

# Lotus



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**Lotus**

**Journal For Personal Transformation**



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Society is a reflection of its people. As we are transformed, so is our society. We believe that personal growth and spiritual awakening co-evolve and are intricately related and that such growth is facilitated by *thoughtful reading*. *Lotus* hopes to energize, stimulate, and inform readers on their journeys of self-awakening and inspired living. *Lotus* is dedicated to providing resources for personal and spiritual development. Our purpose is to provide our readers with the most thoughtful writings available, current and time honored.

We chose the name *Lotus* because it is one of the most sacred symbols from antiquity. The seeds of the lotus contain, even before they germinate, perfectly formed leaves, the miniature shapes of what one day as mature plants they will become. This is a powerful reminder of the vast potential within us to manifest our essence, to be the grand men and women we were meant to be.

# From the Editor...

**“W**hat brings you here?” In order to transform our lives we need to ask some questions. We need to know why we are here and what we want to change. We have to look within. To grow we need focus; we need awareness. To be aware of ideas, feelings, motives, habits, and body sensations. Making changes is easier when we are conscious of our inner world, when we know what we are dealing with.

Responding with honesty to the right questions can bring us awareness. Questions like, “What’s really important here for me?” “Does this decision or action demonstrate my values?” “What do I say if I tell the truth?” “This is my familiar way; is it still right for me?” “How am I expressing my feelings?” Questioning is a way to connect us with our deeper selves.

To receive the gifts through questioning we have to be willing, willing to face our beliefs and feelings. Although we may be nervous about self examination, the thought of gaining freedom from limiting, pessimistic, and childish beliefs provides us courage to examine our thoughts. The promise of joy sustains us as we release trapped feelings. Just one experience of peace of mind can empower us to tolerate the discomfort of inner examination. When we are open to experiencing all our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations, we can release ourselves from our past. We can live more in the present and travel on the road to inspired living.

To benefit from the insight that comes through questioning, we have to notice. Simply and earnestly NOTICE. We notice the conversations in our head. Some voices argue, some whisper, and others are as clear as a bell. We pay attention to our body: to the sensations in our chest, heart, stomach, head, and back, and throughout our physical being. We observe what we are doing and link our behavior to patterns. We identify habits. We make note of our emotional responses. We discover motives and fears. We become conscious of our inner world. We can cast away outdated decisions and ways of coping that no longer work. We tap into a wealth of knowledge about our ideals, aspirations, and true nature.

When we are aware, we can live with clarity. Vague aspirations and questions of identity evaporate. We become intentional. We respond to life with wisdom and plan according to our ethics. We understand and accept ourselves and are therefore more loving.

“What brings you here?”

Welcome to Lotus



Mary NurrieStearns  
Editor

*Lotus, The Journal of Inner Peace, Mindfulness and Compassionate Living, (ISSN 1056-3954) is published four times a year (September, December, March, June) by Lotus Publishing, Inc., 4032 South Lamar Blvd. #500-137, Austin Texas 78704, (918) 683-4560. Copyright 1993 by Lotus Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Annual subscription rates are: U.S. \$24.00; Canada and Mexico \$27.00; Other countries \$32.00. Single copies \$6.00; Canada \$7.00. Manuscripts, photographs, and art work are welcome and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The magazine cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited materials. Send submissions, address corrections, and subscription request to Lotus, 4032 South Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78704. Lotus is printed on a re-cycled paper that is made from 50 percent recovered materials, including 10 percent de-inked post-consumer waste.*

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# Letters



*The following are some letters from our readers. Telling stories of transformation empowers and reading them inspires. Thank you for sharing with us.*

## TOUCHED ME DEEPLY

The articles in my latest Lotus have truly touched me deeply. Every issue I have received, 3 by this time, reached to me in such meaningful ways but this issue, while I am in a time of transition, I felt with emotion. "When we are ready, the teachers will come."

In "Experiencing Abundance" the first paragraph brought me to tears as I realized how much grief I still feel at not having a mother who could ever love me or care about my life and the things that are important to me. We were never allowed to say "Mother." We always used the first names of our parents at their, or perhaps, her request. Her grandchildren can't just say "Grandma," either, it has to be "Grandma Donna." Maybe she thinks of herself as the "Grand Madonna."

