



SPRING 1999

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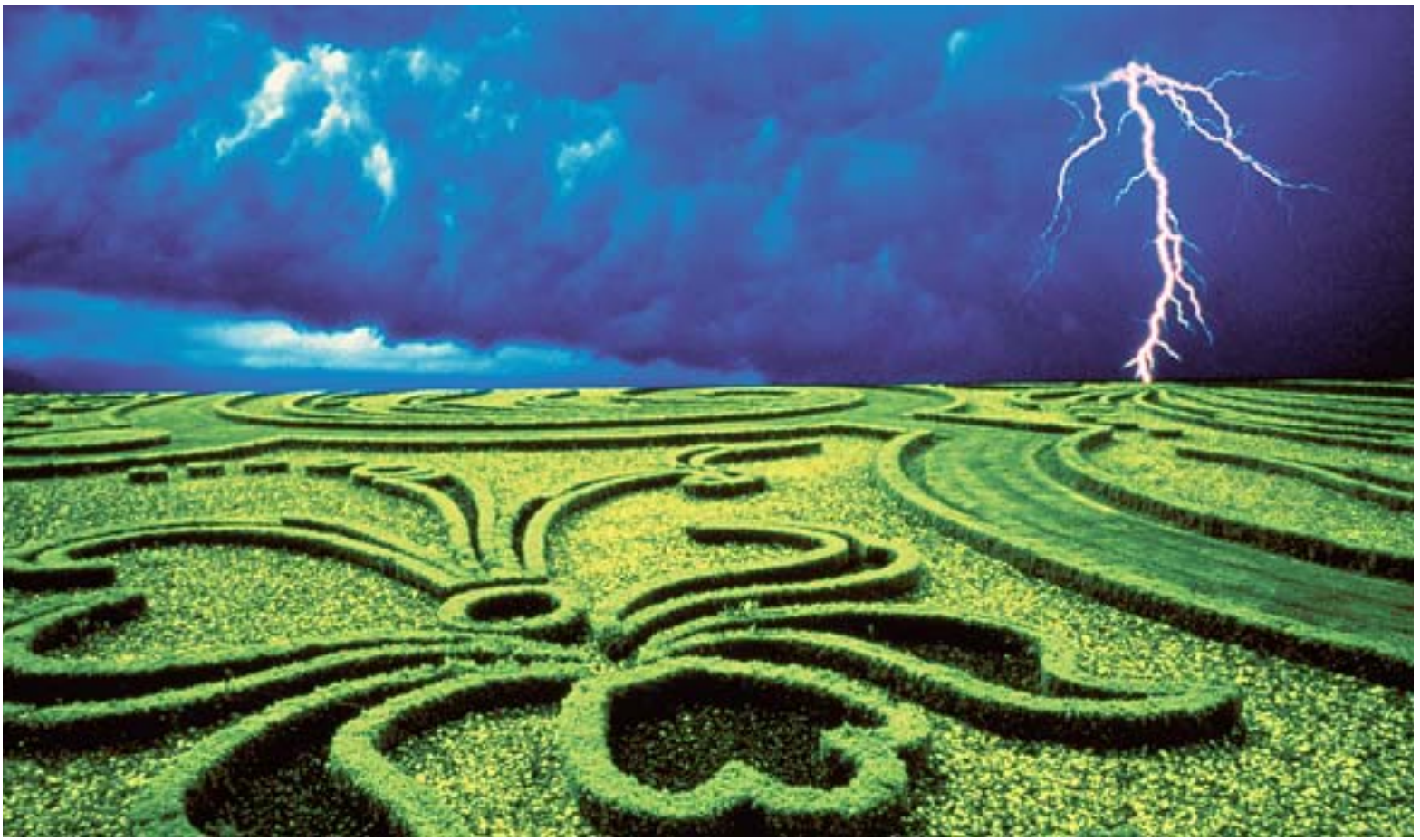
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People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

—*Elisabeth Kübler-Ross*

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 WOMAN—WAYNETTE NELSON/JOHN SHOEMAKER
 CONTENTS PAGE: TONY STONE/LARRY ULRICH
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From the Publisher



A friend of mine likes to use the movie *Titanic* as an analogy for how our society is heading full steam toward ecological disaster. In the movie, despite the warnings received from other

ships in the area to be on the lookout for icebergs, the captain proceeds at full speed. The captain of the *Titanic* complies with the request of his superior to keep the ship at full throttle so they can set a record for crossing the Atlantic on their maiden voyage. Meanwhile, the main body of the movie is occupied with the story of young passionate love. The other passengers enjoy parties and activities not knowing that this night may be their last. My friend likens those events to our society's focus on runaway production and consumption regardless of the long-term environmental effects.


For me, the *Titanic* story line speaks to our internal struggle in the quest for transforming our lives. We often rush through life distracted by the razzle-dazzle of everyday living. In doing so, we disregard what is most precious and pertinent to our development of an inner or spiritual life. In the movie the captain discounts his own inner voice, following egoistic yearnings, only to bring disaster to everyone.

We must develop an inner listening and a presence, of mind to be able to guide our lives. The inner small voice is ever present but we have to be available to hear it. The guidance we receive can be of benefit even if the wisdom of the guidance isn't readily apparent. The shift or transformation may be revealed to us later or may never be obvious. In *Titanic*, if the captain had followed his best sense, he may never have known the disaster he averted.

The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh tells a wonderful story about his early childhood that speaks about living in the present. As a young boy his family was very poor. When his mother went to the market she always brought home a cookie for him. He sat and smelled the cookie before taking a small bite. He wiggled his leg back and forth, petted his dog with his foot, and took another small bite—savoring every morsel. He sat for sometimes forty to fifty minutes eating that one cookie.

If we can live day to day with a "cookie" presence of mind, we will enjoy the gift of life, be calm enough to hear the still quiet voice, and be able to steer clear of obstacles.

Enjoy your *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*.


Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

Personal Transformation

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From the Editor

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.—Hebrews 13:5

We are eternally in relationship with God, Divine consciousness, Higher Self or whatever name you choose to call it. The above scripture assures that the Divine is ever with us. We know this to be true, yet to feel, breathe, and live it, we must undergo transformation in our relationship with the Divine. Strengthening the bonds with the Divine requires spending quiet time in prayer and meditation. There we discover that we are loved always, and we begin the movement of giving over “my will” to “Thy will,” which is the process of personal transformation. While this giving over is grace given, occurring when we are ready, it is also invited by our efforts. Both spiritual practices, through which we connect with our Higher Self, and introspective practices, through which we become acquainted with the workings of our small selves, invite us into deeper relationship.

Being truly seen is another way we experience the Divine. Most of us have had the experience of feeling really seen by someone. It occurs when another connects with the Divine essence in us. You know that you have been seen by your response. Your heart softens, you feel connected with the other person and yourself. It’s as if your soul is made visible and through their recognition, you recognize yourself. The words spoken by the other may seemingly have no direct connection to you, but the truth being expressed echoes deep inside, and you feel acknowledged for who you truly are.

Sometimes there are conversations in which the presence of the other communicates as much as their words. Some quality in them is transmitted through voice and reaches deep within. Paul Tillich said, “Depth speaks to depth.” Such was my conversation with Father Thomas Keating. When interviewing him for this issue, the depth of spirit from which he spoke moved me profoundly. His voice penetrated my psyche and tears of recognition and communion arose from my core. I felt seen, made visible to myself. Such experiences invoke heartfelt gratitude. Not only do they stay with us, but also, the impact may deepen and be more fully realized in the future.



There is another kind of being seen that initially may not feel like a blessing, although it is. We have all had the experience of being seen through. This is when someone catches you trying to seem important, seek approval or take control. They discover that you embellished a story, distorted facts or maneuvered another. Being caught, you cringe, deny, justify or feel shame.

Although uncomfortable, someone seeing through you and telling you what they observe is an opportunity to see yourself more clearly. Feedback like this, when contemplated, helps you to become more aware of what constitutes your small self or ego self. When you acknowledge the truth to yourself, the unconscious becomes conscious. You make space for Divine consciousness to move through you.

When you are seen through, what remains? Underneath, you find wounds and unexamined attitudes that have been with you since childhood. By facing what is in your shadow you heal and mature. Doing so forges pathways into your core. There you access the silence within, the place from which God speaks.

Being in closer relationship with God, you experience Divine loving support, and you are able to feel what has been repressed and see your shortcomings for what they are—attempts to survive. This psychological awareness carves space in your consciousness for creativity, wisdom, joy, and peace—evidence that the Divine is expressing Itself through you.

Grace and love reside in relationship. Father Keating said, “God appreciates all our efforts to be friends with him.” It is equally true that our efforts to be intimate with ourselves reap rich rewards. For it is in relationship—with others, ourselves, and God—that we discover our true identity.

Welcome to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor

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LAMA SURYA DAS



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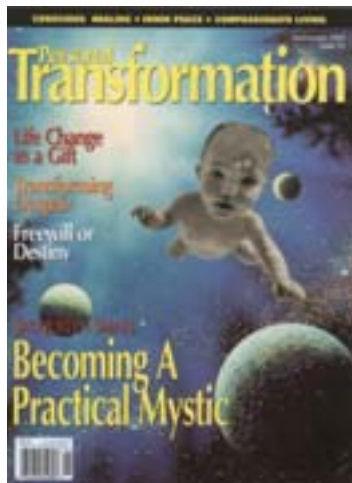
WAYNE MULLER



WAYNE W. DYER has written thirteen books, including *Wisdom of the Ages*, a collection of essays on the writings of the greatest thinkers of the past. He has a doctorate in counseling psychology and lectures nationwide as well as appearing regularly on a variety of television programs.

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN was born in India in 1882. He founded the Sufi Order in the West and in 1910 became one of the first teachers of the tradition in the West. For the next 16 years, he lectured and guided seekers throughout Europe and the United States. He returned to India in 1926, where he died a year later.

From our Readers



COOL?

What an interesting cover for the Anniversary issue of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. I do love your magazine and hate to pick, but what does a baby in space have to do with transformation?—*Ben Wilson, Portland, Oregon.*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: The theme for the cover was to depict the great journey we all make—born from the unseen (space) and in death return. Another way to look at it, we are born of the stars and upon death return to the stars. Space has always represented the great mystery of the micro-cosmic and the macro-cosmic universe we live in.

OPEN TO WISDOM

I am glad that you are back. I flipped through your Anniversary issue when, to my surprise, I found it in my mailbox, and felt as though a friend had come to visit.

I was also happy to see the arti-

cle “Love, Compassion and Joy” by Thich Nhat Hahn. I am primarily a Christian, having been raised in a Protestant church. The spiritual songs and scriptures that tend to go deepest into my heart come from the Christian tradition, perhaps because they penetrate into my cells, having heard them all my life, living in a Christian culture.

As a spiritual seeker, I am open to wisdom teachings from all religious traditions. I have particularly been attracted to Buddhism, even though many of the terms are confusing and unfamiliar to me. One of the reasons I love Thich Nhat Hahn's writings is that there is a simplicity and clarity in his words that bring Buddhist and universal truths to life. Reading his article was like receiving a teaching on the deeper aspects of love.—*Bev Donnell, Greensboro, North Carolina.*

MOTIVATING

Thank you for your article “Despair, Hope and Faith,” by Jim Rosemergy, in your 1999 Anniversary issue.

As someone who has gone through some difficult times in her life, I could easily identify with the feelings of despair one can have. To read that “wherever there is despair, hope is close at hand” was very affirming and uplifting. Although I have gone through periods of despair and always worked through those times, it was still good to read that there is a process of healing one

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 78

READERS ON...

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE your insights and reflections with other *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* readers? We want to know about your transformative experiences—what you learned, how you changed and how these aspects of transformation affected you and the way you relate to life. Send us a 400-500 word essay on one of the following aspects of transformation.

EXPLORING AND EXPRESSING inner life (through journaling, poetry, drawing, dance etc.).
Due April 30, 1999.

ONENESS WITH NATURE (a wilderness experience, gardening, relationship with a pet, etc.).
Due July 14, 1999

Send manuscript, your address, and daytime phone number to: Readers on, *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* 8210 East 71st Street #503, Tulsa, OK 74133-2948. Essays chosen for print will receive two free gift subscriptions. (Please note: Manuscripts will be edited and cannot be returned.)

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Transformation Groups

Leaderless Groups that Work

MARY JANE MORGAN

In a recent survey of 3000 participants it was reported that 19 percent of today's adults have participated in or are presently participating in a leaderless group. Leaderless groups such as the 12-step programs have long been a widely used resource for support and information. In most towns and all cities you find listings of hundreds of leaderless groups offering support—from Al-Anon to divorce recovery to parenting.

Leaderless groups are also increasingly being recognized as valuable tools for people seeking personal and spiritual growth. Spiritually oriented groups as such wisdom circles are beginning to sprout up. With so many people taking advantage of what these groups have to offer, it's no wonder they have earned respect as being a catalyst for healing and growth. Whether the focus of the group is a disease such as alcoholism, a transition such as the death of a spouse, or spiritual growth such as Bible study, effective groups have several things in common. They all heighten motivation, provide feedback, and bring people together for the mutual support of similar journeys.

Similarly, to do transformational exploration, we can greatly benefit from the support of like-minded sojourners: from the honest communication, commitment, and shared experiences of others invested in conscious growth. Steven Wolf, Ph.D., clinical psychologist, knows this well. He has been both a member as well as a leader of growth groups for over twenty-five



STEVE WOLF

years. He believes that leaderless groups for the purpose of self-exploration can provide an internal foundation for the creation and flourishing of communities for transformation. Steve sees the formation of such ongoing community groups as providing an invaluable step in our collective movement toward universal consciousness. Over the past several years, Steve has formed transformational groups that he describes as “spiritually centered, psychologically oriented, leaderless groups designed for self-exploration and the creation of conscious community.”

Both leaderless groups and groups with a leader have their own unique advantages. Leaderless groups are inexpensive and draw upon the strengths, support, motivation, and experiences of their participants. In these groups leadership is a function which moves through the group members. It does not rest on the authority of the leader. A leader-led group can never provide the opportunity for developing the responsibility for the voice of leadership that is possible in a leaderless group. On the other hand, groups facilitated by a leader have a skilled person navigating the participants through the inevitable crises of group life, a person who can provide support for individuals who are dealing with emotional challenges which are more than a leaderless group can justifiably be expected to contend with. In order to incorporate some strengths of leader-led groups into these leaderless groups, Steve teaches methodologies to empower the members to address the inevitable challenges which occur as part of the leaderless group process.

He now trains group facilitators in his model, working with other experienced group leaders who respect and are adept at addressing the depth and complexities of group process. Group leaders comfortable with groups, committed to empowering others pursuing their own work of self-exploration, and who desire to assist and guide groups through the often uncomfortable, sometimes intense, crises can be taught these

methodologies. They can then birth groups for personal transformation as part of their clinical practice, as the foundation for conscious community.

The failure of leaderless groups often comes about when individuals no longer feel empowered to safely express themselves within the group. This results in dropouts or superficial connections during

group meetings. "Many leaderless groups flounder due to their inability to deal with the five crises of leaderless groups," says Steve. He labels these phenomena as crises because when they occur one or more members of the group feel held back, unable to bring their soul to the group. The spirit of the group then lacks full presence. The five crises involve issues of forming

consensus; inability to explore deep emotional content; personality conflicts; power, authority, and leadership struggles; and loss of spiritual purpose or reason for being in the group.

The group facilitator develops each group in such a way as to empower the group to address crises as they arise. In the first few sessions, the facilitator teaches the participants how to function in the group and gradually become independent. After meeting for a few sessions with the facilitator, the group meets alone. The facilitator returns for the next couple of sessions with the group, then skips another week. Over time, the group meets more and more often without the facilitator. Over the course of the group's existence, the facilitator remains available to the group to provide assistance and training on an as-needed basis. The professional facilitator is paid only when he or she meets with the group. This provides a financial "carrot" for members to strive for their independence.

A recent experience with a group Steve started several years ago shows how a facilitator can teach his group to deal with their crises. Steve had not met with the group for some time when they called and asked him to attend their next meeting. One of the group members had intense feelings toward another member and did not want to be "facilitated" by him, because she felt he had violated her in his manner of questioning. What resulted was a crisis about power, authority, and leadership. The group felt unable to work through the issue alone and enlisted the help of their facilitator. Steve used the crisis as an opportunity to teach them how to deal with the intense emotional conflict which

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Transformation Group Training

Learn to Train Leaderless Groups

Personal Transformation magazine is sponsoring training programs for individuals interested in becoming trainers for leaderless, spiritually centered transformation groups.

The training is particularly suited for therapists, healers and other qualified persons who have done a lot of inner work, understand the importance of groups in personal growth, and would like to organize and train leaderless groups.

The format is ongoing, small groups which meet for three weekend workshops over a year. Trainees learn methodologies by participating in a leaderless group led by Steve Wolf. Three training groups are planned: one each on the East Coast, the West Coast, and in the Midwest.

These groups are being organized now. Take advantage of this opportunity to become a group leader and guide others on their transformational journey.

To sign up, or for information, call (800)775-6887.

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Your transformation questions answered by leaders in the movement.

Dreams, what good are they?

I have been in therapy for some time and my therapist has encouraged me to participate in a dream group. I'm interested but skeptical and wonder when dream work is self-indulgent and when it has a redeeming value. What purpose does it serve?

JEREMY TAYLOR: The scientific evidence is: all human beings dream every night, whether or not we remember these sleeping adventures or not. Thus, anyone who says, "I don't dream!" is simply confessing that he/she is failing to pay attention to this universal aspect of human experience. The universality of the phenomenon of dreaming is reason enough to be interested in it, and when you add to that the fact that individual dreams always have immensely valuable information (albeit usually in confusing symbolic form) to convey to the dreamer's waking mind, then paying regular attention to dreams becomes an exciting and productive activity.

Thirty years of work in the field, exploring something well in excess of 100,000 dreams has convinced me that all dreams come in the service of health and wholeness and speak a universal language of metaphor and symbol. One of the generic "messages" of every remembered dream is: "There is a potentially positive and creative role for the dreamer's waking consciousness to play in the further unfoldment of the issues and events that are given symbolic shape in this dream..."

This is true even and particularly of those seemingly irredeemable and nasty dreams we call "nightmares." In my experience, the specialized generic message of every nightmare is "Wake up! Pay attention! There is a survival issue at stake in your waking life that you can do something

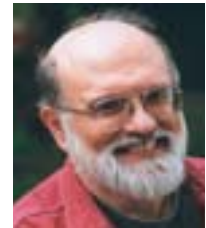
positive about, if you only notice it in time!" The nastier the immediate experience of the nightmare, the surer you can be that it contains information of particular potential use, value, and importance. Sometimes, the nightmare will draw our waking attention to survival issues relating to physical health and well-being, but more often, it warns us about threats to the "survival" of the dreamer's authentic self, (what the Zen Buddhists sometimes call, "your face before you were born"), which is most often jeopardized by the bogus internalized demands of social convention and its ever-present companion, self-deception.

Paying regular attention to dreams is the single most reliable method of confronting and combatting self-deception that I know.

The practical problem, of course, is that the dreams usually seem so confusing and nonsensical upon first reflection. One of the reasons for this is that dreams themselves are the workshop of evolution, and thus every dream is right at the boundary of what the partially evolved waking personality is capable of seeing and comprehending at that moment. One of the things this means is that every person is uniquely blind to the deeper meanings of his/her own dreams; in other words, one of the hardest things in the world to do is for any person to easily see the deeper meanings of his or her own dreams in solitude.

The best solution to this problem is to share one's dreams with others and get the benefit of the fresh eyes and ears with which they are able to "see" and hear my dreams. Because the symbolic language of the dream is, in fact, universal, the likelihood that the guesses, speculations and projections that others are drawn to share about the meanings they see in my dreams

IN THIS ISSUE:



JEREMY TAYLOR,
How dreams can have an important role in your growth.



NANCY NAPIER, PH.D.,
How to handle life challenges during a crisis.



BARBARA WHITFIELD,
How to deal with family problems relating to death.



DORIS HELGE, PH.D.,
How to deal with shame and unworthiness.

will awaken the archetypal “aha!” of recognition that is the only reliable touchstone in this fascinating and deeply productive work.

In this sense, every remembered dream is “about” the person whom the dreamer is growing and evolving into. These developments of personality, character, and creative inspiration/manifestation will sometimes percolate to the surface of waking awareness eventually, in some form or another, whether or not the dreamer is paying attention to his/her dreams, but the practice of keeping track of dreams and sharing them with others can enhance, deepen, and accelerate this process of personal transformation in extraordinary and amusing ways.

My Life Has Fallen Apart

For years I felt I had a great life. Everything was easy. I traveled, met fascinating people and my extended family helped me build a thriving business. A year ago, everything changed. I went through bankruptcy and now family relationships are strained. I remember being grateful for my life before, but I am unable to feel that way now. How do I find peace when my life is turned upside down?

NANCY NAPIER: When things fall apart, suddenly we are faced with the fundamental reality that the one constant in life is change, that inevitably things will never remain the same. At these times, we are offered an opportunity to deepen our trust and allow learning to unfold, even as we may also find ourselves faced with an experience of vulnerability and powerlessness.

