challenge, achievement, growth, loving relationships, and giving of ourselves. But a truly successful life also includes equanimity and peace of mind, a sense of perspective in the face of both success and failure, love and loss. For no matter how much*



TONY STONE/ROB BOUDREAU

*we may gain in life, it is certain that we will all face loss at various times. And it is very hard to accept the one with equanimity while clinging desperately to the other. TURN TO PAGE 83*