I know some of her past, guess at the rest and why she is the way she is but I have never quite got past the expectation, whenever I call her, of believing that she will still want to hear about what is happening to me and my life and that she will love me. Your articles are helping me to face the

reality that I am the only one who can give my "child" the love she never had and that it is okay to grieve for the beautiful child that simply wanted to be loved for herself and not mother's expectations.

The article on TV truly opened my eyes to what a terrible detriment the medium is. I have lived with an addict for 43 years and am often disturbed by the "zombie" look. I've mentally used the term often, seeing a grown man slouched in mesmerization hour after hour. I do watch some of it but give thanks that I have so many creative endeavors and the spiritual path to take me away from it on a regular basis.

I thank God for the beautiful Magical Mandalas I create and for my music and poetry and for Lotus. Every piece from my brain and from your magazine is an inspiration that keeps me on track.—Betty Jo Olson, Twin Falls, Idaho.

## IN MY LAST RELATIONSHIP

Some lessons are so hard! I'm a reasonably healthy person. I'm curious, fun-loving, and have friends and family who love me. I read self-help stuff, so I know the dangers of centering my life around a man. I did it again in my last relationship, however. He

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### Letters

was entertaining and charming. Against my better judgment I became increasingly involved with him. You know the story. I justified his drinking, immaturity, and financial irresponsibility. At times the relationship was wonderful. But I had to ignore my voice telling me this was hurting. I had to ignore my fear when he wouldn't listen to me or follow through with his commitments. I had made a lot of personal growth the past few years and I was slipping back. Finally, I came to my senses and stayed away from him after one of our frequent flare-ups.

Let's hope I learned my lesson this time. I saw my therapist a few times to get me back on track. I'm focusing on my life again and rediscovering me. I learned a lot from this past relationship. Brenda Schaeffer's article *Loving Me, Loving You* came at the right time. I've read about addictive relationships before. This time more sank in! I've also been journaling and know that I am writing you to reinforce my recent decisions. Thanks so much.—*Kelly S., Boulder, Colorado.*

### TV ZOMBIE

This is my husband's story. He was a workaholic. Through his twenties and thirties, he worked sixty to eighty hours a week and thought about money all the time. In his early forties, he realized there is more to life than work and cut back. I was hopeful that we might get reacquainted but the TV got in the way. The last few years he has been hooked on TV. A true TV zombie. I

showed him your article on TV and even read him parts of it. It is shocking to see how powerful, toxic, and addictive TV really is. He's agreed to turn off the tube for awhile in the evening to walk with me. Wish us luck. I am angry at TV and welcome an article to use as ammunition.—*Betty Smith, Atlanta, Georgia.*

### TIME TO EXAMINE

Thank you One and All for producing such a wonderful magazine. I've just got my first two issues. I am really enjoying them. I am so proud that so many people out there are taking time to examine the really important things in our lives. Our Personal Transformations will make a difference to the people around us and therefore it is very important that we take that step.

Also Dear Editor: Could you tell me of someone who would be able to teach me meditation (or quieting the mind) through correspondence. Once again, my love to all of you and thanks for sharing that light.—*Kannan M., Singapore*

*Editors Note: Meditation is important for self growth. We are not familiar with meditation correspondence courses. We recommend that you make yourself familiar with several methods of meditation through books before you seek out a teacher.*

### ENCOURAGING IDEAS

I am so pleased with this fine publication. Every issue, I read thoroughly and thoughtfully...

# ISIS Ad

## Letters

then go back to study again ideas that are helpful. Recently, I marked some of the passages that seemed to speak to me and help in hard times.

It is very encouraging to read how your authors struggle with difficult times and change themselves—this helps us as we try to do the same. Also, the letters from readers are encouraging.

Anne Schaefer's recent ideas on people's ability to do their own work, that feelings need to be natural reminded me of a confusing time with a counselor. He wanted me to take a ball bat and hit a table. I wouldn't do it because I didn't have angry feelings toward the table. This was a point of disagreement between us because he believed that hitting this table

was necessary for me to grow and my refusal to do it showed my stubbornness. Anne Schaefer's belief that it must be natural is welcome. Also, the idea that the process can lead us through a different door from the one which we entered... helps to explore different ways.

Thank you very much for the encouraging ideas and beautiful publication. I hope everyone will renew their subscriptions to support our mutual learning together.—*B.P., Mount Airy, Maryland.*

## RESOURCES

I want to thank you for introducing "Lotus Resources for Growth" into your magazine. After reading certain articles, some of us yearn to know more about subjects. Your mail-order bookstore now gives us an easy opportunity.