If we are accustomed to having enough money, losing income and financial stability can bring about not only a crisis of faith, but a need to experience ourselves in a new way. While we were once self-sufficient and capable of meeting our own needs, suddenly we now must turn to others for help. The shift from being financially secure to financially unstable can be a profound emotional experience, opening up feelings of helplessness that may be new to us. If our sense of who we are in the world is tied to the job we do, the title we carry, the career we have shaped for ourselves, when work fails us we may enter into an identity crisis, a sense of not knowing who we are or what makes us valuable.

Experiences such as these invite us to turn to something less tangible than the ways in which we measure our lives materially. Fundamental to finding peace during times of change is the awareness

that to have our lives turned upside down isn't a sign that we are doing something wrong. Rather, it's a sign that life is continuing on its natural and inevitable course, creating change, opening us up to new learning and spiritual deepening. If we have a belief in something greater than ourselves, the journey can take us further into our relationship with the divine. At times like these, we are faced with the need to explore our relationship to faith and our willingness to create learning opportunities in whatever experiences life brings our way.

One of the most powerful places of peace, for me, is the still point that's found between the out-breath and the next in-breath. By learning to travel to the “bottom of the breath” and find the still point that exists within the gap between breaths, we can find a home base that becomes a reliable resting place. For example, take a moment to imagine that within and behind every single thought, feeling, sensation, action, or urge that you have is a fundamental, ever-present, all-enfolding stillness. The stillness is both infinite and intimate—a presence you can “lean into” when you need to re-center yourself or take some time simply to be. Being in the stillness doesn't mean stopping all your thoughts and feelings. It just means that you have a place where you can find support while upsetting or vulnerable thoughts and feelings move through.

A helpful and empowering state of mind/being is that of “no struggle.” A stance of “no struggle” is an active, empowered surrender to what is not in our control, rather than a passive response to helplessness. Whatever life may challenge us with at any given time, when we meet it with no struggle we conserve our energy and awareness for what we *can* do and allow what we *can't* change to move on by. It helps to remember that, just as the good times tend to change, the bad times will, as well. Whatever the crisis, it will eventually shift and become something else. It may take time, and we may have no idea what is coming, but that change will happen is inescapable.

Coping With AIDS

My son has AIDS and is dying. Even though these are “enlightened days” my husband has not accepted our son's homosexuality and cannot face his approaching death. Is there some way to help my son and husband through this?

BARBARA WHITFIELD: My heart and prayers go out to you at this most painful time for you, your

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Transformations

Three Stories Offer Hope and Inspiration

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

WILMA MANKILLER,
FORMER CHIEF OF THE
CHEROKEE NATION

I am from a little community that the old-timers call Mankiller Flats. Most people call it the Rocky Mountain in East Oklahoma. I'm 53 years old. When I was a child, this community was very isolated. There weren't any paved roads. We had no television. We had no telephone. It was a predominantly Cherokee speaking community.

I learned three things from that community that are still with me, that I won't ever forget. I learned these things not because someone sat me down and said, "These are values that will be important to you in your life." But, rather, I learned by watching the people around me, which is probably the best way to learn.

I learned a lot about communities by watching very poor people barter with one another. If some family had milk, another family might have vegetables and another might have fruit. People traded with one another. We had to depend on one another in that community in order to live, in order to survive. This was long before there were federal programs for people, and so the lesson from that was that we are interdependent, and that was the only way we would survive.

The second thing I learned was to try to keep my mind and my life as free as possible of negative things. I learned that by watching people who had faced the most daunting problems you can imagine yet always had something positive to say about what was going on. This relates to a very ancient concept which I describe



as having a good mind. Watching and listening to those people taught me that no matter what kind of situation you find yourself in, try to find something positive about it. Try to hold on to the concept that we all have choices when disaster befalls us, and we can either focus on the negative or we can focus on the positive. Our people have kept that old tradition of having a good mind. In fact, one of my favorite traditional Cherokee prayers starts out by saying, "Let us first remove all negative things from our minds so we can come together as one."

Another lesson I learned from my early life in Adair County came from seeing people look at problems and enormous obstacles as challenges rather than excuses to sit down and do nothing. That taught me, as a person facing personal trauma and as a leader, to see obstacles as challenges rather than as reasons to give up.

Until my early thirties, I lived my life based on those three basic principles. I didn't think much about spirituality. My family was not involved in regular church attendance, nor were they involved in regular tribal traditional ceremonies.

One beautiful fall day in 1979 I got dressed and left my home. I had the radio on and I was singing a song. The next thing I remembered was five days later when I woke up in intensive care in a hospital in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Nothing that had happened to me before or has happened since had a more profound effect on me

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 17

People say to me, “Think how much better your life would have been if you hadn’t had to go through all of those things.” First of all, I wouldn’t have this absolute, unshakable faith in God.

personally and spiritually than that experience. I was driving not more than five miles from home on a little road. I was coming up a hill and my friend, Sherry, was coming the other way. She always drove too fast and she was always in too much of a hurry. She passed three cars before her car and my car collided head-on. She was killed and I was close to death when they took me from the car. The doctors and nurses didn’t know whether I was a man or a woman. I was in shock, and bleeding badly. I came close to death. For the first in my life, I had an absolute clear understanding that there is a God. It wasn’t a perception; it wasn’t an intellectual thing. It was a knowledge that permeated every fiber of my being.

The feeling I had during that time is a feeling I don’t know how to describe because I don’t think we experience that feeling until we face death. Yet I think that is what life is all about, that experience of going home. During that time, I felt overwhelmed by a feeling of unconditional love, and the feeling was more beautiful than the finest day I’ve ever had in my life.

While I was recovering from that accident, I began to practice the old Cherokee way of having a good mind. The doctor told me I would never walk again and for a while I moped around believing that. Then my fighting spirits kicked in and I went to work, and I’ve been walking ever since. Even though I recovered, I decided during that time that if I ended up in a wheelchair or had to wear braces for the rest of my life, I would be fine because I could still read and write.

I prayed, both with a medicine man and with a preacher, and eventually I was on my way to recovery. Then I started having strange problems. I couldn’t hold a toothbrush to brush my teeth. I couldn’t brush my hair because my fingers wouldn’t work. My eyes stopped moving and I couldn’t see to read. I began to lose my voice

because my throat muscles were starting to go, and I began to fall down.

No one knew what was wrong with me. In September 1980 I watched a muscular dystrophy telethon and saw a woman who had symptoms strikingly similar to my own, and I thought, “Oh my God, I think that’s what I have.” By that time it had started to affect my breathing. Still recovering from the accident, I made an appointment with a Tulsa doctor and was diagnosed with Systemic Myasthenia Gravis, a neuromuscular disorder in the muscular dystrophy family. As I was being treated for that, Charlie and I started working on a project together.

Charlie was raised in a Christian family, and he began to talk to me about church. While I didn’t know anything about church or the Bible, his values and my values were strikingly similar. What I called being a person of good mind or trying to live in a good way, he called trying to be Christ-like.

Eventually Charlie and I married and started going to church. I loved being in a community of people who were trying to live in a good way, sometimes failing sometimes succeeding, but always trying to figure out how to be the best people they could.

In 1986, my faith was tested. I began to have major kidney problems. By 1989 I was experiencing kidney failure. By 1990 I had total kidney failure and had a transplant. What sustained me during that time was traditional ceremonies, my church, and prayer. It was difficult to do my job at the Cherokee Nation and to go through the kidney transplant. I tried to find something positive to think about during that time.

Nineteen ninety-five was one of the most difficult years I’ve lived through. After the 1995 election, friends whom I thought had been friends for many years turned out to be what I call situational friends; they were only friends when I was in a leadership position, when everything was going well.

Transformations

Late in 1995, I was diagnosed with Lymphoma second stage cancer of the lymph system. During that time, sometimes I would pray with the Bible, sometimes with the Eagle feather. But I prayed every single day. It was during this time that I had a call from a Cherokee evangelist who reminded me this wasn't a journey I could take by myself. I needed to turn it over to God and say, "If I'm supposed to live, I'll live. If I am not supposed to live, I won't." I began to understand that it was okay to let go of life.

From then on things got worse. I got a lung infection and the medicines they gave me caused kidney failure. Just as I finished the radiation in November of 1996, I experienced total kidney failure. In December, I went on dialysis, which I didn't do well on.

When people saw me during that time, they didn't know what I was going through because I remained fairly positive, both because of my faith and my acceptance. I turned the whole thing over to God and said, "Whatever is going to happen is going to happen."

No one would do a kidney transplant because my immune system was already lowered from the cancer treatment. In the summer of 1998 I participated in a clinical trial where they give patients less immune suppression medicine than other transplant patients receive. I was able to receive a second kidney.

People say to me, "Think how much better your life would have been if you hadn't had to go through all of those things." First of all, I wouldn't have this absolute, unshakable faith in God. Secondly, I don't think I would have had the emotional level headedness to be able to lead the Cherokee Nation.

There is a current popular book, *Don't Sweat The Small Stuff*. I learned during my illnesses that I shouldn't sweat the small stuff. I also learned that one of the most important things in life is love—not only for you to be loved, that's important, but it is also critical to your survival as a human being to love other people.

I don't know what my prognosis is. Do you know what yours is? I read a sign once that said, "The best way to make God smile is to make long-term plans because only God knows what's in store for us."

A Will to Live

CAROLYN HILL

The first five months after being diagnosed with AIDS, my body felt as if a major world war had passed through it, leaving nothing but charred, smoking ruins. I vomited, coughed, sweated profusely and was wracked with pain. I had fever, nightmares, severe anemia as well as uncontrollable diarrhea, and had become so fatigued I could barely sit up in bed. I was, in fact, wasting away to oblivion. Yet something made me refuse to give up.

"You know, most people who have a strong will to live usually have a very apparent reason for it, such as kids, a mate, or wanting to see their grandchildren born," my mom said to me one day after watching me struggle. "You obviously have a very strong will to live, but I haven't been able to figure out the reason yet."

I burst out laughing because I hadn't been able to figure it out either. I had just turned forty, had no children, no mate and no home. I was also disgusted with my twenty-year career.

My doctor had put me on the famous drug "cocktail" that was saving many people's lives. However, it merely compounded my problems. Small bites of food caused such agony that I would wrap my arms around my stomach, curl into a ball, and cry at each meal. In addition, I developed severe allergic reactions to my medications and spent many days looking like a swelled up red blowfish, and scratching until I bled.

After going to the hospital for four weeks and getting worse with each visit, one summer day I staggered up the steps of John's Hopkins Hospital and felt my stomach cramp. I knew I had about sixty seconds to find a bathroom. "Oh God, I've lost all control of my body," I muttered. "I don't know what to do, and the doctors aren't helping."

Not only had my body deteriorated, I was beginning to fall apart emotionally. And now, here I was, about to lose bowel control in front of hundreds of



strangers at the entrance to John's Hopkins. Crying, I shouted for Mom to help.

She took my arm. "There's a bathroom right inside. We're almost there."

"I can't make it." I gasped for air as my muscles went limp. I was too weak to walk any further. Panicked, I looked in every direction, trying to find someplace to ease my misery and hide my shame. But there was no place to hide. I was horrified and humiliated as diarrhea streamed down my legs, ruining my favorite pair of white shorts and new leather sandals. I collapsed, sobbing, onto the steps near a garbage can and curled up, watching both my insides and my life flow down the stairs.

I honestly don't know why I didn't give up on life altogether at that point. At the pace I was going, it was obvious I was rapidly headed for death. My doctors seemed to be at their wits' end; they took me off all medications and for weeks ran every test they could think of. Each day, it took all of my concentration and limited physical energy to get dressed, eat three meals, go to the bathroom, and get to the hospital.

Several weeks later, my doctor found a lump in my abdomen and sent me immediately to the radiology department. The lump turned out to be a mass of lymph nodes. I was diagnosed with MAI (Mycobacterium Avium Inter-cellular), an opportunistic infection that preys upon people with AIDS, and used to kill them. The potentially fatal symptoms of MAI were being exacerbated by the "cocktail" medications I was taking, which was the reason for my debilitating health. Now that my

doctors finally knew what was going on, they could treat the problem effectively.

Over the next five months, with a lot of help from my doctors, family and friends, my prayer group and minister, as well as my own inner strength and meditations, I finally began to heal. One of the things that helped me the most was a prosperity class at a Unity Church that taught the principle of the four Ts—tithing of time, talent, and treasures. This class helped me re-program my negative thought patterns into positive thoughts. Instead of thinking, "I'm not good enough" or "No matter how hard I try, things don't work out," I began to say to myself, "I'm good enough to do this. If I try hard, everything will work out."

As I started to feel better, I found I had time to reflect on all that had happened to me, and I came back to the question my mother had asked: "Why did I have such a strong will to live?" Everything in my life as I had known it had been stripped away and, on the surface, I had nothing to live for. What was my reason for hanging on?

I suppose part of me needed to know if it was possible to overcome a life-threatening illness and overwhelming adversity. Could I lift myself out of the pit I had fallen into and find true joy and peace in life? Could I find the "Kingdom of Heaven Within," that was promised by so many of the world's masters? As I walked through this journey, I began to think that perhaps those things were possible.

I am now on my way to overcoming AIDS. My viral load, which peaked at 170,000, is now almost undetectable. And my immune system grows stronger each week. My CD4, or "T-cell," white blood count is climbing and is now around 350, from a low of 20 (normal is 6,000-12,000). The anemia has subsided. The fevers have stopped. The night sweats have ended. The excruciating pain in my muscles has eased, and I am gaining weight because I can eat again. I still wrestle with the awful side effects of the disease and the potent medications. And, at times, the emotional turmoil that is inherent with AIDS still knocks me for a loop. But all in all, I am healing quite well.

Because of AIDS, I now look deep into my soul for the negative thoughts, habits, patterns, and

Transformations

energies that helped create my “dis-ease” (a term meaning “not being at ease with life and how things work”), and work hard to rid myself of them. I have developed a new appreciation for what is important in life—the small things like ice cream and flowers, and the big things like family, friends, the Creator and myself. I’ve learned to enjoy the simple pleasures of life, like going for walks on moonlit evenings when everything is blanketed in snowy silence, drifting away to the angelic sounds of Pachelbel and Mozart, basking in a sunbeam, curling up in front of a fire with a good book and a cup of hot chocolate, sharing laughter and making memories with family and friends, and thanking our Creator for this glorious life.

No, I’m not ready to die. Because of the changes I made in the way I view life, I feel my life is just beginning. It’s become a wonderful ride, and one I certainly don’t want to miss.

Kundalini Awakening

PATRICIA BLOISE

In 1973 I began a twenty-year journey that would change my life forever. I was admitted to a New York State Psychiatric hospital with delusions of grandeur—I believed I was the Virgin Mary. I was experiencing a tremendous increase in energy, had dropped ten pounds in a week, and had stopped sleeping. Powerful subconscious forces were running rampant in my psyche, and I was out of touch with reality. My family had no clue what was happening to me, and neither did I.

People in the midst of these sorts of crises are sometimes misunderstood and mishandled. I was no exception. I was seen as a psychotic individual and labeled as schizophrenic. Although I was not in touch with what the world viewed as reality, the grandeur and beauty of my internal world could not be imagined. My body had become weightless. My feet carried me as if with wings. The natural world



was filled with an extraordinary beauty. Brilliant light shimmered around everything. Trees and flowers took on new meaning. A profound peace overwhelmed me, and there was a deep surrender to the majesty of all. But the doctors did not see this. And I was so taken with the profound grandeur and majesty of this experience that I did not have the ability or the desire to speak of it.

Three months of drug therapy brought me back to a mundane and difficult reality. The heavy sedatives took away my ability to function. I could not tie a shoelace or hold a pen in my hand. I had muscle spasms in my face, and I walked as if I had a plank strapped to my back. I had even lost the ability to think or remember. They said I was better and sent me home.

Once I got off the medications, life went back to normal—for six years. Then it hit again. It was the same pattern as before, with tremendous energy, except I did not experience the intense beauty and joy. I was hospitalized for another three months, diagnosed with another schizophrenic disorder, and underwent intense drug therapy again.

After I was released, I stayed on the medications for a month. Eventually I went back to school and got married. Life was normal and happy until 1991. Then it hit again. This time the hospitalization lasted only four days. But eight months later, it happened yet again.

Over the last nineteen years, I had learned many things about my condition, what it was and what it was not. A degree in psychology had taught me about the mind/body connection. And while I knew

there were many conditions in the body that could be precipitated by different forms of stress, this condition did not seem to be one of them. It came of its own accord without rhyme or reason, during times of harmony and smooth sailing. Conversely, during times of difficulty and adversity, it remained silent. There seemed to be no way to predict what would provoke this energy. What became evident over time, however, was that it was not going away.

The night I was brought to the hospital in 1992, I met Dr. Saba, a doctor from India. After three hospitalizations, three diagnoses of schizophrenia, and horrible medications, grace came into my life. I was finally blessed with a doctor who understood what was happening to me, and began to help me understand.

Dr. Saba gave me hope. He diagnosed me with Unipolar Mania—Bipolar Disorder without the depression—and began treating me with Lithium, which I will take the rest of my life. Unipolar Mania is not talked about very often in medical circles. It does not even appear in the DSM IV. It is a rare condition in which the individual swings from a normal energy level to a manic state, thus my tremendous energy, weight loss, lack of sleep, and intense mental experiences.

Although mania can have serious, even deadly, side effects if not treated, there is also a positive side to this condition. When understood and treated properly, Unipolar Mania can transport the personality to worlds of higher vision and deeper understanding. A healthy mind active with this type of creative energy can become powerfully productive. The classic treatment for mania, Lithium, is a wonder drug for people with this condition. It keeps their mania under enough control so they still have an abundance of energy, but their brains don't become disorganized, and they can excel in both their work and their creativity.

At the time Dr. Saba diagnosed me, I had become involved in the Self-Realization Fellowship, a metaphysical community. As I worked with my doctor and sorted through the writings of the metaphysical world, juggling back and forth between medical jargon and metaphysical words, pieces started falling into place. I began meditating. Yoga showed me a way to calm and quiet myself. Medita-

tion is a strong tool for circulating energy in your body, and the more I meditated, the more I got the energy in my body under control. As I became more and more proficient at meditating, Dr. Saba was able to cut back on my Lithium.

I also studied Indian mythology, learning about the divine energy in each of us. I came across a new term, Kundalini, which Indian philosophers teach to be a source of profound spiritual energy.

After nineteen years of not understanding what was happening to me and going through tremendous trauma, I can now say that I feel Unipolar Mania is a gift. Through meditation, I am able to tap into this powerful energy, yet remain in control. It's been a difficult journey, but I've learned so much about the mind and what the yogis say. Because my consciousness has changed so dramatically, I now see the world as a phenomenal place. These things never would have happened to me without this, and I am so grateful. This has been a process of transformation. It has been the greatest gift in my life. I am a more compassionate, more loving, more kind, and more generous person because of it.

I believe true health comes from being able to accept our bodies in their imperfect states, just as we must accept the outer conditions of our lives, imperfect as they almost always are. To find opportunity in adversity, to champion our own causes, to be our own keepers of light, to me this is where real freedom lies. It is the struggle that makes one strong, that bestows the gift. Real health is achieved in a state of victory over one's own suffering. Victory does not mean cure. Victory means acceptance, with a spirit of integrity, for whatever life brings us. •

Tell about Your Transformation

In each issue, we present stories from people who have transformed their lives.

Do you experience inner peace and joy? Is your life fulfilled with loving relationships? Are you directed by your wisdom and aspirations? We want to present your inspiring story. We want to tell our readers how *you* changed your life. For more information please see page 77.

Compassion in Action

Gretchen Schodde

FOUNDER OF HARMONY HILL

BY MELISSA WEST

Gretchen Schodde strides to the outdoor labyrinth at Harmony Hill in the misty Northwest predawn. Lighting a candle at the entrance to the labyrinth, she carries it to the center and places it at the base of the redwood tree growing there. Schodde sits against the shaggy bark in meditation and prayer for participants at an upcoming cancer retreat. Meditation done, she walks out of the labyrinth and to her office to begin her day as director of Harmony Hill, a wellness retreat center scenically nestled between the Olympic mountains and Hood Canal in Washington State.

It has been a long journey for Schodde from her previous life as a nurse practitioner in academia and clinics to founding Harmony Hill. A pioneer of the nurse practitioner movement almost three decades ago, she found herself increasingly burned out while trying to serve others.

“I got to a point where I was caught up in fast-lane living. I needed time and space to go inward and ask the big questions: What’s important in life? What gives life quality and depth and meaning?” Discouraged and in broken health, Schodde went on a weekend retreat fourteen years ago and, as she jokes, “never left.” She moved from the retreat house to the property next door, which consisted of several older buildings badly in need of repair. With other volunteers she rehabilitated the buildings, planted extensive gardens, and



named the property Harmony Hill. A new retreat center was born.

The first years of Harmony Hill were challenging. Struggling to keep afloat, Schodde worked extra jobs to keep Harmony Hill going. Her former colleagues had difficulty understanding her new life, with its risks, uncertainties and lack of financial reward.

“Some were asking, ‘What are you doing? Why are you taking this huge gamble when you were so successful as a family nurse practitioner?’” recalls Schodde. “But I know that when I worked in more traditional settings like universities and hospitals, it was so easy to get caught up in the rat race that I often felt like I was earning a dying, not a living. I was giving up my soul so that someday I could do what I really wanted to do.”

Schodde soon found that money, volunteers, and resources showed up just when she needed them most. “I learned that I could trust that the resources to serve would come if I was doing God’s work.” Harmony Hill grew and flourished, thanks to the hard work of Schodde and her volunteers, and word that spread of the healing atmosphere at Harmony Hill. “We are careful here to stress that what happens at Harmony Hill is healing, not curing. Curing is the successful outcome of a medical treatment. Healing is about becoming more whole in body, mind, and spirit.”

Harmony Hill began by offering both general and 12-step retreats. A new element was added when

“This work is about surrender. When I get low and start wondering, ‘Why am I doing any of this?’ it’s a sign that I’m trying to control outcomes. I’m learning how to recognize that sooner so I can give back to God whatever doesn’t seem to be working. Out of that surrender comes tremendous gifts, because it puts me in touch with a much deeper level of my own authenticity, and gives me peace that I can’t get anywhere else.”

Schodde’s mother, a long-term breast cancer survivor, was diagnosed with a tumor in her jaw. “It was a very stressful time for my whole family,” says Schodde. “Even as a nurse with plenty of clinical experience with cancer, I was aware that we didn’t have the resources needed to deal with this tremendous challenge. It would have been so helpful to have others to share with who were also dealing with cancer.”

Shortly after her mother’s crisis, Schodde watched a public television series by Bill Moyers called “Healing and the Mind.” She was deeply moved by the innovative cancer support program at Commonweal that Moyers highlighted. “If I had known about Commonweal at the time of my mother’s challenge, I would have wanted my whole family to go. I could see the tremendous need for this sort of retreat and felt fortunate to be selected to participate in Commonweal’s first training program offered to other centers.”

Inspired by Commonweal’s model, Schodde recruited a core faculty who developed Harmony Hill’s retreat for those challenged with cancer. Offering group support, gentle massage, therapeutic movement, and art and other creative outlets, the retreats offered participants a chance to experience deep kinship with others on the same path. “The cancer retreats offer participants a chance to ask the big questions that I asked when I went on retreat, and a chance to go inward and reflect on their lives. Responding to a deep need, we are also now offering retreats for health

providers—doctors, nurses, chaplains—who work with cancer professionally.”

Schodde appreciates how her present work with the cancer retreats connects her with her former life. “Being a nurse practitioner was major preparation for the work I’m doing now. My passion as a nurse practitioner was educating people about lifestyle change, helping them make choices about not just their physical health, but their greater wellbeing.

“Lifestyle change includes the integration of body, mind, and spirit, and discovering your own inner resources. This—as I learned in my own life—is where the power of retreats comes in: unplugging from everyday life in a beautiful setting allows healing to begin.”

Working with people with cancer, Schodde admits, isn’t always easy. “I get exhausted and depressed sometimes—there’s not enough time or resources. I can feel overwhelmed by the suffering of those who show up at Harmony Hill. I find myself asking, ‘Why do these good people have such tremendous physical and emotional suffering?’” Schodde admits she couldn’t do the work without a deep spiritual orientation. “To stay centered I need to remember that life is all about spiritual learning. We’re here to help each other learn. In opening to the suffering, we can become receptive to new ways of looking at our own lives and life itself.

“This work is about surrender. When I get low and start wondering, ‘Why am I doing any of this?’

it's a sign that I'm trying to control outcomes. I'm learning how to recognize that sooner so I can give back to God whatever doesn't seem to be working. Out of that surrender comes tremendous gifts, because it puts me in touch with a much deeper level of my own authenticity, and gives me peace that I can't get anywhere else."

When she gets too caught up in paperwork and phone calls, Schodde heads out to the garden. "I have to garden to replenish my own soul so that I can serve others better. Gardening is a year-round process: I learn about surrender in the winter, about the importance of emptiness and waiting, just as much as I learn about the promise of new life in the spring. I can get spiritually malnourished, with nothing to give to others, unless I get my hands in the dirt.

"Being in the garden is soul food. It nourishes me to live in this beauty and be aware on a daily basis that there's a Power greater than ourselves. Living by the mountains and the water helps me to reflect on life. When I come from a place of inner peace, I am much more present for the people who show up here."

Even with its challenges, Schodde is passionately committed to serving those affected by cancer. "I feel a quiet joy when I'm in tune with knowing that service is soul work. It's about giving back to God by using our God-given gifts to help others. Service is a way that a person can become an authentic Self; not the small, constricted self that our culture tells us we are, but a much larger Self."

When asked how an individual can discern the best way to help others, Schodde replies, "Look into your own heart. You'll find it there. Whatever gives you joy is so

much easier and so much more fun to share than something you 'should' be doing. There are as many ways to help as there are gifts that we have."

Schodde is deeply grateful for the opportunity to offer retreats for others to learn to live more fully even in the midst of suffering. She remembers Rose, a retired woman with late-stage lung cancer who had difficulty walking. Another participant volunteered to drive Rose to the movement class one morning in a golf cart donated to Harmony Hill.

"That morning I heard strange sounds outside my office," recalls Schodde. "I looked out the window and saw Rose and Nancy careening down the path, so enthralled from the movement class that they were giggling like a couple of schoolgirls and tooting the bicycle horn in the golf cart. I'll never forget the sound of them laughing, and how radiant they both looked. Rose told me later she hadn't laughed that hard in years."

Rose was so touched by the retreat that when she died she donated her van to Harmony Hill. The license plate reads "4DBIRDS," as she was an avid bird watcher. "Well, I'm no birder," says Schodde, "and to this day when people see the license plate and ask me birding questions, I hear Rose laughing, just like she laughed that morning. When I hear that laugh, I know why I'm still on retreat at Harmony Hill."•

For information about Harmony Hill and its cancer retreats, contact Harmony Hill at (360)898-2363, write to 7362 E. Highway 106, Union, WA, 98592, email harmonyhb@halyon.com, or visit the retreat website at www.harmonyhill.org

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PICK UP

From the Heart



Nobody Special

WAYNE MULLER

Recently a wealthy New York couple withdrew their three-million-dollar donation to the Children's Zoo in Central Park because the city proposed a commemorative plaque that was smaller than the couple wanted. The modern world disdains selflessness. The important works are those that are signed, that get your photo in the paper, your name on the wall. Unless you are a Mother Teresa or a Dalai Lama, humility is decidedly out of fashion.

When I was ordained in the Church, Henri Nouwen preached my ordination sermon. In the Christian lineage, Jesus ordained Peter, who ordained a long line of priests, who eventually ordained Henri Nouwen, who put his hands on me. This is my lineage, an unbroken line of hands. My words and actions, if they bear fruit, come from the soil of that lineage.

When Henri preached at my ordination he told me to remember that the spiritual life was one of downward mobility. *Downward mobility*, he repeated several times, as if he was worried I would forget. Indeed, I might have. I was fresh out of seminary and had great spiritual feats to accomplish. I was prepared to dedicate myself to the service of others. Surely the honor and recognition to come would only be natural.

But Henri had another picture for me in his mind. Jesus insisted we do our work quietly, in secret. *Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.* God's loving eye will see your good work in secret, and you

will be rewarded in secret. Do not seek glory for yourself; the quiet reward is sweeter.

Henri's instruction to me was deeply authentic, from wisdom hard won. Henri had sold hundreds of thousands of books as a highly respected professor at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard. Still, he felt troubled and incomplete. He felt that his success and popularity camouflaged a deeper longing for quiet contemplation and service. In 1985 Henri left the comforts of the university to make his home as a chaplain in a small community of developmentally disabled adults.

In our many years as friends, there was never a question in my mind as to who Henri was working for. Henri worked for Jesus. Even though he wrote often about himself in his books, it was never to show his strengths, but rather to *confess his weaknesses*. In weakness is the Lord's strength, said Saint Paul, and Henri was devoted to that theological premise. It made him human and accessible to those who work quietly and tirelessly for their churches, for their communities, for those in need. He was not a superstar among the spiritual glitterati. But among those by whom service is performed invisibly and to great effect, he was revered and cherished as an indispensable companion. Whenever people learned I was a friend of Henri, doors throughout the Christian world would be flung open with kindness and instant acceptance. *Oh, Henri*, they would say, and smile.

When Henri spoke of humility, he would often recount the story of Jesus who, after his baptism, spent forty days in the wilderness. After a long and arduous fast, Jesus was confronted by Satan, who tempted Jesus, inviting him to turn the stones lying on the dry ground into bread, thereby providing food for those who were hungry. Jesus refused, saying that we do not live by bread alone, but by the words of God. Then Satan suggested Jesus throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple to demonstrate his celestial importance, as surely the angels themselves would bear him up. Again, Jesus refused. Finally, Satan offered Jesus unlimited power-

full authority and dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth, if only Jesus would worship him. Jesus again refused, saying that one should worship only God.

According to Henri, Jesus' three temptations were these: To be useful. To be important. And to be powerful.

Useful, important, and powerful—are not these the attributes that still tempt every one of us who seek to do good in the world? Yet the saints and sages teach us to offer our kindness humbly, invisibly, quietly. Jesus did not seek worldly power or influence. He spent his time with unknown and disliked people. *Be faithful in small things*, he said, *and you will be faithful in great things*. He held up models: the good Samaritan, who goes out of his way to help, completely anonymously, and seeks no reward; and the poor woman at the temple, who stealthily puts her two pennies into the collection box. As Mother Teresa reminded us, we do no great things, only small things with great love.

I was in bed one evening reading a political piece in *The New Yorker* when I came upon Henri's name. It seemed that Hillary Clinton had been reading his writings on gratefulness and forgiveness. I called Henri and asked him about it. He told me he had been invited to the White House to provide counsel during difficult times. While he sympathized with the Clintons' sorrows, and while a White House invitation seemed to be recognition of the importance of spiritual matters, he nevertheless sent his apologies and did not go. "I don't want to be the court chaplain," he told me. "I am here with Adam, my disabled friend. There are others who can go to the White House. Adam needs me." In

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that moment, I finally realized the full impact of his admonitions to me. *Downward mobility.*

Jesus was kind, loving, a peacemaker, humble, wise, a giving healer. The world saw this, took notice, and killed him for it. One of the things that died with Jesus was the illusion that the world will always reward good deeds. Sabbath is a time when we retreat from the illusion of our own indispensability. We are important in that we are part of something larger. We are part of the family of the earth, members of the body of Christ, part of the *dharma* and *sangha* of the Buddha. Our power comes not from ourselves, but from the enormity of which we are a part.

True freedom comes when we become—as Zen teacher Suzuki Roshi said—“nobody special.” We do our work not for glory and honor, but simply because we must, because we believe in the value of right action and good labor. In the end, we may or may not receive our reward from the world. More often, we receive our reward in secret. During a quiet walk, when we suddenly feel lighter; when we receive a kind word and the heart is made warm and full; during a moment’s reflection, when we feel a clarity of purpose; in these and a thousand other unexpected ways,

we secretly receive our reward.

Sabbath time reminds us it is not by our hand but by earth and spirit and grace that all things are done. During Sabbath we take time, let things unfold without our influence, see how the earth feeds us, and remember that we are both creator and recipient of creation. We feel we must do everything ourselves—but what of the grace of God? What of the company of Jesus and the saints, what of the Buddha and the ministry of angels and bodhisattvas? We must help, but we are not in charge.

The word “humility,” like the word “human,” comes from “humus,” or earth. We are most human when we do no great things. We are not so important; we are simply dust and spirit—at best, loving midwives, participants in a process much larger than we. If we are quiet and listen and feel how things move, perhaps we will be wise enough to put our hands on what waits to be born, and bless it with kindness and care. But in the end, we are granted the tremendous blessing of knowing that we do very little at all by ourselves. •

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PICK UP

Pathways to Wholeness



Understanding Humility, Pride, and Strength

WALTER STARCKE

The best way to hide a secret is to make it obvious and put it right out in full view. We all tend to look in distant esoteric corners while the truth at hand is so simple that we miss it. Take living the spiritual life, for instance. We spend our whole lives going to the far corners of the earth to find out what living spiritually means while all the time it is just what the word says: spirit. When the spirit in which we do something is more important to us than the results we wish to achieve, we are spiritual. When results are more important to us than how we go about getting them, we are materialists. It's that simple.

It may be simple for me to say but it is difficult to habitually follow because we have been conditioned all of our lives to look at life primarily objectively in terms of results and secondarily in terms of the spirit underlying our intent. The time has come when we may have to stop being factual and start re-examining every thought we think in terms of the spirit inherent in our words and acts.

To begin with, we have to realize several basic things. First, our nature is infinity; therefore, every imaginable quality or character trait is incorporated in our all-inclusive essential being. Second, there isn't anything in us or our potential that is either bad or good in itself. Third, everything can be used for either good or evil depending on the spirit that inhabits its use.

Words are no exception. Our concepts are empowered by the words we use, and we are prisoners of our concepts in that they become the self-created laws by which we live. The spirit in which we conceive of a

word dictates its effect on us and on our lives; therefore, we must use words rather than be used by them. In order not to be used by words we have to "double think." That means we have to think multi-dimensionally and be simultaneously aware of how a word or idea applies subjectively at the level of spirit and how it works at the objective level of egotism.

Take the word "pride" for instance. All of our lives we have heard, "Pride comes before the fall," and there are many particularly Old Testament scriptures, such as Proverbs 11:13, which have conditioned the word. It says, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." That makes it sound as though anyone who has any pride will be destroyed. Yet we turn right around and tell people that they should have pride in their work, etc. What is the answer? Here again pride is part of one's infinite nature. It has a good use and it can also be misused. The difference is whether pride is objective or subjective. If one is proud of results, egotism may have colored the spirit of one's pride but if the spirit of one's pride is a thankfulness for "being about my father's business," for having the capacity to be creative, that is another matter. If pride stems from self-respect, with a capital S, then by all means a sense of pride should accompany our actions. Otherwise, we are denying our oneness with the source, that we are made in the image of God. If we are not proud of our godly potential, we will never demonstrate it.

Humility is another of those words that has now come to stand for something entirely different than its root meaning. The word humility comes from the Latin word for the earth, "humus." In that sense, to have humility is to acknowledge one's grounding, to be proud of one's humanity. Unfortunately, humility has come to mean lowliness and self-abasement. Mister or Miss Mouse in the office who is subservient to everyone and puts him or herself down isn't humble. He or she has the worst case of self-centered ego in the office.

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True humility flies in the face of much that has traditionally been taught. Believing that being humble means acknowledging that we are sinners or that we should debase our humanity anchors us to limitation and self-indulgence. Acknowledging the divinity of our God-given humanity is true humility. In that, spiritual pride and humility are two sides of the same coin.

By and large, the same people who consider self-effacement to be a virtue think of God as something other than their own true nature. To them, humility is seen as an act of self-depreciation which isn't complete until one has reduced one's self to nothingness. Such a concept is the opposite of humility. It is not humility. It is humiliation. One humiliates one's self before the eyes of God. That's a pity, because the message of Christ is not fulfilled until one thinks of one's self as having been created in the image of God.

Paul had the right idea when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me." That shows he viewed life from a "double thread" approach, both subjectively and objectively. By using the word "me," Paul showed that he knew he had a personal sense of self which could do a job, but at the same time that he could only do it when he was in Christ consciousness. Paul didn't say, "I can do all things through Jesus." Though Jesus, the man, was doubtless his model, Paul knew he could of himself do nothing unless he was in a godly state of consciousness. That is humility. He acknowledged his humanity but demonstrated his humility by stating that he could do anything when he was operating out of his higher consciousness.

True spiritual pride acknowledges one's inherent divinity but is free from either hubris or egotism. Humility free from ego is not self-depreciation or limitation but rather an honest realization that when one's full potential is present in one's consciousness, one can do anything. The Christ, higher consciousness, is a synonym or metaphor for love, which in truth is a metaphor for God. When a person is in that loving state of consciousness, true humility exists.

Once more, our infinite nature includes every emotion, every feeling, every thought, and every intent, even anger and fear. Remember that Jesus was plenty angry when he chased the money changers out of the temple, but he used his anger in the spirit of love, and he was not used by it. Even in anger he had humility because he was using it for a divine purpose and was expressing his own wholeness. Every aspect of our personalities is part of God's wholeness and has its right use and time. When we find ourselves feeling insecure, resentful, or any of the other feelings we have commonly been told we should overcome, our first thought should be to examine our feelings and find out what they are telling us in terms of spirit.

This is not to say that all feelings are always appropriate or that when some of them get too intense or overblown they represent humility. For instance, extreme anxiety is not humbleness. It is atheistic. Anyone who does not believe in him or her self is an atheist. Atheists lack humility because they do not believe they are made in the image of God.

In the evolution of soul consciousness, there comes a time when we reach a turning point.


After we arrive we have the ability to be humble. We can turn around and see our masks, our personalities, for what they are—materialistic interpretations of our identities. After the turning point we are able to become consciously aware whether we are living by our lower consciousness or by our higher Spirit. Then, indeed, humility is the process of humiliating our inferior sense of self so that our true selves can be in the driver's seat.

One who has humility is one who knows God to be their true presence—rather than a self who claims a life apart from God. Humility is God's smile. It is a time when we wink at the illusion of a self apart from God, when we recognize that the mask of self is only a mask.

Humility is the soul's ego. Humility and its complementary side, confidence, is the realization that it is all God.

Finally, strength. How does strength fit into the picture? Objectively, strength has to do with one's energy, one's muscles, and one's will power. Subjectively, our strength is not in what we do but in who we are. It has to do with our ability to walk our talk. Ultimately the only true strength is in our capacity to remember that God is the only cause and presence, and also that we are that presence.

Like faith, we do not know how strong we are until we are tested. If we can engender the spirit of love despite negative appearances and regardless of possible consequences, we have true strength. It takes strength to remember who we are. It takes strength to love those who spitefully use us. In pride born of humility is our strength. •



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Transformational Practices



Humility and Spiritual Life

R A F A E L C A T A L A

One of the most important dimensions of the spiritual life is humility. Most people think that the word humility means to accept being a doormat. They usually repeat the Biblical phrase from the New Testament, “turn the other cheek,” as Jesus did before his tormentors.

What they do not realize is that Jesus “turned the other cheek” on very firm ground. His action conveyed this awareness: You can kill me and I will do nothing to defend my body, but what I have said remains. I will not take back one single word of what I have taught. I will not recant from a single one of my actions. “For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:18)

Humility, then, is to live and act from an attitude and altitude of Being. Out of this conscious awareness we live and express Life. This appears as teaching. What we do out of this awareness stands firm. We may go to prison, be made fun of, or be killed, but we do not recant or disavow our position, our actions, or our words. This is humility.

This principle works in our daily lives as well. How many of us give in to social pressure? How many of us give in to the maneuvering of our children or our relatives and let the principles we live by fall by the wayside? How many times would we rather give in than to be an example to our neighbors, our children and our other relatives?

Jesus turned the other cheek from a position of great strength and love for humanity. Humility is strength, not weakness. Humility is love, not servitude or bondage. Humility is not humiliation.

We need to go beyond merely repeating words spoken by the great spiritual lights. We must ponder in the depth of our Being what their words mean to us. Furthermore, we may well ponder about the lives of these men and women—their lives speak for their words. It is easy to speak of “turning the other cheek,” not realizing that this emanated from a way of life, an attitude and an altitude of life as prayer—prayer as action and fulfillment. Humility from this standpoint is service.

Many people think their private and public lives are separate from their spiritual one. They are willing to lie, little lies and big ones, and they do not realize they are compromising their integrity. I am not saying we should feel guilty any time we violate our integrity. We violate it many, many times, ignorantly. When we do so it is a call to become consciously aware of our violation and to begin to pour our integrity into the situation.

Let us take, for example, the case of a student who asked a friend to lie for him by saying that he had been living in a certain state longer than he actually had been. He did this so he could pay less for his tuition in school even though his family could easily afford the price of tuition. The student was doing this out of habit—the same habit that cheats on everything.

Many people exchange their dollars for their integrity. Integrity is something we feel in our hearts, while dollars we see with our eyes and touch with our fingers. Violation of integrity is a double-edged sword—it cuts deeply however you touch it. Dollars come and go, but they are morally valueless. In fact, the price of a dollar is a lot cheaper than the price we pay for violating our own inner integrity!

No transaction in life gives or receives something for nothing. If we cheat we are putting down our own integrity as payment. This “tilts” us out of our inner physical, mental and spiritual balance, and the results

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Finding Contentment

JERRY M. RUHL, PH.D. AND
ROBERT A. JOHNSON

The old saying that money cannot buy happiness may be familiar to us all, but it is easily forgotten in a fast-paced consumer society. In their new book, *Contentment*, Jungian visionary Robert A. Johnson and psychologist Jerry M. Ruhl remind us that contentment cannot be found in possessions, power, or status. It grows out of self-awareness, close relationships, community involvement, and, most importantly, an active, meaningful spiritual connection.