An interesting thought came to me, spurred on by a book I ordered from your list —*Meeting the Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature.*

I was working my way through this book of excerpts and had arrived at a section on illness and health when I was struck with the flu. Unable to read — or do anything much except muse and moan — my mind drifted to recent readings. The phrase "disowned body" kept coming up in my reverie. Suddenly I was struck with the notion that people actually enjoy infirmities.

I don't mean serious or terminal illnesses, but I think we may well nurture our aches and pains, general malaises and lifelong weaknesses, "ititises" and "ectomies" ("...let me tell you about my oper-

# Omega Ad

## Letters

ation"). Why, however, would anyone want to be sick? From my own sick-bed, I took an inventory and this is what I found.

First — illness offers us an opportunity to experience our bodies. That usually forgotten area between head and extremities comes alive with pain. The bronchial tubes wheeze, the stomach hurts, the bowel feels funny, the back aches. We become fully aware of the body's usually incognito "powerhouse."

Second — illness provides a perfectly acceptable excuse for something we don't want to do. "I can't go to school today; I can't make that meeting; I can't start painting the house yet; I can't have dinner with my future in-laws." In my case, I couldn't even

get out of bed, much less go to a funeral I should have attended.

Third — illness gives life structure and the individual an identity. "I'm allergic to cats... cigarettes... aspirin; You know I can't eat shellfish; Remember I'm the one with the back trouble; Ever since my foot operation..."

Fourth — illness can be a plea for kindness. Someone with an infirmity needs to be treated politely and with consideration, certainly not bullied.

I am sure this last point could be explored in its many ramifications. Perhaps that will be my next project. Thanks for the book and tape list and thanks for the magazine. I wish it were a monthly.—*Bonita Treadwell, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*•

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# Becoming More Peaceful

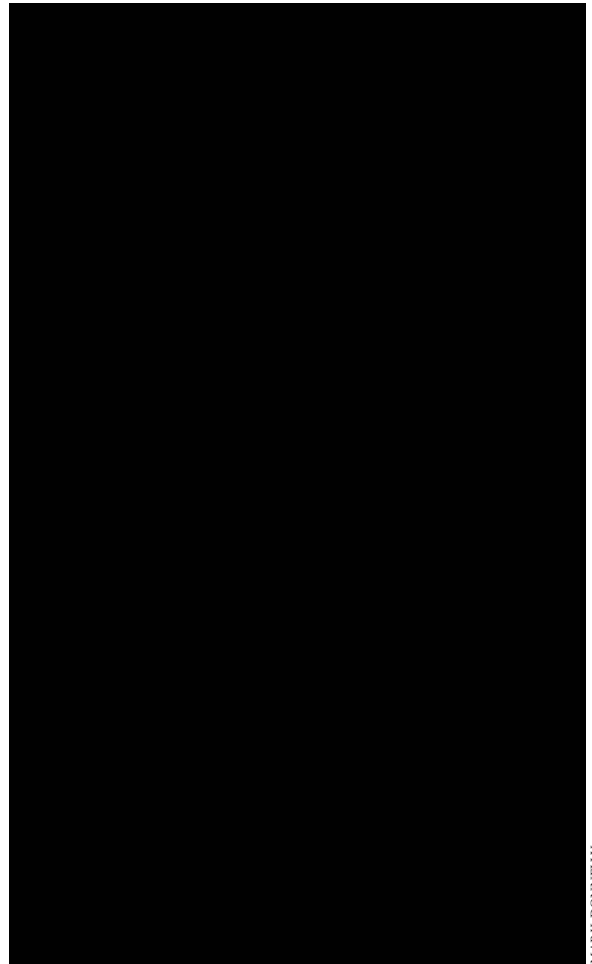
CONNIE GREANY

**M**y success is becoming peaceful. This has resulted from making choices, doing diligent work, and having a supportive husband and friends. Though I am not always at peace, I know how to find it more quickly and easily than I did several years ago. Even in my youth, I recognized peaceful people and idolized them. I knew that I really wanted to change. To do so, I had to go through a long drawn-out process of dealing with my anger. I had to find out where the anger was coming from. It related to my dad and alcoholism and things that happened growing up. I didn't really have peace until I confronted my dad with these issues.