Robert Johnson is a world-renowned Jungian analyst and the author of many best selling books including *He* and *Inner Work*. Dr. Jerry Ruhl, a psychotherapist, collaborated with Robert Johnson on another recent book, *Balancing Heaven and Earth*.

We recently asked the two men to discuss contentment in modern life and, in particular, to address the themes of strength, pride, and humility as they relate to personal transformation.

JERRY RUHL: As modern people, we like to believe

that contentment comes from getting what we want. We tend to look for it “out there.” Our society teaches us that the only reality is the one we can hold onto. It values outer experiences and material possessions. Accordingly, we live with a “just-as-soon-as” mentality. Just as soon as I get my work done, I can relax. Just as soon as I find the right partner, I will be content. Or, conversely, just as soon as my divorce comes through, I will be content. Just as soon as I earn enough money, just as soon as I get a nicer boss, a better job, a bigger house, a new car. And so our contentment fades away over the horizon. Robert and I joke that “just as soon as” should be printed on dollar bills replacing “In God We Trust” as the great American slogan!

Contentment is not the result of what you have—it grows out of the capacity to mediate your desires with “what is.” A basic spiritual principle is learning to accept what is instead of insisting that life be a certain way. Life is rarely the way we want it to be. It’s

The ego has an endless number of desires. They never stop. But the higher Self—some people call it the divine spark—it has a fate in store for you. I call the manifestation of this fate slender threads. We all have free will, of course, so we can oppose the slender threads. Perhaps this is necessary to keep us incarnated, but I think we can learn to work with the slender threads instead of trying to force life to go a certain way.

just the way it is. That doesn't mean you should give up or become passive or just go with the flow. The art of realizing contentment is an active and dynamic process. You might imagine it as a dance between your wishes and reality, between what you want and what you get. This doesn't have to be a struggle.

You might think of the great dance team of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. They were two dancers who were so responsive to each other there was no longer a sense that one was leading and the other following. As one stepped forward, the other stepped back. They learned to move as one. And this is how each of us can learn to dance with what is given. Sometimes you take the lead and assert your will and fate moves with you, but in the very next step you may need to follow rather than lead. In psychological language, this is the dance between the ego and the higher Self.

ROBERT JOHNSON: Yes, too often modern people try to address the problems of life with only half of that duo, the ego or personal "I." Dr. Carl Jung, the great Swiss psychiatrist, once said that the goal of life should be re-centering the personality from the ego to the Self. The Self, as Jung defines it, embraces not only our consciousness, which the ego is the center of, but also the unconscious psyche. The Self is an unknowable essence, but it might be called the God within us since all of our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving toward this wholeness.

We experience lack of meaning whenever we view ourselves as creatures whose lives have no positive relation to something beyond ourselves. When

the ego and the higher Self are in alignment—then we are content.

RUHL: To address the issue of pride, we live in an age of "I" consciousness. Humans dominate the physical world in a way no one thought possible in previous centuries. Our buildings and our cities are monuments to ourselves. Just look at the skyline of a major metropolis like Manhattan. The grandest buildings are symbols of human power, status, and control. Earlier in all civilizations, the tallest building was dedicated to the divine. But, as we have become skilled at controlling external reality, we also have become filled with God-Almightiness. This is the hubris that leads to so much discontent in modern life. This "I" inside us can become arrogant and alienated from its roots in nature. That is where humility comes in. We have to learn that the "I" doesn't always know what is best for us. The root of the word humility is related to humus, which means the rich soil that you add to your garden to make it grow. Humility involves bringing ourselves back down to the earth.

JOHNSON: There is an old story that Dr. Jung was fond of telling. It concerns a spiritual seeker who came to his master and said, "In the old days, people walked and talked with God—why doesn't this happen anymore?" And the master replied, "Because nowadays no one will stoop so low."

A strong ego is essential for any modern person to perform the cultural tasks of life, like paying the bills on time. You can't just abandon the responsibilities of human life. We need the ego as a center of consciousness, but it must serve something greater.

It must learn to serve. St. Paul once said: “I must decrease, that He may increase.”

The ego has an endless number of desires. They never stop. But the higher Self—some people call it the divine spark—it has a fate in store for you. I call the manifestation of this fate slender threads. We all have free will, of course, so we can oppose the slender threads. Perhaps this is necessary to keep us incarnated, but I think we can learn to work with the slender threads instead of trying to force life to go a certain way. As modern people, we love our freedom. Freedom insists that the ego can do anything it wishes. But we are safest when we let go of trying to control life and instead trust and listen to the slender threads. In every moment we can choose to follow the will of God or not follow it.

RUHL: When something doesn't go the way we want, the “I” inside often gets frustrated. For example, I recently heard about a house that was for sale that I became interested in. I wasn't really ready to make an offer, however, and it was sold to someone else in a matter of days. Now, I could make myself miserable over this or I could instead think that a slender thread was at work. Perhaps fate has something else in store for me and I just can't see the larger pattern yet. There is a tendency to try to push reality to go our way, and this produces much of the anxiety of modern life. Of course, my ego has to do its work—I need to apply my will to gather information, but the ego is inflated with pride when it thinks it can make sound decisions without consulting with the Self.

JOHNSON: The proper role for the ego is to serve as the eyes and ears of God. It is the Self that should be making the decisions.

For example, right now I need to decide if I should get up and start to prepare lunch or continue with our conversation. I want to do both. Instead of adding up all the pros and cons and eventually forcing a decision with the ego, I can just be more aware. If I go inside and listen, the best choice becomes clear. You can feel in your body the difference between a decision from the ego and a decision from the Self. The Self decision comes from this second center of the personality. Some think of it as being centered in the heart. Others speak of a “gut” feeling. Jung called it the

Self. If you are patient, a practical, workable, livable solution presents itself. This takes some practice, and the best decision may take weeks if it involves a big issue in your life, but there comes a moment when one knows.

RUHL: Oftentimes, it feels like the ego just gets tired of waiting. It would rather choose than hold the tension of not knowing what to do. It seems to me that an important measure of psychic strength is our capacity to hold the place of unknowing until the intentions of the Self are revealed.

JOHNSON: We live in dualities, this versus that—it's how the ego perceives reality. But the Self can synthesize and integrate these dualities. When the moment ripens, it becomes clear what is the right thing.

The wonderful Danish writer Isak Dineson once suggested that there are three occasions for happiness in human life: when there is an excess of energy; during the cessation of pain; and when we possess the absolute certainty that we are doing the will of God. The first of these belongs mostly to youth, and the second is, by definition, brief. The third, however, is open to anyone at any and all times. To possess the absolute certainty that one is doing the will of God—this is another way of saying that your ego is in alignment with the Self.

RUHL: Let's talk a little more about humility. There is the danger of false humility, of the ego pursuing spirituality to get what it wants or to avoid suffering.

JOHNSON: Well, the ego cannot make the ego smaller. Some of the most arrogant people I have ever met have announced that they were working to get rid of their egos to be one with God. I think that is the most egocentric thing! That is false humility. A friend recently pointed to a positive event in his life as proof that God exists. I pointed out, perhaps injudiciously, that his faith in God was very thin if he could find the divine only in experiences he liked. You are better off putting the ego to work.

RUHL: If one turns spiritual pursuit into a project, going after enlightenment as the ultimate “high,” a goody to make one happy, to assuage fears, or to escape suffering, this is just ego inflation. We have all seen people who have mistaken an ego inflation for an enlightenment. You cannot acquire

We live in a time that is fraught with uncertainty. I believe that God is out of the box in the modern world. That sounds like a joke, but I mean it in all seriousness. God once resided in the tabernacle and only a priest had the key. Not only were we locked out, but God was locked in. There was safety in this arrangement. Then, somehow, the box became broken in the 20th century, and God got out.

contentment like some consumer item, but you can prepare for it. It is closer to the truth to say that contentment comes to us as a gift of grace.

JOHNSON: Yes, but even that has been distorted. That is probably what was originally meant by the word grace, but so many people today seem to think that grace is when God pulls you out of a mess. Almost every prayer is what I call bell-hopping God—giving God orders for room service. We tell God to make it rain or stop it from raining. God, make my stomach ache go away. God, bring me a new job. This is a highly egocentric thing to do. No matter how polite you get, it's still telling Him what to do.

RUHL: Re-centering the personality doesn't mean manipulating things so that the ego can get its way.

JOHNSON: The secular view is that you just take charge of your life and make decisions. An alternate approach is to tell God what to do and then sit and wait for something to happen. But I am talking about a third alternative, an active process in which the ego plays an important role (awareness) and the inner Self plays an important role (decision). Jung's book *Answer To Job* addresses this, but in a clumsy manner that offended many people. In essence, that book says that God needs us as much as we need Him.

RUHL: This brings me back to my analogy of the dance. Reality doesn't always go the way we would like. When this happens we can either become frus-

trated and redouble our efforts to push reality around, or we can learn to accept, affirm, and even dance with what is given by the Self. It's all in the dance.

One of the difficulties of our age is that the cultural institutions that used to carry this process don't work for many people. There are many pitfalls, such as spiritual inflation, when you attempt to live out a religious life on your own. I think people yearn for community, rituals, and collective symbols for the religious life.

JOHNSON: We live in a time that is fraught with uncertainty. I believe that God is out of the box in the modern world. That sounds like a joke, but I mean it in all seriousness. God once resided in the tabernacle and only a priest had the key. Not only were we locked out, but God was locked in. There was safety in this arrangement. Then, somehow, the box became broken in the 20th century, and God got out. Very few of us seem to know what to do with this desperate fact: God is loose! It remains to be seen what humanity will do with this. It has wonderful possibilities, and dreadful consequences if it goes wrong.

RUHL: I think I would like to end with a story from our book. This is a story from India that concerns attachment. As we've said, contentment is not a matter of what you possess or don't possess. You can whittle your possessions down to practically nothing and still be miserable. Alternatively, you can be a king in a palace, if that is your job, and real-

ize contentment. Mother Teresa taught that we must be prepared at any moment to give up all our possessions. If we can sustain this attitude, then we don't need to take a vow of poverty. It is your attitude that is key. This story is quite instructive on this matter.

There once was a king who, despite his reign over a great empire, was very humble. Each morning he would attend to the political, financial and social affairs of his kingdom, but early each evening he would retire and sit at the feet of a spiritual master who taught in the forest adjoining the royal palace. The king possessed an elaborate carriage that was carved and gilded and pulled by shining stallions, but when he went to the master he always walked quietly on his own two feet. In fact, the king had let it be known that he was not to be treated in any special way while he was in the presence of the wise one.

Among the group of spiritual seekers who regularly attended the spiritual deepenings, there also was a sunyasin. A sunyasin is an ascetic or renunciate in India who owns little more than the yellow robe on his back. He has renounced possessions, relationships—everything. He lives by begging and is completely at the mercy of fate. This man's only possessions were his robe, a begging bowl and two loin cloths.

Day by day the meditation and the teaching went on in the small clearing near the edge of the forest. Both the king and the sunyasin were devoted, and they sat in the front row, one on each side of the master. One day the sunyasin couldn't take it any longer, and he exploded in anger at the master. "Look here," he said. "I have renounced everything to be a holy man. Yet you don't treat me with any more respect than this king who comes here in fine silks, wearing jewelry with priceless gems. He drinks wine and eats whatever he wants from golden plates. He has a harem, servants, and we all know that he partakes of earthly pleasures without end. I have given up all possessions, yet you don't treat me with any more honor than you do this man!"

The master nodded at this outburst, but said nothing. Similarly, the king was silent. It is the custom in India that if you ask a question of an enlight-

ened one you don't always receive a direct answer. The answer may be tucked into a conversation or provided through an example at a later time. This keeps the seekers on their toes and helps to distinguish lived experience from mere intellectual understanding.

A few days after the sunyasin's outburst, everyone was again assembled for the master's daily teachings, including the king and the sunyasin. No one had spoken of the earlier conflict. Just as they were beginning their prayers, a messenger came bursting in and, with great urgency, whispered something in the ear of the king. The king nodded calmly, dismissed the young man, and returned to his prayers. A few minutes later another messenger arrived with even more urgency; in fact, he could scarcely control himself. "A fire has broken out, and it threatens the palace," the messenger blurted out before the entire assembled group.

The king nodded calmly and returned to his meditation.

A few minutes later a third messenger came dashing into the clearing and shouted across the heads of everyone, "Your majesty, your majesty, the fire is at the gates of the palace."

Again, the king nodded, but that was all. By this time everyone could see the fire. In great horror they smelled the acrid smoke that came billowing up from the palace walls. While the prayers continued, the fire raced through the palace, and it wasn't long before it reached the edge of the forest. Ash and smoke filled the air, and soon the devout circle could feel the very heat of the blaze against their faces.

Suddenly, the sunyasin remembered that he had washed his extra loin cloth and hung it up to dry in the branches of a tree near the clearing. He jumped to his feet and went dashing across the clearing—but in that very moment the raging fire stopped! The smoke was entirely gone too, the sun was again visible, and everyone could see the palace shining serenely just beyond the forest. The puzzled sunyasin stopped in mid-stride, and came back with a sheepish and puzzled look on his face. "What happened?" he asked.

The master replied, "Now tell me, who is attached and who is not?"•

Exploring Pride, Strength, and Humility



AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS KEATING
BY MARY NURRIESTEARN

Thomas Keating, a wise 76-year-old Trappist monk, is known for making contemplative practice accessible to spiritual seekers outside of monastic walls. Father Keating refers to this contemplative practice, which is rooted in Christian tradition, as divine psychotherapy. He promises that this gentle practice can bring about profound spiritual and psychological growth, and his personal presence is evidence that it is so.

I was first introduced to Thomas Keating through a tape series on contemplative prayer. Hearing the clarity and love in his voice was as impactful as learning about centering prayer. His voice, coupled with his understanding of not only how the personality forms programs for happiness, but how centering prayer releases us from their grip and grounds us in the true source of happiness, drew me toward centering prayer as a practice.

In brief, centering prayer takes its practitioners beyond thoughts and feelings and into the presence of divine spirit, or God. Over time this growing rela-

tionship with the Divine draws up out of the unconscious and into awareness the components of our personalities. It shows us the core attitudes and behavioral patterns we unknowingly developed in childhood in order to get along in our families and communities, and to define ourselves. These patterns are what Keating refers to as our emotional programs for happiness. As we grow spiritually and reside more in relationship with God, we become more able to let the unconscious reveal its secrets to us. At the same time, as these secrets are released, we compensate less for them and make space for God to work in us and through us. Ultimately, and over time, this practice can lead to union with God.

Sensing that centering prayer is an alchemist for dissolving the pride associated with the false self as well as imbuing humility into our consciousness, we wanted to interview him on pride, strength, and humility. I spoke with him at his residence in Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, by telephone. I was deeply moved by the depth of humil-

In the Christian perspective, strength is another word for virtue. Strength is the capacity to practice the fundamental human virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—which characterize a human being.

ity from which he spoke.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: *Let's talk first about strength. How do you define psychological strength?*

THOMAS KEATING: Psychological strength involves a strong ego (as ego is understood in psychology) and a defined self-identity. Above all, psychological strength is based on self-acceptance of our weaknesses as well as a healthy self-esteem, which is the firm conviction in our own basic goodness. In the Christian perspective, strength is another word for virtue. Strength is the capacity to practice the fundamental human virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—which characterize a human being. Growing in this capacity translates into a healthy self-esteem and the ability to accept our own weaknesses without covering them up, at least to ourselves.

PT: *Is will-power an aspect of psychological strength?*

KEATING: All of the virtues are rooted in the will. Prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance are all acts of the will. They are choices, in other words, and sometimes choices that are quite difficult. Will-power has to be distinguished from an energy neurosis in which one thinks that by practicing or exercising will-power one can control everything. Virtue, true strength, is not controlling or dominating other people. It is moderating our own excesses and respecting the basic goodness of other people and their needs.

PT: *What is the effect of having great psychological strength?*

KEATING: Psychological strength means the integration of our human capacities and the balance of our emotional life with an intellectual life. Psychological strength is the fruit of an integration of ourselves in which we accept the spiritual dimension of our being, without which psychological strength, to

me, is not well-founded and is probably superficial.

PT: *Does developing psychological strength lead to spiritual strength?*

KEATING: Yes, unless one has some bias against the spiritual dimension. Many psychologists, up until recent times, have denied the existence of a spiritual dimension and have considered psychological strength to be the capacity to live a more or less normal human life—to be able to earn a living and to have normal relationships. But the fullest psychological strength is to integrate those capacities, which are good, into the further development of which the spiritual part of our nature is capable. This openness to the transcendent element of human life, both within ourselves and beyond, is a significant part of psychological health. Saint John of the Cross, a well-known Christian mystic of the 16th century, wrote, “Human health consists of having a conscious relationship with God.”

PT: *How do you define spiritual strength?*

KEATING: It is the capacity to act from the center of our being, rather than acting from our emotional reactions to events. Spiritual strength is the capacity to respond to events from the center of compassion and genuine concern, to relate to people where they are, and to accept ourselves and our weaknesses in the confidence that God will help us to sift through our weaknesses and let go of behaviors that are obstacles to relating to truth, to other people, ourselves, and ultimate reality.

PT: *Can we develop spiritual strength or is it something that's given by grace?*

KEATING: Everything, in a sense, is grace. Our natural gifts are designed to open us to grace. Spiritual strength comes through grace, but it also comes through our efforts to reduce in ourselves obstacles to grace that become obvious to us. Letting go of obstacles is the negative side of what we defined as positive strength; namely, the practice of

the virtues which moderate the excesses of our human nature, balance our individual good with social good, balance our esteem for ourselves with our esteem for the rights and needs of others, and heighten our accountability to God.

PT: How do you define pride?

KEATING: In spiritual literature, pride is defined as the tendency to make oneself the center of the universe. In other words, pride is an inordinate, unreasonable love of one's excellence or talents. It's the attitude that has contempt for authority and doesn't want to be accountable to anyone. From a practical point of view, pride makes us consider ourselves our own beginning and end.

PT: If we were raised in ways and under circumstances that resulted in us feeling shame—if we were the wrong sex or the wrong race or experienced child abuse or sexual trauma—is developing pride important?

KEATING: Let's make a few distinctions here. Pride as you use the term is the same as developing self-respect or a strong ego. It's not the rejection of oneself or the despising of oneself, and it is certainly not self-hatred. These are mental illnesses. Pride is not a positive attitude toward oneself and one's talents. A good disposition recognizes talents and gifts as God-given and is grateful. Pride as I describe above is the separate self-sense gone wild, you might say. It's an apotheosis of ourselves as the center of the universe, or as little gods, when it is unrestrained by humility.

PT: When people say, "I am proud of myself, I finally spoke up for myself and didn't make excuses," or, "I was so proud of my son," they're talking about a different quality.

KEATING: Exactly. They're not talking about pride as a defect; they're talking about the proud feeling associated with doing a good deed or an appreciation for the rightness of our attitude. On the contrary, that's a healthy attitude.

Pride is used in different senses. On the other hand, pride as an expression of our separate self is unhealthy because it makes it hard for us to accept the truth about our own weaknesses and difficult to relate to other people, because they have to fit into our plans or minister to our ego. Of course, ego is another term that has meanings that have to be dis-

tinguished. Psychologically, we speak of a healthy or strong ego, but the phrase "went on an ego trip" is a reference to a prideful attitude, which is the opposite of being proud of doing a good deed.

PT: Do you differentiate between pride and dignity?

KEATING: Pride is separation from our deep self, other people, and God, whereas dignity is concerned with the truth about ourselves, our true relationship with others, and with God. Humility is often confused with self-deprecation or a low self-esteem, which is a lack of having developed a genuine self-identity in the adolescent period. Self-identity is an aspect of a strong ego, and a strong ego is extremely helpful for the spiritual life. To give oneself to God, one needs to have a self. In our culture, a self-identity is often not fully developed until people are in their late twenties or early thirties. Sometimes a healthy ego doesn't emerge in people who were deeply wounded in early childhood—battered, as you mentioned earlier, by various forms of abuse which cause incredible emotional damage—without prolonged psychotherapy. These people are not suffering from pride; they're suffering from emotional wounds that were inflicted on them. They need to be encouraged to have self-esteem and to develop their self-identities, to look upon themselves as good and to get rid of feelings of shame they might have brought with them from early childhood.

PT: Is there spiritual pride in the saying of Jesus, "I and my Father are one?"

KEATING: That's not spiritual pride, but a statement of fact. It would be pride if it weren't true, then it would be presumption. Pride leads to the presumption of a separate self-sense. Humility is a delicate balance between presumption and despair. Thinking too much of our weakness or regarding ourselves as totally dependent upon others leads to depression and low self-esteem, which is not humility, but a mental illness, or at least a distortion of human development. On the other hand, people who attempt to do things clearly beyond their strength or who treat themselves as if they can do anything, anytime, anyplace, are equally distorted by their presumption. Humility is the balance between trust in God and the recognition of our

weaknesses. When those two attitudes aren't present, there isn't true humility, which is an authentic, honest attitude toward ourselves—recognizing our weaknesses and our basic goodness—and an honest, authentic attitude about reality, other people, and of course, God.

PT: *Let's further explore pride. "Pride goeth before the fall" is from one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. What does this text mean?*

KEATING: Pride, as presumption, goes before a fall. In other words, assuming strength or virtues that you don't have or thinking that you're not subject to sin or to the weaknesses of other people is presumption. Not having a healthy recognition of one's limitations is asking for trouble. People with that attitude are likely to fall on their noses.

PT: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted," Luke 18:14. What is the meaning of this scripture?*

KEATING: That's a beautiful text and it puts the issue into a nutshell. Anyone who exalts himself or herself puts too much confidence in his or her own power. They do the opposite of those who have a low self-esteem. They have such a high self-esteem that they think they can practice any virtue or do anything. Therefore, they think people owe them something. When they make unjust demands on other people and manifest their own selfish programs for happiness, they are going to be humbled. Most of us have basically the same limitations, the same separate self-sense, the same tendency to pride. If we exalt our own programs for happiness or place demands on society that disregard other people's rights and needs, the text is warning us that for our own true good, we'll get into trouble. At the very least, we'll be in competition with all of the other egos on the planet who are trying to follow the same mistaken path. This happens unless people grasp the spiritual dimension within that calls us to move beyond the superficial purposes of ordinary life and to see ourselves in the light of our true goodness and capacity to share the divine life. For those who humble themselves, those who acknowledge the truth about themselves, even painful truths they would prefer to cover up so that nobody knows, especially themselves; once they accept the

truth, even if acknowledging the truth is painful, they experience the inner freedom that the truth always brings. We had a classic example of this in the press recently. If we acknowledge the truth, most people will forgive us; if we do not, then people are not so sympathetic.

PT: *How is humility different from shame or false modesty?*

KEATING: False modesty is not based on the truth and it can't be humility, because humility is the truth, basically. Another distinction might be helpful here. I'd like to juxtapose shame and guilt first because they are very different. Guilt is about a particular act that our conscience disapproves of, and hence, as soon as one regrets the behavior or tries to change it, guilt has no more effect on us. Guilt that doesn't last beyond the time it takes to recognize, be sorry and want to amend our particular misbehavior is healthy. It becomes unhealthy when it's protracted, say, beyond 30 seconds, in which case it really manifests our pride, because now what is hurt is that we haven't measured up to our idealized self-image, which is the fruit of pride. Shame, on the other hand, is a pervasive feeling, due, usually, to the deprivation of emotional needs during early childhood. It doesn't just say that I did something wrong, but that *I am a mistake*. Shame is more serious and much more difficult than guilt.

The fruit of great damage in early childhood, shame causes us to identify with our limitations in such a way that we don't recognize our basic goodness or the possibilities we have to manifest the creative potential of the human spirit. With that in mind, the relationship between shame and humility is that shame is a false attitude toward ourselves. Humility is the true acceptance of ourselves, with our faults, along with the firm confidence that with God's help we can not only correct them, but fulfill the transcendent potential within us to become sharers in the divine life in the fullest sense of that term.

PT: *What is the power and strength within humility?*

KEATING: Humility is the greatest strength there is. It's not blown away by praise or exaggerated by the approval others give us. It is not ambitious; it's content to be whatever we are. Humility accepts all



of the damage that has been done to us in early childhood, knowingly or unknowingly by others, and all of the means we took to protect ourselves from that woundedness. At the same time, humility rests in the peace that comes from not being afraid of the truth. Humility is not afraid to acknowledge whatever has happened in our lives, including our own sins or faults. Because of this great trust in God rather than in ourselves, it participates in the strength of God. It participates in God's power because there's no tendency in us to attribute it to ourselves. We know that God is helping us and this is the true security. The programs for happiness that we had to hold ourselves together or to achieve a certain public esteem, at least acceptance in our community, is not the ultimate value anymore. Acceptance is appreciated as a support, but it's not necessary to our happiness. If the approval of others is taken away, the confidence that we have in God remains and the sense of loss is moderated by trust in God's power to help us. Humility taps into God's own strength—that is the bottom line. It involves great sensitivity to our motivation in daily life. Many of the world religions emphasize daily life as the battlefield in which we come to know ourselves and our spiritual potential for union with God.

PT: In the truest sense, is humility the basis of personal power?

KEATING: It depends on the motivation. If personal power is an ego trip or comes from creative talents within us which we attribute to ourselves, the basis is pride and presumption. Then we're headed for a fall because the power is not real, not authentic. Personal power that is authentic doesn't come from ourselves, but through the movement of the Holy Spirit in us, prompting us to work for God or for the needs of others, and out of love of others. We attribute any good that we do to Spirit. Attributing spiritual power to ourselves is the most dangerous kind of pride. No one does more harm in the world than one with spiritual powers that are not rooted in a profound sense of humility. To reach that level of humility requires the purification of what psychology calls the unconscious. Daily life shows us the dynamics of the unconscious as it appears in our emotional reactions to everyday activities, warning us of what we haven't quite faced. We're not humble until we face our emotional reactions and recognize their source in our unconscious.

PT: What do you mean by programs for happiness?

KEATING: The instinctual needs that we have

Attributing spiritual power to ourselves is the most dangerous kind of pride. No one does more harm in the world than one with spiritual powers that are not rooted in a profound sense of humility.

when we enter into the world are focused on survival and security, power and control, and affection and esteem. When any of these instinctual needs, which are basically good, are experienced by the child as unfulfilled or withdrawn through abuse and neglect, especially when it is habitual, the child, for survival purposes, may repress those painful, traumatic, emotional experiences in the unconscious. The child may also develop compensatory systems in which he or she tries to find happiness in the gratification of one of those three instinctual needs. All of us grow up without the experience of true security, which is God's presence. Programs for happiness are temperamentally greatly complexified by the socialization period from ages four to eight when we unquestionably absorb the values of the culture—the environment, peer group, parents, religion and ethnic background. At that young age, there's no full human ability yet to evaluate some of those values, so we absorb them all. Our emotional programs for happiness are also attracted to what is acceptable in the culture. The emotional programs for happiness can't possibly work. They're not moderated by the virtues. Fantastic demands for power lead to terrible harm in society when egos are collectivized. National interests that know no bounds and which trample on the rights of others even to the point of war, violence, torture, and all of the other unspeakable barbaric activities, are, unfortunately, still with us, in spite of our supposed evolutionary progress.

PT: As adults, our ordinary lives are the battlefields for us to grow in humility. How do we do that?

KEATING: First, we have to get to know and then moderate the demands we make on life. We have to stop acting as if the world owes us a living. Sometimes the stages of human growth are normal, but become abnormal when we get stuck in our devel-

opmental phases. Teachings on the archetypes are interesting. For instance, the archetype of the orphan is normal at a certain age when you need to be dependent on parents or nurses. When you're an adult, the feeling that everyone should continue to take care of you becomes unreasonable and unattainable, and gives way to the afflictive emotions, such as grief and anger, that follow whenever our programs for happiness are frustrated. Virtues, the fruit of humility, are the result of human development in the right direction. Pride is the result of human development in the wrong direction. Sometimes the human faculties develop, but the spiritual ones do not. Proud people are suffering from infantile motivation that they need to grow out of to find true happiness.

PT: What practices would help us to grow in humility?

KEATING: The first one is prayer. Ask God for humility. The second practice is to spend time every day in silence, to be with yourself at a deep level, without thinking. Allow yourself to feel what you feel, noticing what events upset you and cause the feelings of grief, anger, and discouragement to arise. Doing so helps bring to your awareness some emotional program, of which you're not fully conscious, that is trying to come to consciousness through events. Let go of the excesses of that program. For example, although you may desperately want people to love you, does that mean that if one or two people dislike you, it's the end of the world? For someone who has pushed that program to such an extreme the least criticism or look that's interpreted as a rejection sends them into a tizzy for hours.

Other people have to control everything to feel happy and may even insist on ordering your food in a restaurant. They are still under the influence of a childish need to compensate for some kind of deprivation in their early childhood. They need to grow

out of the desire to control. The practice of virtue and the growth of psychological strength lead to the moderation of those childish attitudes. We have great education in this country, but not in emotional development and in the practice of moderation, what used to be called the virtue of temperance. Temperance means to moderate our appetites. When we do not moderate our emotional programs for happiness, they lead to all kinds of complications—interior turmoil, emotional binges, broken relationships. Humility enables us to relate to other people as people, rather than from our little universe of expectations and emotional programs for happiness.

PT: *In a sense, those programs for happiness have to be humbled in order to access humility.*

KEATING: Exactly. We have to humble our biases and prejudices contained in the unquestioned values that we absorbed in childhood, sometimes because they were the condition of our acceptance or approval from important others. We need to let go of our over-identification with our group and family. It's not that we're not grateful for what we receive, but a naive loyalty leads to hiding the truth—things that should be addressed because they are real problems or injustices. Humility is freedom to say what should be said at the right time or to keep quiet when it's not appropriate to speak. This inner freedom is the sign that our daily life is beginning to be penetrated by the transcendent potentialities of our spiritual center. It is grace that enables us to do that, and that's why prayer is so valuable. Prayer reminds us that what we can't do, with God's help, we can do, if we ask and if we let go of those things in us that are obstacles to God's love. There's also a distinction between humility and humiliation. Humiliation is when you're put down when you don't want to be, or you resist when pride is humbled. Humility is the willingness to accept criticism and the defects that people point out to us.

PT: *Without having to defend against.*

KEATING: Yes. We take criticisms into account, to see if what others say is true, but at the same time, if we feel it's not true, we're at peace. We want to recognize the gifts that God has given us, and recognize the gifts we don't have, which somebody

else was given. We recognize those facts without falling into jealousy or envy. Humility is humble in the sense of not being offended by the truth. But humiliation, according to Saint Bernard, is the path to humility. Saint Bernard means the humiliation that one uses well, that one accepts willingly insofar as it is true, but does not attribute to oneself if it is not true. Humility is never a put-down, but the willingness to acknowledge the truth about ourselves. Humility welcomes humiliation. Although it's painful at times, it realizes that, precisely because I feel humiliated, I'm attached to my happiness seeking programs in some way that needs correction if I'm going to be really happy and at peace in daily life.

PT: *Let's close the interview with a little more discussion about prayer.*

KEATING: I'd like to emphasize prayer as a seeking of a true relationship with God or the Ultimate Reality. Take time each day to be with yourself, out of respect for yourself. In this tumultuous, noisy and active world you need to keep in touch with your deeper self, beyond the ordinary psychological awareness that preoccupies you. In this way you can cultivate this awareness of the dynamics of your unconscious, of the quality of your relationships with others, and of the damage done to you in early childhood that you have to take into account in your activities. Above all, prayer helps you to identify the affection and esteem, power and control, and security needs that seem to predominate.

PT: *During prayer, or relationship with God time, how do you recommend that we relate to this information as it comes into our consciousness?*

KEATING: There are different ways of relating, all of them good. I suggest talking to God, friend to friend. Be open to God's inspirations; ask for God's help. Then, prayer as relationship, hanging out with God every day, moves from a kind of clumsiness in the beginning to ever-increasing ease in conversing with God. This moves toward friendship, which is a commitment to prayer and to being accountable to God in our daily lives. This is how love grows. Love is the ultimate meaning of the universe and to possess love is to be truly happy. This love can grow from friendship to the point of union and even unity.

PT: *Are you saying that prayer time is simply*

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Awakening to Soul

H A Z R A T I N A Y A T K H A N

Is there even one soul, however materialistic, that does not wish to unfold? There cannot be. It is in the unfoldment of the soul that the purpose of life is fulfilled. And this is true not only of human beings, but also of the lower creation, and even of objects of every kind; the fulfillment of their existence lies in their unfoldment. The clouds gather, and the purpose of this is shown when it starts raining. It is the unfoldment of that gathering of clouds that shows itself in rain; that purpose was not accomplished in the gathering of the clouds, which was only a preparation. One sees the same thing in nature, which works the whole year round and in the appropriate season brings forth its fruits. Not only human beings, but even the birds and animals watch and delight in seeing the purpose of nature's continual activity being fulfilled in the spring.

We learn from this that every being and every object is working towards that unfoldment that is the fulfillment of its purpose. As Sa'di has said, "Every being is intended to be on earth for a certain purpose, and the light of that purpose has been kindled in his heart."

But behind all the different purposes that we see working through each individual, there seems to be one purpose, and that is the unfoldment of the soul. Knowing this, the ancient Hindus held this ideal before them in all walks of life. Not only those who sought after truth were seeking the soul's unfoldment, but an artist, a scientist, a learned person, a man of industry or of commerce—each one believed that through his particular occupation he would be able to reach that goal. The great misfortune today is that people are so segregated in their different occupations that they have lost the thread that binds humanity into one and gives that

impetus from which all derive benefit.

This makes us wonder whether it is possible for scientists to arrive through their scientific studies, or artists through their art, or people of commerce through their trade, at that central truth that concerns every soul. When we look at humanity, we find that we can not only divide it into different races and different nations, we can also divide it into people of different occupations. In this age of materialism, the only thing that unites us is our material interest, but how long can we be united by a material interest? A friendship formed in materialism is not a friendship that will endure, nor can such friends depend upon each other. It is sacrifice that enables us to be friends and to co-operate with one another, and in sacrifice the sign of spirituality is seen, but we do not unite together in sacrifice today; our unity is in what we can gain in one way or the other. It is a matter for distress that in order to unite, we are holding fast to a lower ideal that will never prove a center of unity. It is only the high ideal that can unite, and in which we can hope to be united.

How can one define the unfoldment of the soul? The soul can be likened to the rose; as a rosebud blooms, so the soul unfolds itself. For the rosebud to bloom, five conditions are required: fertile soil, bright sun, water, air, and space; the same five things are required for the unfoldment of the soul. As a fertile soil is required by the rosebush in order to grow, so education in the spiritual ideal should be given to the child from the moment it is born. When a child is deprived of that most important education in its childhood, then the soil is taken away from the roots of the rose. I can recall having met so many people who had every possibility and tendency to become interested



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IMAGE: RANN/FELIX SCHUSTER



Balancing the Head and the Heart

CARLOS WARTER

The heart is a life-sustaining, blood-pumping organ. It has an electrical energy field that translates into a frequency forty times wider than the electrical field of our brains. Electrically, its power stirs deep feelings of hope, love, and care. It is also the “ear” for listening to the source of higher intelligence.

Tuning in to these positive feelings and the higher intelligence enables us to make positive choices. Accessing it through our inner voice gives a sense of inner knowing. Experiencing love, care, and compassion produces a qualitative shift in the electromagnetic field of heart: it makes it larger.

The brain is our center of intelligence. It thinks, analyzes, and processes information and data. It reads out data from the five senses; from the heart; from the paracrine, endocrine, and immunological systems. It is truly our CPU (central processing unit).

When the heart inputs its intuitive intelligence, the brain translates the frequencies into thoughts, sym-

bols, words, and concepts so we can understand and act on them. By following the directives of our hearts instead of staying tuned in to habitual mental images, we allow our brains to perceive congruently with our open hearts. Coherent, congruent, and confluent actions follow. The union of body, speech, and mind that results is true well-being, because it is in alignment with our essential identity.

When we are identified with the path of the heart, the brain enables us to see ourselves and others clearly, to speak with meaning, and to act from the higher frequencies of the heart, which we call core values.

By awakening the energy of our hearts, we give ourselves the power to release judgments, communicate honestly, enjoy inner self esteem and security, and uncover the frequency of compassion. We can surrender to the higher intelligence and power that enters through our hearts.

The coherent frequencies of the heart also have healing power. By tuning in to the higher frequencies

...Because we hold on to negative emotions, some of us die with a lifetime of love still locked up in our hearts. It takes much more energy to harbor negative emotions than it does to let them go. Granted that it's important to acknowledge them. It's also important to feel them. But after doing that, it takes much more energy to retain the negative feelings than it does to flow with the gentle path of heart.

(shifting from anger to forgiveness, for example), we can lower our blood pressure and increase T-cell counts. As stress subsides, these systemic and immunological changes take place. Thus, tuning in to the holographic awareness of the heart can be a way to change the frequency patterns that cause illness. From there, the activation of the heart takes place and we can forgive ourselves and forgive others, magnetize our appreciation and caring, and see even death and dying as a frontier on which to move toward the light. Love is the core energy of the heart. It is also the energy of expansion, of connection. It is the vital, divine current of creation. When we tune in to this higher dimensional energy, we return to core human values.

CORE VALUES

Core values such as forgiveness, understanding, compassion, and loving kindness are essential human values. They don't come from the brain they come from the heart. These values embody the natural energy of the human heart.

Heart values are fluid. Through the open doorway of the heart, they flow out and they also flow in. They make a bridge between what we so often see as our "separate self" and the vast ocean of the interdimensional, interconnected world around us. They are the vehicles by which we express the essential fluidity of our being; they are the means by which we receive the divine energy we embody. These values connect us with others. Opening to these core values, we no longer feel or see ourselves as separate. At the same time, we can see others as ourselves.

When we identify with lower frequencies such

as anger, fear, depression, apathy, boredom, anxiety, irritation, frustration, exhaustion, low self-esteem, unfulfillment, tension, discouragement, and stress reactions, we are damming (and "damning") these higher human values. Solidifying the lower frequencies blocks the love, forgiveness, and compassion that dwell in our hearts. It keeps us from entering the human realm, which is also the realm of the divine.

In blocking the love, compassion, and forgiveness of our hearts, solidified negative emotions lock into our bodies an explosive force that, if unchecked, will create disease. They are like sticks of dynamite that sooner or later will implode into heart disease, kidney failure, cancer, severe depression, or a fatal accident. Unfortunately, because we hold on to negative emotions, some of us die with a lifetime of love still locked up in our hearts.

One interesting phenomenon, readily experienced on the path of heart, is that it takes much more energy to harbor negative emotions than it does to let them go. Granted that it's important to acknowledge them. It's also important to feel them. And we're going to explore fluid ways to work with them. But after doing that, it takes much more energy to retain the negative feelings—clinging, grasping, defending, clutching at, holding a grudge—than it does to flow with the gentle path of heart. Touching our hearts, feeling our hearts, takes us beyond these negative emotions into higher frequencies, such as forgiveness. We don't have to create these higher frequencies; they are already there.

Inner work entails unlearning our attachments to the lower frequencies. We will always experience

the lower frequencies, but we can learn to work with them in creative ways. We could consider inner work as simply “attention to essence.” The more we attend to essence, the less likely we are to let temporary identifications crystallize. Inner work unblocks the dam and allows our true heart power to flow naturally. As well, it clears our hearts so they can actively receive the divine energy that flows around us and through us.

The different wisdom traditions and religions have reinforced those core values through their moral codes and prayers, rituals and practices. The Bible tells us, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Tibetan Buddhists say, “Be grateful to everyone.” The Sufi sage Hadrat ‘Ali said, “Faith is experience by the heart, avowal by the tongue, and action by the limbs.” These traditions know that higher heart frequencies are the doorway to cosmic intelligence. Cosmic intelligence is running the show.

FREQUENCIES OF THE HEART

Some of us repress our emotions, some of us act them out. Some of us try to suppress others’ emotions. None of these approaches works. On the path of the heart, we learn to see our emotions clearly and manage them. And in managing them we find out that any emotion presents an opportunity to connect with essence.

We quickly learn that when we align our emotions with the wisdom of the heart, we have fun. The more we listen to the heart, the more we hear it. I find it useful to think of emotions as frequencies we can tune in to.

We can visualize higher and lower heart frequencies, higher and lower bands of emotions. It’s as if the universe were filled with radio stations or television channels with their own patterns—their own sonics, their own design and texture. Each station is tuned to a band or to many bands at different times. These are the dimensions. Although some frequencies affect us subconsciously and we can’t do much about them, we have a choice of how to respond when we’re aware of them.

For example, the thought “I forgive myself” is powerful because it cuts through our story lines. It cuts through them because it resonates with a higher frequency of emotion than the thought “I

am bad because I have made myself sick by eating the wrong foods.” Saying with commitment and devotion “I forgive myself” transcends the static electricity of the lower frequencies of emotion. It doesn’t try to obliterate them; it doesn’t argue with them. It rises above them.

If we tell ourselves with conviction “I forgive myself” and feel it in our heart of hearts, then the other story lines—“I’m a lousy person because I did this-and-this-and-this,” “I can never do anything right,” and so on—simply wither and die in the face of the truth.

The energy of “I forgive myself” is the affirmation of the truth. It engages a transformative energy—the energy of forgiveness.

When I arrived in Colombia from Venezuela, it was during fierce contention between the two countries for fishing rights. In Cartagena, I gave a workshop for some business leaders. In one of the exercises I asked the participants to accept and love themselves. I then directed them to accept and love their colleagues. After they had done this, I asked them to extend these high-frequency feelings to customers and even competitors.

Then I asked the participants to accept and love all their fellow Colombians, especially at this particular time of strong nationalist feelings. Few of them had trouble accepting and loving all the other citizens of their own country. Finally, I asked them to accept and then love the citizens of Venezuela. To my surprise, most of them were in such a loving space after the first part of this exercise that they were able to do this—all except one woman. She told me angrily that she had no intention of accepting or loving Venezuela or Venezuelans. In fact, she hated Venezuelans.

I asked, “Have you ever been to Venezuela?” “No,” she answered.

“Well then,” I prodded, “do you know any Venezuelans?” Again she answered no.

“Where did you feel the love for your competitors?” I inquired. “Inside myself,” she answered.

“And where do you think your hatred for Venezuelans exists?” I continued.

“Since I don’t know any Venezuelans, I think that I am really hating that part of myself that doesn’t accept them,” she replied.

If we tell ourselves with conviction “I forgive myself” and feel it in our heart of hearts, then the other story lines—“I’m a lousy person because I did this-and-this-and-this,” “I can never do anything right,” and so on—simply wither and die in the face of the truth.

On hearing that insight, a Catholic nun among the participants cried out, “Merciful God!” “What is it?” I asked the elderly nun.

“I have served the Church for over fifty years,” she said with tears running down her cheeks, “and this is the first time I really knew what Jesus Christ meant when he said to love one’s enemies as oneself.”

In Hinduism, *sanskaras* (“impressions on the soul”), or what we are calling crystallized false identities, are erased or healed through attunement with the frequency of forgiveness. Hindus believe that *sanskaras* impact the life force of the heart; they represent a cycle that we are forced to repeat until they have been removed from their hardened position on our hearts. Forgiveness removes them.

Forgiveness releases resentments, hurt, pain, and stressful emotions, thereby erasing negative associations from the holographic field of the heart. Nonforgiveness can lead to hate that damages the heart emotionally, contracts it electrically, and pollutes it spiritually.

In tuning in to positive frequencies, we move back into the flow of our lives. We create a new standard—one that is based on our own inner truth rather than an outside, arbitrary “truth.” Empowered by deepening awareness, we are no longer dependent on others for validation and approval. We free both ourselves and others to be who we are. We begin to see ourselves as essence. As well, we can see the essence within others, regardless of outer appearances.

THE HIGHER HEART FREQUENCIES

Heart frequencies are feelings, and feelings are what makes life worthwhile. Higher heart vibrations

are the higher aspects of human nature—serenity, laughter, love, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, gratitude, appreciation, kindness. These are “in sync” with core values. These frequencies are accessed from the core, meaning the heart. The primary feeling is simply unconditional love.

The higher heart bands are a bridge into the field of essence. They are the highways of divine energy. Accessing these higher bands regenerates the immune system. They’re in charge of the fountain of youth. Our “ageless body” resides in the higher frequencies.

The way to tune in to love is to connect with our hearts at the deepest level. In any situation, phrases such as “I am present in the moment,” “Stay in the heart,” and “Open the heart” are useful techniques for grounding ourselves on the path of the heart. If we feel ourselves closing down, freezing, turning off, erecting a defensive wall, we can consciously remind ourselves in this way of the path of heart. If we feel afraid, depressed, irritable; if things aren’t going our way in a meeting with a client; if we’re frustrated by a creative logjam, we can return to the source of “flow” by silently repeating words like these.

As well, taking a deep breath is always helpful. We can imagine that we are breathing in the luminous golden light of the higher frequencies and that we ourselves are dissolving into that flowing, nectar like energy of love.

Love serves as the ultimate healer because it keeps our hearts and heads in balance. •

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Manifesting Spiritual Change

AN INTERVIEW WITH WAYNE DYER
BY RICK NURRIESTEARNS

Wayne Dyer's newest book, *Wisdom of the Ages*, contains a wonderful collection of prose and poetry from sixty ancestral masters. Just compiling the words of these extraordinary people of the past twenty-five centuries in one volume is reason enough for the book. However, each teaching, on some aspect of personal and spiritual growth, is followed by an essay. In the essays, Dyer applies the insights of these wise people to our lives today. He also offers a social and historical context for each writer's life and work. These sages come to life in these pages, touching our hearts and beckoning us to bring their wisdom into our contemporary lives.

Since Dyer is such a popular author and lecturer, we were interested in what he had to say about effecting deep spiritual change, the underlying focus of this book and his life's work. We talked by phone one morning while he was at his home in southern Florida. He is a dynamic speaker, and although he was focused and thoughtful in responding to the questions, his enthusiasm was not apparent during the interview.

Personal Transformation: In this book, you talk about working with our thoughts in order to create deep inner change. Do we effect spiritual change by working with our mind?

WAYNE DYER: That's the place we start, certainly. The way to effect deep spiritual change is to work at allowing the highest part of you, the invisible part of you, the divine part of you, to be the more dominant force in your life. That's done through getting quiet and becoming peaceful. You use the mind to lose the mind. In the process of losing it, you make conscious contact with what I think of as God. That's really the process of personal transformation. In the word transformation, trans means to go beyond. Transformation translates to the experience of going beyond form. The mind is not in the world of form. That which houses it is, perhaps, but we don't even know if it is housed in the brain. Certainly, it's beyond the world of the physical. Using the mind to lose the mind is the process of getting quiet, of shutting down the inner dialogue, of letting go of the chatter that fills our lives every day.

PT: *You discuss the Bible quote, “As you think, so shall you be.” How do you interpret that?*

DYER: Thinking is a major part of our lives. It defines our relationships, our health and our level of prosperity. We become what we think about all day long. It’s the first law of the universe. You have to ask yourself, “Why am I thinking the way that I’m thinking,” rather than “Why am I attracting what I am attracting into my life?” People aren’t good at attracting into their life what they want because the reverse is also true. What you really, really don’t want, you will also get. If your mind is on what you don’t want, you will continue to manifest and attract that into your life. For example, you can’t manifest prosperity from “I despise being poor.” If you despise being poor, if that’s what you think, you have to create more despising being poor. It’s true of everything in our lives. We have to become really conscious of what we think about, and put our attention on what we want rather than what we don’t want. Let’s look at relationships. If your thoughts and energy are on what you don’t like about the person, if you pay attention primarily to their flaws and to what they do that upsets you, that will characterize the nature of your relationship. You will continue to see the flaws and the things that upset you being manifested. Robert Frost said, “We love the things we love for what they are”—not for what they ought to be or used to be or what we think they should be, but what they are. Everything gets defined by the way we process it. Everything. Looking out the window at a sunny day can be seen as beautiful for one person and horrible for someone else who thinks the temperature isn’t right or worries that it might rain. What you think about is what you create in your life.

PT: *Given the power of thinking, what is the best place in ourselves for making decisions? What do we turn our thoughts to?*

DYER: The best place is one of peace, which is enlightenment. Enlightenment is to be immersed in and surrounded by peace at all moments in our lives. Before you act, you can ask yourself if what you are about to do or what you are about to say is going to bring peace. For example, often you have a choice to be right or to be kind. By being right, making somebody else wrong, you create turmoil; but by being kind, you always create peace. Enlight-

enment is about being kind, about being at peace. The Course of Miracles says, “I can choose peace rather than this.” It’s a great affirmation. We don’t get rid of ego—this part of us that needs to be right, that’s into pleasure and that evaluates itself on the basis of what it has, who it’s better than, and what everybody else thinks of “me.” We just make ego the least important part of our decision-making. We try to be conscious of choosing peace.

PT: *You discuss the importance of being yourself, of being self-directed enough to maintain balance and dignity. How do we know our true self, so that we’re directing ourselves with something other than ego?*

DYER: The truest part of us feels divine and knows peace; not believes in it, but knows it. It knows tranquility and harmony and feels in balance. It’s not anything you can intellectualize about; it’s something you absolutely know. If I’m able to serve in some way, that is, to bring peace to somebody, or to make someone else’s life better, if I’m able to do that, then of course, I’m doing it for myself as well.

PT: *I’ll quote you here. You encourage us “to wish for anything we want. We are entitled to share the abundance of the world. We’re divine creatures of God, and as such, we’re as entitled to health, prosperity and love as anyone who lives on earth.” How do we relate to the principles of manifestation in a way that we’re serving the betterment of humanity and not feeding some hungry ego which may have something to prove or feels entitled?*

DYER: I know the question. When you attract into your life the things you desire, whether it’s a new Mercedes, jewelry from Sak’s, a job, or feeding a homeless person, as long as it’s consistent with those nine principles I wrote about in *Manifest Your Destiny*, it’s based on love. When your desires are based on love, you create abundance for everyone else on the planet. It’s a myth to think people are hungry or dying or starving or in poverty because you attract prosperity into your life. It’s a guilt myth. I’ll use myself as an example. When I have a book idea in my head, I go away and I write a book. As a result, great abundance flows into my life—money, accolades, and lots of wonderful things. In a way it feeds my ego, but the process of actualizing what I feel is my purpose, putting it down on paper

and letting the world read it, involves millions of people. Somebody has to edit the book, somebody has to deliver the book, somebody has to build the cars that deliver the book, somebody has to feed the people who get up in the morning to get in the cars. None of those people go to work without any clothes on. Somebody has to inspect the clothes, grow the cotton, and design the garment. It's an endless progression.

No man is an island unto himself. We are all part of the main. Mystical consciousness is an awareness that none of us is alone. We accomplish nothing alone. Everything is done in relationship. When I create and when I attract into my life, I afford opportunity to everyone else in the whole world to work together in order to bring that about, and in the process of doing so, abundance is created for them as well. It's when I do nothing that I stop that flow of abundance and prosperity. If you have a desire to attract something into your life, whatever that might be, you should act on it as long as it's not going to hurt anyone else in the process. There are two ways to have the tallest building in town, you know. One is to knock down everyone else's building, but before long, you're going to be at war, because people won't stand for that. Secondly, you can work on your own building. In the process of working on your own building, you allow everyone else to have a building, as well. When you stop, you stop other people as well.

PT: So prosperity and abundance come out of our inner-connectedness.

DYER: Absolutely. People say to me, "You drive a nice car and you have a nice home and there are people starving in Somalia." I respond with "People aren't starving in Somalia because I drive a nice car." I do all that I can to help. I work with the hunger projects to help people improve their lives, but denying myself the things that I want and that I can create for myself won't decrease world hunger.

PT: You talk about dignity in the book. How do you define dignity?

DYER: If we talk about dignity in terms of how we feel about ourselves, we might be able to define dignity as being in harmony with our higher self. If we talk about dignity in terms of comparing people on some scale, we get into prejudice. My father, who spent years in prison and who abandoned us,

would have been labeled a very undignified man, and yet, he was the greatest teacher in my life. He taught me about forgiveness and how to get on the spiritual path. I remember being told a story about a man who had signed up to come to this planet to live—to sit and beg at a corner in front of a certain building every day, to stand there with his hand out, just to teach one person compassion. His was a life of dignity.

PT: What's your understanding of humility?

DYER: It's not projecting your ego onto others. It's a wonderful trait to cultivate. I am not talking about false humility, which is pretending. I am talking about not always having to draw attention to yourself. I listened, on a call-in radio show, to this father who had given up his child for adoption and now, thirty years later, his child is famous. His son took his real name back five years ago. The father now wants to reconnect with the son he hasn't seen since he gave him up for adoption. The father told this story on the radio. Everybody who called in talked about how they disliked this man and what he was doing, accusing him of only wanting contact with his famous son because he wanted money. Then callers said, "Let me tell you about what happened to me, with my father." Everyone who called in projected their own story onto this person's desire to reconnect with his son. We have to learn humility—to see the world the way it is, not the way we are, and to see people the way they are, and not the way we are, and not to use ourselves and our stories as a justification or a rationale for the way everyone else ought to behave.

PT: Do we have to be humbled to develop humility?

DYER: It's not a question of being humbled. It's a question of losing some of your self-importance, your self-absorption. It's making the decision to be free. Freedom means an absence of thinking about yourself. You're never free until you're free from thinking about yourself, and that's what all transformational work is about. It's about losing your self-absorption, reaching a level of impeccability, and reaching levels of higher consciousness.

PT: In ways, freedom and humility are the same.

DYER: Yes. They are egolessness, losing ego, or not having it be such a dominant force in your life.

PT: In that sense, is there strength in humility?

DYER: There is strength in humility, but that isn't the reason to become humble. The reason to grow in humility is because doing so raises you to a higher level of consciousness. You are only strong because other people perceive you to be that way. Strength is a relative term.

PT: *One of the themes throughout your book is that we are naturally purposeful. If we are inherently purposeful, are we naturally powerful, and if so, what's the source of that power?*

DYER: We are all naturally much more powerful than our egos, our minds and our personalities have convinced us. We have incredible power which comes from our source. We become powerless because we disconnect ourselves from our source. When you disconnect from the source, you lose the power of the source, like the drop of water in the ocean. When the water is away from the ocean, it shrivels and can't create and sustain life. But, reconnect it to its source and it regains all of the power of its source. Our egos are like these drops of water. We've come to believe that we are separate from our source—separate from each other, separate from God, and separate from what we'd like to attract into our lives. This concept of separation is where we lose our power. When you reconnect to your source, you regain the power of your source—the power to create and sustain life, which is as powerful as it gets.

PT: *Is there a difference between power and strength?*

DYER: Strength is often perceived as a comparison to others—how much more I can lift or how much faster I can run or how influential I am. Power is often interpreted as having influence beyond your own boundaries. But I'm not speaking about that kind of power, which is a dominating kind of power. I'm talking about the power in the inner strength, to be able to create and sustain life, to heal, and to attract prosperity into our lives.

PT: *What about the heart in transformation?*

DYER: I see the heart as the center of the body; not the brain, not the head, but the heart. The heart is a symbol, of course, of coming from the place inside of you that knows that you and God are one. It's something that you can only feel and experience. Your heart beating is like the waves hitting upon the ocean. Jackson Browne sang, "I hear your heart beating everywhere." It is God's voice inside of you,

coming from that place in your center where you radiate out into the world what it is that you are and want. It's only when you can get to that center place, that place of the heart, that you'll really come to know peace. The mind won't give it to you.

PT: *You talk about a rich life being filled with enthusiasm. What generates enthusiasm?*

DYER: The word enthusiasm means "God within." Enthos is God and asm means within. Enthusiasm is being authentic. It's allowing God to reside inside of you.

PT: *Is the heart the source of enthusiasm?*

DYER: Yes, that's the God within. When people ask, "How do you get to be a great speaker?" I say, "Be authentic and be enthusiastic, and anything else, he'll forgive you for." If you can't remember, if you stumble, it won't make any difference.

PT: *You say there is no such thing as failure. What do you mean by that?*

DYER: If you swing at a golf ball and the ball dribbles off to the side, you haven't really failed, you've produced a result. The question in life isn't whether you fail, the question is, what do you do with the results you've produced? Do you say I can never hit a golf ball, I'm not athletic, or do you pick up the ball and swing at it again? The moment you label yourself a failure, you become the label that you place on yourself. Failure is another judgmental term. One person's failure is someone else's enormous success.

PT: *What about regrets? Are they real and do they serve our evolution?*

DYER: You don't regret what you do, you regret what you don't do. When you do something and don't like the result you produce, you have a choice. You can learn from the experience. You can make changes and in that sense, there's no regret. There's actually gratitude for the fall, because the falls provide you with the energy to propel yourself to higher and higher places in our lives. When you'd like to try something and you don't because you're afraid of failing or you're afraid of somebody else's opinion about it, then you can have regrets. You can go through your whole life wondering what would have happened if you had asked her to go out. There is also an aspect of regret after doing something harmful toward another person. When you feel regret, vow to change your behavior. In that sense, regret serves our evolution. •



The Heart of Awakening

L A M A S U R Y A D A S

If you were able to go inward right now and waken your sleeping Buddha, what would you find? Tibetan Buddhism says that at the heart of you, me, every single person, and all other creatures great and small, is an inner radiance that reflects our essential nature, which is always utterly positive. Tibetans refer to this inner light as pure radiance or innate luminosity; in fact, they call it ground luminosity because it is the “bottom line.” There is nothing after this, and nothing before this. This luminosity is birthless and deathless. It is a luminescent emptiness, called “clear light,” and it is endowed with the heart of unconditional compassion and love. Whatever your past or present religious beliefs, you will probably recognize that Tibetans are not alone in associating luminosity with enlightenment or an incandescent spiritual presence. In Christian churches and Jewish synagogues as well as Buddhist temples, people light candles that symbolize spiritual luminosity. Saints and other figures are universally repre-

sented by shimmering halos of light, surrounded by nimbuses and auras. Some people can even see them in reality. The tradition in Judaism, the religion of my childhood, is for the women in the household to light candles at sundown on Friday night. Why? To invite the light and spirit of God into the temple of the home for the Sabbath.

Think about all the millions of men and women who have bowed their heads in prayer while lighting candles. Do any of us really think that the Buddha, or any other penultimate image of the absolute, needs a candle to see or to stay warm? Lighting a candle is just a symbolic, ritualized way of offering light in the darkness. The candle symbolizes the inner light and luminous wisdom that can guide each of us through the darkness of ignorance and confusion. The candle’s shining flame is an outer reminder of inner luminosity and clarity—the living spiritual flame burning within the temple of our heart and soul.

The timeless wisdom of Tibet assures us that when

you are able to hear the Buddha's wisdom, when you are willing to ponder his insightful lessons, and when you are genuinely committed to practicing these lessons by doing your best to lead an impeccable life, you can actualize this ground luminosity. You will reach the heart of awakening; you will know where you have been, and you will see where you are going. Your own inner light and truth—the clear light by which we see and are seen—will guide you. This is total awareness; this is perfect enlightenment. Enlightenment means an end to directionless wandering through the dreamlike passageways of life and death. It means that you have found your own home Buddha. How does the Buddha feel? Completely comfortable, at peace, and at ease in every situation and every circumstance with a sense of true inner freedom, independent of both outer circumstances and internal emotions.

Waking up your inner Buddha and staying awake requires extraordinary self-knowledge and presence of mind. It means paying close attention to how you think and how you act, and it means making an ongoing commitment to searching inward for answers. Inward. Deeper. Beneath the surface of things, not just inside yourself.

As Westerners, this isn't how we have been conditioned to think. We keep looking outside for answers. We look for lovers, friends, parents, authorities, and even children to answer needs they can't possibly fulfill. We have fantasies about career, romance, friendship, and intimacy. We are so full of fantasies about the past and the future. Often we don't want to let go of these fantasies because we fear that doing so means giving up on life. But that's not how it works. In truth, unrealistic expectations tarnish our appreciation of life and weigh down the buoyancy of the present moment.

Don't we all tend to think mainly in terms of the gratification of our desires and securing our place in the world? Haven't we all been conditioned to place primary emphasis on persona, or how we appear? Our common languages abound with phrases about projecting a good image. The emphasis is on how you appear to yourself as well as how you appear to others—in order to get what you want. Don't we all seek security, safety, and reassurance?

We're often told, "Don't just stand there, do something!" And we do. We do many somethings. When we are involved in unsatisfying relationships, we believe that our solutions will be found in different relationships; when we have jobs that make us angry and resentful, we believe that new jobs will give us what we want; when we're unhappy with our surroundings, we believe we can resolve our unhappiness by changing locales. Then when our problems refuse to go away, we complain that we're stuck and look for ways to get moving.

We take this kind of logic even further when we reduce life to an ongoing competition. Trained and conditioned to believe that life is about achievement, about winning, losing, and self-assertion, we put much of our energy into momentary solutions. It's no wonder so many of us feel alienated, alone, exhausted, cynical, and disheartened.

Buddhism turns these attitudes about winning and achieving upside down and inside out. Buddhist emphasis is not on new ways to conquer outer space, cyberspace or, for that matter, Manhattan Island. The wisdom traditions tell us that we can afford to slow down, take a breather, and turn inward. To master ourselves is to arrive home at the center of being—the universal mandala. What we seek, we already are. "Everything is available in the natural state," as a lama of old once said. So why should we look anywhere else?

Taking an inward path is not about cultism or blind faith. It is about genuine leadership, embodying and enacting truth's highest principles—not mere sheeplike followership. Conforming is not the deepest teaching of the spiritual traditions. The deepest teachings are about radiant awareness and the inherently joyful freedom of being. It's not just about maintaining a quiet mind. If all you want is a quiet mind, there is a huge pharmaceutical industry that would be happy to serve that need.

The path to enlightenment and awakening is the opposite of squelching and containing yourself or trying to keep up a nice, efficient, stainless-steel persona—very shiny but also very hard and cold. There is no substitute for living a juicy genuine life of Buddha activity. The Buddha is bubbling, happy, and sad. Waking up the Buddha is about letting go

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Being a Joyful Servant

AN INTERVIEW WITH LAWRENCE KUSHNER
BY MARY NURRIESTEARN

While we were searching for material for this issue, Lawrence Kushner's newest book, *Eyes Remade for Wonder*, came across my desk. I picked it up, intending only to glance through it, and found myself immersed in it. Through reading his words, I discovered that Kushner had insight about the subject of humility from the perspective of Jewish mysticism. Sensing that he would contribute to our understanding of humility I contacted him to set up an interview.

Kushner is rabbi at the Congregation Bel El in Sudbury, Massachusetts. His books and lectures have been a source of spiritual nourishment for people from all faiths for the past twenty-five years. Indeed, that was my experience. Being in conversation with him was most uplifting.

I interviewed Kushner by phone while he was at his home. He responded easily and with depth to my questions. In fact, the text that follows is almost verbatim, a commentary on his understanding of humility.

Personal Transformation: Let's begin with a definition of humility.

LAWRENCE KUSHNER: Humility is the joyful

awareness that I am a creature of God and so is everyone else. It's the "so is everyone else" that makes up humility, transforming the ecstasy into an abiding sense of gratitude. I think it was Martin Buber who wisely observed that humility is not thinking that you are lower than anyone else, it's just not thinking that you're higher than anyone else.

PT: What is humility founded on?

KUSHNER: Humility is founded on creatureliness—I have been created to do something that only I can do, just as you have been created to accomplish something that only you can do. It is founded on the notion that each life has a sacred, unique and never-recurring possibility. No matter who I meet or how beneath me she might "appear" to be intellectually, socially and financially, spiritually, she has a job that only she can do and it is an honor to meet her . . . or him.

PT: There's dignity and worth in every human being.

KUSHNER: Yes, spiritual essence. Humility comes from realizing the dignity in each creature. Theologically, you can also construct humility from an understanding of what for Jews are the first two utterances

at Sinai. Some Christian traditions number the utterances in a different order, but for Judaism, the first utterance is really not a commandment; it's simply, "I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The second utterance begins, "You should have no other gods before you, no likenesses in heavens above." Those two, according to the *Talmud*, were heard by the assembled community of Israel at the foot of Sinai directly from God personally. Everything else, they heard through Moses. The first two are almost the flip side of one another. The first one says I am God, and the second one says you can't have any other gods. It's almost as if God gets us all together at Sinai and says, "I just have two things to tell you. Number one, I'm God; number two, you're not." The basis of all arrogance is thinking that you're God. The basis of all humility is realizing that you're not, and no one else is either, and that as creatures, each with unique tasks, we revere one another's spiritual assignments. The reason for our lack of humility is that human beings, as part of the human condition and struggle, have this proclivity for falling into thinking that they're God.

PT: Give an example of how we fall into thinking that we're God.

KUSHNER: We forget that we're going to die. That's it, in a nutshell. We get to thinking that we're going to live forever. If we live forever, all bets are off, all rules are gone, and we can do whatever we like. Then something comes to us, sometimes as devastating as an appointment with our physician who has bad news. Other times it's just a scare. I was on a plane last week that was hit by lightning, and I was reminded again. The greeting of the monks is *memento mori*, "Remember, you're dying." This is not said in a morose or depressing way, but in a grateful and enlivening way. It's a reminder that you are a human being. Kafka said the meaning of life is that it ends.

PT: How do we recognize humility in one another?

KUSHNER: The *Talmud* asks the question, "Who is wise?" and gives the surprise answer, "Someone who learns from everyone." We recognize humility in others by finding something that we can learn

from them. Do you hear them? Are you paying attention? There's something you can learn from everyone, something that only he or she knows, that only he or she can teach you.

PT: Which is part of their spiritual assignment, in a sense.

KUSHNER: It's like each person's life has the pieces of a 1,000 piece interlocking jigsaw puzzle. In Judaism, at the time of death, we say the *shemah*, which is the declaration of God's unity, put the last puzzle piece in place, and die. In my experience, no one seems to get issued a complete puzzle. Everyone's puzzle is missing, on average, seven pieces, and these puzzle pieces are distributed randomly into other people's puzzles. We spend our lives walking around saying, "Do you need a puzzle piece with a little yellow in the corner and a red line running through it?" Then we meet someone, and he or she says, "Oh, my God, I've been looking for it all my life." We say, "I don't know what to do with it, I wound up with it, take it, it's yours." It's rarely the author or featured speaker who has your puzzle pieces; it's usually someone who has a bit part in your life whose name is not recorded in the program.

PT: That's an example of humility being based on interconnectedness.

KUSHNER: I call it the "who was that masked man, anyway?" phenomenon. Usually, we don't know who it was until months, years, decades later when we look back realizing, with humility, that if it hadn't been for that person, our life wouldn't be the way it is now.

PT: Why aspire to humility?

KUSHNER: The way I'm parsing it, the question means: What value is there in being aware that you are a creature. It seems to me that the only other two options are to say that life is the result of some cosmic crapshoot which renders life meaningless and absurd, or to say, on the other extreme, that I made myself and I'm God. So, to aspire to humility is to constantly remind oneself that one was created for a purpose.

PT: You're talking about purpose. How are purpose and humility linked?

KUSHNER: It is rare that people are given a clear and focused sense of what their purpose is until

their last hours, and then only with a bit of luck and grace, they look back from the mountaintop of their life and realize why they were created.

An Atari computer game produced 15 years ago was similar to *Dungeons and Dragons*. There were different mazes and puzzles to be figured out. Our kids, who were in junior high at the time, thought it was neat to get tips and tricks from their classmates. My daughter came home with what was called an undocumented trick, one that was written nowhere. It was received by word of mouth. In this Atari game, if you went into one of the rooms and moved the cursor up against what looked like a wall and hit certain keys at the same time, you could walk through the wall and go into an otherwise inaccessible room in which there were a rainbow and the initials of the game's creator. That stayed with me as a metaphor for the religious search that we're discussing. In other words, what do you have to do to access the initials of the Creator that presumably are encoded within everyone and everything at all times? The name of the game is to find the presence of the Creator and then act in ways to help others find it, too.

PT: So that we don't have to wait until our final moments to find our meaning?

KUSHNER: I wouldn't say it guarantees you a clear sense of what your purpose is, but it can certainly give you the satisfaction of knowing that you are on the right track. Realizing how all the pieces fit together is always related to moments of death or near-death experiences. I qualify a powerful mystical or spiritual encounter as a near-death experience because in order to have it, you must be willing to let go of yourself. In Hasidism, which is the last great flowering of Jewish spirituality, the 18th Cen-

First, one must learn what it means to be a joyful servant. Start by serving the people you live with—help them, learn how to tend to their needs, even before they can express them.

ture Jewish Spiritual revivalism in Eastern Europe, one of the ultimate goals of spiritual life was to live in such a way that one was continuously aware of one's presence *within* the Divine. In order to attain that level of awareness, in addition to leading a devout and pious life, one had to be willing to experience what in Hebrew is called *bittul yesb*, which means a loss of self—not in an aesthetic way, but like a drop that falls into the ocean. The drop is still there, it is just impossible to identify its boundaries any longer. That's *bittul yesb*, which is a small death. Whenever we behave in such a way so as to find the presence of the Creator, we experience a sense of momentary ecstasy, and we, too, become like a drop that has fallen into the sea.

PT: What does the pursuit of humility move us toward?

KUSHNER: Humility is the key, the instrument opening the portal to the sense of one's pres-

ence within God and ultimate meaning.

PT: How, then, do we grow in humility?

KUSHNER: A couple of things come to mind. First, one must learn what it means to be a joyful servant. Start by serving the people you live with—help them, learn how to tend to their needs, even before they can express them. At the beginning of the main prayer segment of Jewish liturgy, before reciting the primary bouquet of prayers, a passage is read from psalms 51:17 which says, "Oh, God, open my lips that my mouth may declare Your praise." It's a beautiful and a curious teaching that invites us to relinquish control of running our lives, saying that we are prepared to simply be an instrument, an agent of the Divine. You move from learning how to serve others joyfully to learning how to serve the Holy One of all being. In the way Judaism

I qualify a powerful mystical or spiritual encounter as a near-death experience because in order to have it, you must be willing to let go of yourself.

structures religious life, this becomes the fulfillment of God's commandments. Each day is filled with a myriad of opportunities for secret observance, and each one of them is an opportunity for humility, an opportunity to be a joyful servant.

PT: *Give an example of that.*

KUSHNER: This is one of my favorite stories, and it's true. When my wife, Karen, was six or seven months pregnant with our second child, we lived in a little shoebox of an apartment in Marlboro, Mass. It was a cold, wintry night, and we had gone to bed around 11 p.m. A little past midnight, she woke me up, apologetically, telling me that she couldn't sleep. She said she would love a chocolate bar with almonds. I realized that this was the strange craving of a pregnant woman and was eager to help. She'd been schlepping this baby around in her belly, and I was getting off easy, so I figured it was the least I could do. Before she completed enunciating her request, I said, "Don't worry about a thing, honey." I put my Levi's on over my pajamas, threw on a sweatshirt, snow galoshes, and my down parka, hood, gloves and muffler. I ran down the few flights of steps to the car and to my chagrin, saw there were about three inches of wet sloppy snow all over the car. I cleaned it off, started the car, and then had this horrifying realization—I had no idea where I was going to find a store open in the middle of the night. I drove up Route 20 and remembered the Holiday Inn out on Route 495 had a candy machine. I can still picture the night clerk watching this car skid to a stop in a snowstorm, a man runs in, waves, pumps quarters into the candy machine, grabs a handful of candy bars, runs back to the car, and drives off into the blizzard. I got home and gave my wife the candy bars.

For about an hour on a wintry night, I, Lawrence Kushner, who normally has a very well-developed ego, did not have an ego. Instead, I was a servant of Karen Kushner's ego. I did not stay in a warm bed. I drove around looking for candy bars. Here's the

crazy part. Doing what my lover wanted made me happier than doing what I wanted. It was more fulfilling. It was transforming. By letting go of myself and serving someone whom I loved, I reached a state of humility and an otherwise unattainable fulfillment.

PT: *In addition to being a joyful servant, how else do we grow in humility?*

KUSHNER: We go out to others and try to find out what their unique job is and what we can learn from them.

PT: *Does strength of being come from grounding our lives in our purpose?*

KUSHNER: I'll give you a choice. There are two people with whom you could pick a fight. Who would you least prefer to fight with? One is a 250-pound weight-lifting bruiser, and the other is a 90-pound weakling who is running an errand for the godfather. I'd pick the bruiser anytime. If you fight with someone who is on an errand for someone very powerful, you also pick a fight with the person they represent. The messenger says, "Don't mess with me because I'm on an errand from the man." You realize you don't want to get in trouble with him and leave the messenger alone. It's that way with religious and spiritual acts as well. When we realize that we are agents of the Most High, we do whatever we do from the position of enormous strength.

PT: *What would you like to say in closing?*

KUSHNER: My latest favorite humility story: I lecture all over the world and often, they are big lectures, with hundreds and sometimes thousands of people. At virtually every lecture people come up to me with books they'd like me to autograph. There's rarely a lecture where someone doesn't present me with a book written by Rabbi Harold Kushner. I try not to make them feel too embarrassed, but it is awkward. I used to say, "Whose name do you want me to sign?" What goes on for me internally is that they remind me that I'm not very important; they thought I was somebody else. I thank them and I'm grateful for it. •

Readers Write About Service



The Altiplano of Bolivia is an exotic, barren place. A vast plane 13,000 feet above sea level makes every breath a labored one. The heart pounds here. Dreams become fantastic. The snow-capped Andes rise high in the distance. The air is thin. Sunset comes fast.

We had worked for a week among the Aymaran Indians. North Americans of European stock stand as pasty giants among these hearty, solid, brown-skinned people. Their black eyes flash from frames rarely over five feet tall.

With their own hands they had constructed a clinic, here in the middle of the plane, on the way to nowhere. An indigenous church had gathered. "Medical care for our community is hours away," they said. "We need a place of healing." But who will come to serve it? "Surely God will send us someone," they responded simply.

I was in a dry, fallow time in my life. I needed to get away... far away. Thus I found myself with a small group of doctors, dentists, an optometrist, and some helpers inaugurating this Bolivian clinic.

The people walked for miles across the cold, dusty land, stood quietly in line for hours for a chance to be seen by the doctors. "I can see my hand, but I cannot see the sheep," was a common comment directed to the busy optometrist. Faces lit up as they stood in the clinic doorway, gazing in awe through new glasses, marveling at the beauty of the distant mountains, their home.

The week's hard work ended late in the day. We stretched tired backs and prepared to load the Jeeps for the long drive back to the capital.

Wait, our hosts said, quietly. You have given yourselves to us. Now we must give ourselves to you. We have prepared a celebration to send you toward your home.

Musical instruments appeared... drums and reed flutes of all sizes, some which reached the floor and which emitted low, haunting, breathy notes. "We have gifts for you," said these poorest people I had ever met as they placed beribboned sheepskin hats on our bare

heads. Then these tiny people carefully went round the circle as the music played, doffing our hats long enough to shower each of us with confetti.

"Now you must dance," they said. A small, strong brown hand took each of our white ones, and the circle began to dance. We danced the clinic dream. The musicians moved outside. Hundreds of small, quiet people, eyes bright, formed a corridor. The evening sky went purple, then black. Impossibly bright stars popped out.

The line began to snake among the junipers, dancing up the dust to the deep beat of the drum, the haunting minor of the flutes and pipes. We wept.

My heart pounded in the thin air. My throat burned. Lungs gasped for breath. What tears were left in my being streaked my face, evaporated.

I danced there my death. I danced my grief. I danced my emptiness. I danced the pain and the beauty of these people, this place. Around the clinic we went in a dizzying whirl, stomping up the dust. I danced out my pain. I danced in new life.

I can say no more than this... high on the Altiplano there my life was transformed. All the unkind, disappointing things I've ever done were named and danced out. All the wrongs ever done to me were danced out, too, one by one. And I have not since been the same.

Oh, I still hurt others. And others still hurt me. I am as aware of my shortcomings as ever, perhaps more so.

But it does not consume me... no longer has power to rule my life. And brokenness and death, while still quite real, are seen not to be the last word, but life.—
Rev. B. Craig Stinson.

I get up each morning before my family. I bring the paper into the house and put it at the table for my wife. I make breakfast, clean the kitchen and straighten the house. I greet the gang as they come downstairs to start their day. I share other domestic responsibilities, but the morning is my ritual of

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devotion and service.

Her question was simple. "You are a minister and an activist, who do you serve?" I have served many good causes, like environmentalism, providing health care in Nicaragua, disarmament, reproductive rights, and my denomination. She did not ask what causes or ideas I serve, but who or whom do I serve and how is that service significant for me? I serve my wife and children.

Some of the most profound changes, which move us toward justice, equity and compassion, come from feminism. Feminism asks that we change, that we become more conscious of justice and equity in the ways we consider our activities in the kitchen, in our careers, in the bedroom, in how we treat one another, and in how we parent our children.

Serving my family amidst the teaming cauldron of other demands on my time is not always easy. Sometimes we fight. They seldom seem grateful and only occasionally courteous, but I know of no greater joy in my life than my love for my wife or my sons. I have the joy of watching them grow and change, of discovering more about me by how we are together. The greatest gift I have ever received is to be given the chance to spend a lifetime knowing and getting to know my wife. I continually make the choice of putting my family as a high priority. I sometimes pay a price for this choice, but I seldom regret it.

Social action and justice work emerges most powerfully through face-to-face relationships. The journey is from sympathy to empathy, from good causes to true love. "When you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me."

I sit at the chapel of the new day, morning after morning, giving thanks and asking again, "Hey, Sam, did you take your vitamin? How about some Cheerios? Jeanie, please, pass the milk." Thank you, Most Holy One.—*Jim Eller, Minister.*

"**W**hy am I doing this?" I asked myself as I sat down for my daily practice session at the harp. After six frustrating years of learning to play the harp, I was finding myself without any goal or reason to continue. My love affair with the harp was just about over.

"The state hospice convention is giving a workshop by a woman who plays the harp for hospice patients," said my harpist friend, Barbara, on the phone. "I knew you were a hospice volunteer and thought if you were interested, we might go." My curiosity was aroused and we made plans to attend.

A lady from Missoula, Montana gave a talk about "The Chalice of Repose," a program she founded which trains volunteers to play harps at the bedsides of patients who are in the dying phase of a terminal illness. The music she plays is simple, soft and serene. The purpose is to soothe the patient, reduce pain and anxiety, and help ease their transition.

This touched my soul. "I can do this!" I exclaimed to Barbara over lunch. "This is why I've continued to play the harp. This is the work I'm supposed to do. I've never felt anything so strongly!"

The details unfolded in miraculous ways. A friend insisted on paying half the cost of the new, small harp I would need. I found books and articles about using music to aid the sick and dying. A harp mag-

azine featured an ad for “Music written for the hospice situation.” A long-time volunteer for Hospice of Green Country, I shared my idea with the staff. They were enthusiastic and supportive. In April 1998, my bedside harp vigil program for Hospice of Green Country patients became a reality.

As I drive to an assignment, I ask God to allow me to be a channel of unconditional love and acceptance. I ask to give whatever is needed in this situation, and to be an instrument of peace. I promise to give what is mine to give and to take what is mine to take.

And what is mine to take? I know that when you give, the universe supports you. As a student of *Unity* and *A Course in Miracles*, I know that “the cost of giving is receiving,” but my hospice-bedside harp vigil program brings all of this to a higher level.

I am a much better harpist. As I learn to create my own music, the harp becomes an extension of me. In attempting to create a space of love and peace for the patient, I too am enfolded in that space.

Gratitude and humility are my companions. I am so grateful to these patients who allow me to share their lives at this most intimate, stressful, and often painful time.

To give transforms my life in unimaginable ways. Stepping outside of myself to focus on the needs of another connects me to the Oneness of us all.—*Pam Cox*•

In our next issue: EXPLORING AND EXPRESSING INNER LIFE (through journaling, poetry, drawing, etc.).

To contribute, please see Letters to the Editor on page 9 for information.

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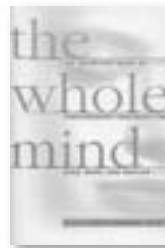
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Briefly Noted

The Whole Mind: The Definitive Guide to Complementary Treatments for Mind, Mood, and Emotion, edited by Lynette Bassman, Ph.D. New World Library, 1998, 553 pages.

If traditional treatment of emotional and psychological problems has failed you, pick up a copy of Lynette Bassman's book *The Whole Mind, The Definitive Guide to Complementary Treatments for Mind, Mood, and Emotion*. The book, which addresses 36 alternative healing modalities, is a collection of original writings by about three dozen experts who approach mental health from a variety of angles. Each expert practitioner details his or her particular alternative healing technique, from the Alexander Technique to Yoga. The essays include descriptions of the techniques, case studies, research, explanations of underlying philosophies, how to choose a practitioner, and resources for learning more. Compiling information on the various treatments into a single volume makes it easier for the reader to compare the various techniques and use what they learn to improve their mental wellness.



Developing Balanced Sensitivity: Practical Buddhist Exercises for Daily Life, by Alexander Berzin. Snow Lion Publications, 1998, 236 pages.

Alexander Berzin's book on balanced sensitivity is a how-to manual offering techniques to help people overcome sensitivity disorders, primarily insensitivity and hyper-

sensitivity. Berzin has developed a series of exercises that focus on identifying the problem, understanding the technique to dispel the problem,

then following the technique to eliminate the two extreme positions: insensitivity and hypersensitivity. The techniques are derived from traditional Buddhist sources, but the exercises focus on coping with difficult situations encountered in daily life.



Soul Work: Finding the Work You Love, Loving the Work You Have, by Deborah P. Block and Lee. J. Richmond. Davies-Black Publishing, 1998, 210 pages.

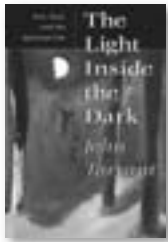
You may be settled into a job you love. You may be looking for a complete career change. In either case, *Soul Work: Finding the Work You Love, Loving the Work You Have* can help you make a bad situation better and a good situation great. The inspirational stories, exercises and meditations help readers reassess their careers and connect their work to the things that bring them the most meaning in their lives so they can achieve the spiritual balance that helps create wholeness in life and work. The book's seven chapters are based on seven spiritual themes: change, balance, energy, community, harmony, calling, and unity, and encourage readers to develop a sense of long-range meaning, purpose and planning throughout their careers. The stories of people at a crossroads in their careers explore ways of resolv-



ing common dilemmas and issues. The reflections in each chapter are drawn from career theory, physics, poetry, philosophy, psychology, world religions and other sources that help readers make the connection between work and spirit. The exercises and meditations will help readers break through old patterns of thinking and let go of past work roles that are no longer productive. *Soul Work* acts as a workbook for blending spirit and work, and as a guidebook for the journey into a career change.

***Zen, Soul, and the Spiritual Life: The Light Inside the Dark*, by John Tarrant. HarperCollins, 247 pages.**

Zen teacher and psychotherapist John Tarrant brings together ancient Eastern traditions and the Western view of the soul in his



book *Zen, Soul and the Spiritual Life: The Light Inside the Dark*. The book offers a new description of our inner landscapes based on

new understanding of the most fundamental questions of life: What is soul? What is spirit? Tarrant broadens and clarifies the distinction between the two: the spirit's connection to light, insight and oneness with God, and the soul's darker, more worldly side that allows us to suffer and mature. His lesson is one of learning to live fully through difficult situations, of looking into our darkest experiences and not denying any of our feelings, but discovering deep happiness and joy even in the dark times as well as in all aspects of daily life.

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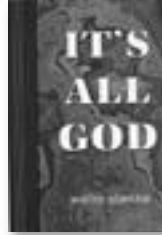
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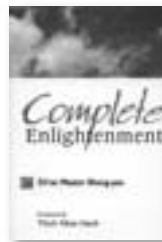
It's All God, by Walter Starcke. *Guadalupe Press, 1998, 288 pages.*

You can have it all, says Walter Starcke, and he proceeds to explain how in his latest book, *It's All God*. In what he calls the crowning fulfillment of a lifetime of searching, Starcke takes readers back to the roots of Western theology and our spiritual foundations. He offers an original interpretation of the Judeo/Christian myth that works for today and also propels us forward into a greater consciousness of our power and our divinity. Starcke first decodes the Bible, explains why so much confusion exists today, and then offers practical how-to ways to live life fully so that we can have it all.



Complete Enlightenment, by Ch'an Master Sheng-yen. *Dharma Drum Publications, 1997, 325 pages.*

Complete Enlightenment is Ch'an Master Sheng-yen's translation and commentary on The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment, a central text that shaped the development of East Asian Buddhism and Zen. Sheng-yen focuses on a literal, accurate and poetic translation, making compromises only when the three conflicted. His work reveals the correct view, pitfalls, and stages of practice, and offers the key to the deep, poetic and practical meanings of the ancient scripture. The translation clarifies the nature of mind and body, illusions and reality, and



the potential for complete enlightenment in each of us. As such, it becomes a manual for the spiritual journey toward complete enlightenment.

Self-Esteem: A Family Affair, by Jean Illsley Clarke. *Hazelden, 1998, 291 pages.*

Helping children develop a concept of true self-worth is, in author Jean Illsley Clarke's eyes, the most valuable gift a parent can give a child. And parenting your child is the most important job you will ever have in life. Her updated book, *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* (originally published in 1978), is offered as a supportive guide toward achieving both goals.

Although much has changed in the 20-plus years since she wrote the book, Clarke contends that many things are still the same and paramount among them is the need to foster true self-esteem, a necessary ingredient for human happiness. Clarke reminds readers that the development of strong self-esteem begins at home in nurturing interactions between parent and child. She defines self-esteem and distinguishes between self-esteem and "feeling good," discusses ways to make changes in families, suggests ways to deal with low self-esteem and self-esteem issues in extended and blended families, and connects self-esteem to dealing with drugs, alcohol, bullying, violence and other societal problems. Clark focuses on offering suggestions for dealing with various family members in ways that nourish self-esteem for everyone involved. •



Thomas Keating

Continued from page 45

“hanging out with,” not petitioning something, but just being with?

KEATING: You can ask, too, but like any acquaintanceship, sometimes you ask for a cup of coffee and sometimes you give one. Other times, you just sit and hold hands. Some people might be turned off by that kind of personal relationship with God, because it's not in their tradition or upbringing. Contemplative prayer, which is the fullness of this relationship, opens us completely to the transcendent dimension, not unlike the way a human relationship deepens and grows. That means you have to get to know each other. Give some time to this relationship. What you do in that time is totally up to you. To sit there and say nothing is fine or to ask for God's help is fine. The relationship itself gradually suggests new ways of relating, such as just being with God, waiting on God. Prayer becomes a face-to-face relationship, sitting and sharing the experience of being together, like a couple who are deeply in love and don't need to talk all the time. The total gift of their presence to each other is deeper than conversation; it might be called communion. The movement of prayer is from conversation that is a little formal, into ease, and then into the capacity to be silent and just enjoy the gift of each other's presence. That requires some time to develop.

PT: No short paths.

KEATING: It's a lifetime practice, one that can always grow deeper. Any effort to know God is success, even though we feel it is a flop, because God appreciates even the smallest consideration or thought much more than we can imagine. •

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Experts Answer

Continued from page 14

son, and your husband. I can tell you how I have helped others in times like this but obviously, you must work this out in your own way and in your own time. That is, this is your time to “stand in the light of your own soul,” being faithful to your wants and needs while balancing your love for your son and your husband.

Since you are in this 24 hours a day, seven days a week, my first thought would be for you to find a support group in your area and get out and be with others in the same situation. You could ask your husband to go along or, if you prefer, go alone. If leaving is impossible, there are support groups on the Internet. I would also recommend that you seek counseling with a psychotherapist or counselor specializing in grief work.

I’m not sure of your spiritual beliefs, but I feel a strong connection to spirit and with my patient’s permission, we pray together and ask for spirit to connect with us during these painful times. I tell my patient all he or she needs is “a little willingness,” and we turn our worries and need to control every scene over to God, Goddess, Holy Spirit, whatever we are comfortable calling “It.” “Standing in the light of your own soul” means staying faithful to your wants and needs, your love for these two special men in your life, and not interfering with their relationship problems. If your husband and/or your son can be approached on a spiritual level, ask them to pray with you and then step out of the way and watch spirit work. If not, you still have spirit with you and the help of a support group and counselor.

Another way to help your son,

yourself and your husband (and other willing family members or friends) is to do “healing circles” with your son. The focus of healing circles is not a hands-on cure. Healing circles are more for comfort. We might not be able to heal a body overwhelmed with disease, but we can ease the pain of the dying person and the sorrow of the ones left behind by creating a ritual where we give energy and love. Something is shared between us—spirit or energy. It doesn’t matter what we call “It,” and it doesn’t matter if we believe in it. All we need is the intention to want to help. We aren’t looking for a cure. But a healing can take place in the soul if people share love.

This healing work is based on the idea that on a subtle level of reality, we are energy or we have energy flowing through us. The entire universe is made of this energy and all of us can be instruments or conduits of an even greater energy simply by asking. That greater energy is healing and comforting, and through us as its messengers, healing energy and comfort are passed on to our sick or dying loved one.

Your son is in physical pain and probably feels psychological and emotional pain not only within himself but also from others he loves. What you do may help relieve his physical pain and ease the emotional pain and anxiety he has and is getting from others.

Sit comfortably on the bed on your son’s right, close to him. Visualize energy flowing out of the giver’s right hand and then being taken back in by the left hand. The person leading the healing ceremony keeps his or her left hand higher up on the receiver’s body than the right. This moves the energy flow

up the receiver’s body so the healing energy moves from toe to head. I like to place my right hand on the tummy and my left over the heart or forehead, but this depends on the patient. Place your hands where both of you are comfortable. Others can place their hands on his head, feet, or sides of the trunk.

If everyone is comfortable with prayer, say what comes from your heart, such as “Dear God, Dear Spirit, please make us instruments of your healing energy, your love, your oneness, and your wisdom. Please help us to get out of the way so you may come through.”

You may want to play soft music, close your eyes, and for fifteen or twenty minutes sit together quietly keeping the contact. At the end of the session, the patient is usually peaceful and relaxed. Consider a closing prayer: “Dear God, thank you for allowing us to be instruments of your love.”

The intention of helping is all that is needed to conduct a healing ceremony. There is no skill involved, just the desire to help someone you care about. Practice the ceremony once or twice a day depending on the receiver’s wants and needs.

Dealing with Shame

Shame has been with me as long as I can remember. Thank God, I feel it much less than I used to. However, I still feel flashes of unworthiness at times. I know my personal history and the source of shame in my psyche. I’ve done lots of psychological work. Will I ever be free of shame? It would be a blessing.

DORIS HELGE: We all have feelings of unworthiness or shame, and most of us want to banish them so we can feel more worthy and self-confident. A multitude of tech-

niques for “letting go” of negative feelings have been designed. They work to a degree. Yet most of us discover that when we push strong, unpleasant feelings such as shame, anger, fear, and sadness away, they return to our doorstep. In fact, usually the feelings are magnified!

The unpleasant feelings we judge so harshly arise specifically so we can dance into new layers of joy, self-worth, love, and peace. Negative emotions are innate resources. We just have to learn how to use them—not feel victimized by them.

If we tried to shield our children from ever experiencing painful events, they would grow up to be shallow individuals unprepared to meet life on its own terms. The same is true for us.

Your past experiences have shaped your life. You’re a stronger and more compassionate person than someone who hasn’t faced your difficulties. Your unpleasant experiences have served you, even though you wouldn’t wish them on anyone. It is our discomfort in life that drives us onward. We decide we want and deserve more and better.

When we allow ourselves to experience—vs. resist—feelings of unworthiness, we graduate to higher levels of self-confidence and happiness. This is because pain and pleasure sit side by side in our brains.

Begin to picture your unpleasant feelings as compost piles that are nourishing and creating higher levels of joy and self-love, and you will stop judging them and labeling them as “bad.” You will simply experience them and amazed at how quickly your negative feelings change on their own.

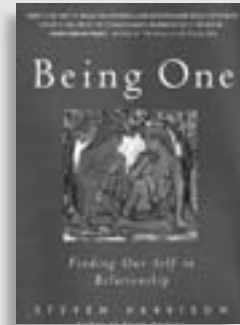
Think of a time when you tried to avoid being in a grumpy mood.



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Chances are the more you battled your mood—trying to change it and to be pleasing to others—the longer you felt out of sorts. When you finally gave in and admitted to yourself or others that you felt grumpy, you were probably surprised at how fast your grumpiness transformed into a positive mood.

The way to a beautiful oasis is through the heart of the desert. The trip through the desert is much faster and easier when we don't dawdle, wailing and berating ourselves for planning a walk through the intense heat. Judgment is truly a self-created prison.

Life was never meant to be a struggle, even though our culture has made struggle an art form. Shame and feelings of unworthiness are simply a part of the human experience. We're here to experience the totality of life and to grow

in the process.

Why is it that babies grow and develop so much more rapidly than adults? You've noticed that babies cry one minute and laugh the next. Generally, they have profound energy and zest for life. Babies don't judge the circumstances of life or agonize over why they feel unpleasant feelings. Therefore, they bound from one learning experience to the next and are generally happy.

We can zip through our challenges with the speed of an infant or a small child once we learn how to use unpleasant feelings such as shame or unworthiness to propel ourselves to their opposites—the self-confidence, self-love, and joy we have been seeking.

JEREMY TAYLOR is a Unitarian Universalist minister, author of *Dream Work, Where People Fly &*

Water Runs Up Hill, and *The Living Labyrinth*, co-founder and past president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. Jeremy lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area. He and his wife, Kathryn, lead "Myth and Dream Tours" focused on the sacred narratives and celebrations of other cultures and their universal/archetypal layers of meaning. www.jeremytaylor.com

NANCY J. NAPIER is a marriage and family therapist in private practice in New York City. She is the author of *Getting Through the Day* and *Recreating Your Self*. She leads workshops for professionals and the public on spiritual and psychological wholeness and other topics.

BARBARA HARRIS WHITFIELD, author of *Full Circle: The Near-Death Experience and Beyond*, is a researcher, near-death experimenter and transpersonal body-centered therapist in private practice in Baltimore and Atlanta. Ms. Whitfield spent six years researching the aftereffects of the near-death experience at the University of Connecticut Medical School. She is a board member of the Kundalini Research Network, was on the executive board of the International Association for Near-Death Studies, and is a consulting editor and contributor for the *Journal of Near-Death Studies*.

DORIS HELGE, Ph.D., is author of *Transforming Pain Into Power—Making the Most of Your Emotions* and journal and magazine articles. The book includes a workbook to help transform painful experiences into personal empowerment. Dr. Helge presents keynotes, seminars and workshops internationally, and works with Fortune 500 and other companies. •

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Practices

Continued from page 32

will eventually manifest mentally and physically. This is a law. If we violate the law ignorantly we will pay for it, but we will probably not know when we are paying the price. On the other hand, if we violate the law knowingly, the price will be much higher, because we know the price, and we will know when we are paying it. The guilt that comes with knowing makes the burden much heavier to bear.

Let us ponder about inappropriate behavior and how that violates our inner integrity. We cannot allow our anger and frustration to pile up, only to release it like a cannon blast. Whenever we do this to anyone, it has lethal psychological consequences. Anger and frustration are a call for communication and understanding. The moment we experience these feelings is the moment to talk to the person or persons we feel angered or frustrated by. It is impractical and ineffective to allow anger and frustration to accumulate. Why? Because it will block our capacity to communicate and it will deeply hurt anyone who does not have the understanding or strength to take it.

Many times as a teacher or group leader of any kind, we will feel deeply frustrated by the students' behavior. There is no place here for a negative display of anger or frustration. Compressed frustration and anger are one of the most destructive weapons created by humans. Yet, anger and frustration rightly understood are signposts that announce we need to communicate in order to reach an understanding. Out of understanding there is growth, out of aggression there is destruction.

Through spiritual understanding we can find a way to remain silent

and wait for inner guidance, and then we will find the words necessary to explain whatever is to be clarified and discerned. We cannot help anyone with a cannon blast of anger and accusations, but with words of understanding and the realization that he or she is spiritually whole, we can lift them up.

How can we make a contribution to the societies we live in and to the world (and that is ourselves, literally) more unless we begin to pour into it our own integrity? Integrity and love build societies, and they are destroyed by the lack of them. We must always do the best we know how—we cannot do any better. This way we will avoid feeling guilty and it will help us become aware when we have violated our inner integrity. This will help us make corrections swiftly and generously.

Fear and pride are the negation of humility. *Humility allows truth to appear in our lives.* Humility provides the ability to recognize our mistakes. Pride and fear, on the other hand, prevent us from recognizing them. Humility gives us the ability to recognize that we missed the mark—so, in a creative fashion, we must try again. Creativity has to do with humility and truth because through humility we stand before the infinity of our Being; then the doors of infinity open up and Creation pours through as spiritual expression—which is action. •

From "Mysticism of Now," by Rafael Catala. Copyright 1997 by Rafael Catala. Printed with permission from Acropolis Books.

Groups

Continued from page 12

rarely is addressed except between couples who are dedicated to in-depth communication. Mostly,

when emotional issues such as these arise people terminate their relationship, or at least they pull back significantly. At the end of Steve's meeting with them, the group energy was joyous. The two members who'd had the conflict walked out arm in arm. In solving this crisis, the group gained skill in dealing with issues of power as well as intimacy. The group, which basically functioned autonomously, received the help it needed and now continues forward on its own, able to deal with a deeper octave of emotional authenticity.

If we look to developmental psychology, seeking the support of the facilitator is not unlike young adults who leave home yet periodically call upon their older relatives for guidance. It is also similar to individual or family therapy where, after a period of regularly working with a therapist, the person or persons decrease frequency of contact and finally discontinue regular sessions with the understanding that, if they need assistance, an appointment with their therapist is just a telephone call away.

Training sessions for persons interested in becoming facilitators for leaderless, spiritually centered, and psychologically oriented transformation groups are now being formed through *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine. Three groups are being organized—one each in Los Angeles, Kansas City and New York City. These groups, which will meet for three weekends over the course of several months, will train facilitators by having them participate in a leaderless group with Steve. The dates of training will be announced when there are enough participants registered for each training program. For further information, or to register contact *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine. Call toll free at (800)775-6887.

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Heart of Awakening

Continued from page 56

of your fixed persona and becoming awake, liberated, and aware.

Starting on a spiritual path means leaving the superficial currents and getting into the deeper waters of real sanity. We're not just swimming against the stream here; we're actually plumbing the deeper waters of being in order to reconnect with our own innate nature. Where do we start? After he arrived in India in 1959, an old lama was asked, "How did you manage to escape from Tibet and cross the high and snowy Himalayas by foot?" He answered, "One step at a time."

The path, as always, begins beneath your feet with the first step you take. Where do you stand right now? This is where we begin. •

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From Our Readers

Continued from page 9

can choose to follow in the midst of personal crises.

Thank you again for this enlightening article. All your articles are inspiring and motivating, and I look forward to each of your publications.—*Sandy Conner, Kansas City, Missouri.*

E L O Q U E N T

So simple, so eloquent. Jim Rosemergy's article on despair, hope and faith in your Anniversary issue was a gem. He wove together so beautifully those three "companions" that accompany us on our journey that I know I will never look at despair the same way again. Now, when despair comes knocking, it won't paralyze me the way it has in the past. I will remember that as dark as the night gets, as small as the candle flame shrinks, just the thinnest sliver of hope will keep it burning until it eventually re-ignites faith and then burns through to a bright new dawn. Where there is life, there is hope. Thank you, Jim, for the reminder.

I also appreciated David Elkins' article and in particular, his story about Viktor Frankl, a survivor of one of Hitler's concentration camps. Reading about his life, his trials and his recollection of the day his life started anew gave me goosebumps. And reminded me, of course, that the trials I have faced and grumbled about are trivial in the grand scheme of life.—*Mary Norris, San Diego, California.*

C O M P A S S I O N I N A C T I O N

Congratulations on adding the *Compassion in Action* feature to your magazine. While reading, studying and working to try and grow spiritually is noble and worthwhile, the

efforts are brought to full fruition only when we act to benefit others' lives. I guess it goes back to that "practice what you preach" adage.

Millard Fuller was a great way to launch the series. Transformation occurs on a multitude of levels, and having basic human needs met is critical to moving to a higher level of consciousness. Habitat for Humanity truly has transformed the lives of so many people, at such a basic level. It is great to read stories about people who put their spirituality into action to help others. Their actions can only inspire and motivate others to do the same.

Keep up the good work.—*Cathy Morse, New York, New York.*

B O O K R E V I E W S ?

I was pleased to receive my copy of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. I am glad it came back to life and I look forward to more issues.

However, I missed the real book review section with Barbara N. Deal. The book reviews in this issue that just came were more like book advertisements. Will Barbara Deal be back?

I also missed George Jaidar's comments and saved the last one, "Are You a Closet Mystic?" It was thought provoking. I don't always agree, but it does get me to think. Will we see him again? I hope so.—*Ruth Nash, Manitowoc, Wisconsin.*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: We changed the book review section of the magazine in an effort to better serve our readers by including more titles. The bookstore shelves are lined with good books on personal and spiritual growth, and we want to give our readers at least a small taste of as many of those as possible. We plan to invite George Jaidar write an occasional column for the magazine. •

Awakening to Soul

Continued from page 46

in all that is spiritual and lofty, but who at the same time were afraid of the terminology in which it is expressed. What does this show? It shows that in childhood something was denied them, and now that they have grown up, although they feel a desire for it and although they want it, when they look at it in a form they are not accustomed to, they are afraid of it.

Is there even one soul, however materialistic, that does not wish to unfold? There cannot be. Every soul has been born to unfold itself; it is its innate tendency, it can not help it. But if the soul is deprived of the right condition, then it ceases to develop. Very often I have met people who did not believe in any particular religion, did not profess any particular faith or adhere to any outward form, but in whom I have seen great spiritual qualities nevertheless.

The water that nourishes the rose is the love element. If that element is absent from anyone's life, however great his intellectual knowledge and his desire to seek after truth, he will still remain backward. Unfortunately, this element often seems to be missing in cultural life. A learned man will say that it has no place in the world of reason, and thus he separates the outer learning from the religious ideal that is called the love of God.

What is it that takes the part of the sun in the life of man, as the sun takes part in the growing of the rose? It is intelligence. Everyone may not seem to be intelligent, but the soul itself is intelligence. When the intelligence is covered by the mist of impressions, of ideas of this earth, that intelligence becomes drowned in something, buried under some-

thing. When it is discovered, then it is as bright as the sun. The mission of Buddha was mainly intended for this purpose. All that Buddha wished to teach his disciples was to discover that pure intelligence that is above all reasoning and is the essence of all reason.

The place that air occupies in the growth of the soul is this: air is symbolic of the inspiration that comes to the heart that is prepared for it. And it is not by outward learning but by what one learns through inspiration that the soul is raised towards its unfoldment.

The space that is needed around the rosebush in order to let it grow means, symbolically, a wide outlook on life. A person may live a hundred years, but with a narrow outlook he will never see the light. In order to see life clearly, the outlook should be wide. There is much to fight with in life in order to keep our outlook wide, for the nature of our life in the world is such that it drags us down and places us in conditions where we cannot but be narrow. A great person is not great because of his merits, his qualities or reputation; the surest proof that a person can give of his greatness is his vast outlook. And it is wonderful to notice how, even unconsciously, people who have arrived at that stage, in whatever walk of life, automatically begin to show a vast outlook on life. What fertilizes this plant and makes roses bloom is, symbolically, the teaching given by the great masters of humanity.

How can one recognize this development of the soul in which the purpose of life is fulfilled? What are its indications, its signs? The soul becomes like a rose and begins to show the rose quality. Just as the rose consists of many petals held together, so the person who

attains the unfoldment of the soul begins to show many different qualities. These qualities emit fragrance in the form of a spiritual personality. The rose has a beautiful structure, and the personality that proves the unfoldment of the soul also has a fine structure: in manner, in dealing with others, in speech, in action. The atmosphere of the spiritual being pervades the air like the perfume of the rose.

The rose has seeds in its heart, and so the developed souls have in their hearts seeds of development that produce many roses. The rose blooms and fades away, but the essence that is taken from the rose lives and keeps the fragrance that the rose had in its full bloom. Personalities who touch that plane of consciousness may live for a limited time on the earth, but the essence that is left by them will live for thousands and thousands of years, always keeping the same fragrance and giving the same pleasure that the rose once gave. •

From "The Awakening of the Human Spirit," by Hazrat Inayat Khan.

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Widening Our Circle

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A human being is part of the whole, called by us "Universe;" a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.

Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures, and the whole of nature in its beauty.

TSL/MARK LEWIS