Anger was causing me pain and hurting my marriage. Sometimes my attitude towards my husband fostered mistrust and anger, not love. I never knew where anger came from. I would suddenly be full of vengeance and resentment towards Jerry. After we talked, I would realize that he had done nothing wrong. Neither

had I really, but these feelings kept welling up.

It was my turn to have the family Christmas. All of the relatives were going to converge on my house. I didn't want to be a hateful person. What was going to happen was a big concern. I started talking with my husband and priest about my anxiety over having Christmas. That fall Jerry and I had a big fight. I went to a friend's house to talk. She kept asking me how I felt about my dad. I had my hands clenched. I started getting mad at her but she insisted, "I want to know how you really feel about your dad." And I said, "Why do you keep asking me? I already told you I love him."



*Connie Greany, Missouri.*

MARK DONNELLY



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My hands were white from clenching them. She said "I don't believe you." I started bawling and finally talking about what had happened. Later I talked to Jerry. I had never wanted him to know what had happened when I was growing up. I thought if I kept it a secret he would think I was a nice person. I was afraid he wouldn't love me if he knew. I realized that many of the arguments I had with Jerry related back to parents. Looking back, I realize that anger manifested itself in alcoholism, abuse, and addictions in my family. Even then, I knew that Jerry and I deserved better.

My priest told me that if I needed strength to confront the issues, I could get spiritual help through prayer. He also taught me how to forgive. With that support, I confronted my father through role playing and confronted my feelings by writing. I felt like I needed actually to confront my dad which I did before Christmas.

I talked to my brothers and sisters next. After planning the whole thing, I invited Dad to my house. I approached the situation by saying, "I would like to improve my relationship with Jerry and the only way I can do it is to confront some of the things that are bothering me." I told my dad the things I hated him for. I told him I forgave him and asked him to forgive me for my hate. He didn't respond. I said, "Well, I want to come over and touch you because that's how Jerry and I let each other know everything's okay." I put my hand on his shoulder and he stood up and held me for what seemed like a very long time. That was the first time I truly felt like my dad

loved me. I think that was the first time my dad ever felt forgiven.

I released myself from resentment by using imagination, visualization, and role playing. I tried to look at other points of view and to understand my dad. I learned to express my expectations to others and in a couple of cases to limit them. I became more creative because when I was upset, I would stitch, draw, or do pottery. Prayer helped me to focus my thoughts and to feel something else out there giving me strength.

One of the best things my priest told me was that if you've got something going on inside and you're unwilling to forgive someone, it poisons you. It takes away your emotional, physical, and spiritual strength. The only way you can move beyond is to let it go. You have to figure out how you can let it go. For me release was in expression. Sometimes I couldn't myself talk. I could only express it by crying or drawing.

I stayed with this process because I wanted to have a good relationship with Jerry . I knew that I had to make new choices to control my feelings. Previously, I put things in the back of my mind where they might get out of control like a volcano. When you compress something volatile, it comes up when you least expect it. I didn't want that to happen. Jerry was my friend and I loved him. I didn't want to hurt him in any way, so I decided to open up with him.

I have changed. Now I know how to forgive people when they hurt me. I know how to forgive myself. I know how to deal with feelings. I am more peaceful. •

## *Healing into Wholeness Eupsychia Ad*

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*An Interview with Elizabeth Harper Neeld*

*Interviewed by Mary NurrieStearns, Editor of Lotus*

# Taking Steps to a New Life

*The moment when we receive the news of the death or divorce and our normal everyday lives are shattered, we must choose to experience and express our grief fully.*

Elizabeth Harper Neeld is a former professor at Texas A&M University; her work includes sixteen books. She writes, lectures, and conducts workshops and seminars on loss, grief, and change. Her book "Seven Choices" marked the culmination of a comprehensive ten year study on change she launched in 1980. It provided the basis for the upcoming Public Television documentary on the Challenge of Grief.



**LOTUS:** Define the mourning process that you talk about in your book *Seven Choices*.

ELIZABETH: I did not know when tragedy struck my life that built into us humans is opportunity to live a process that is launched by loss. I did not know about healthy forms of grieving. I especially did not know that I had any participation in this process. Grief was something that had happened to me. I was the victim. I felt helpless and hopeless. I questioned my spiritual principles; this was healthy but felt like total devastation on top of tragedy.

This process is in everyone. Recovery is available for us all. We teach each other. After my young husband dropped dead jogging, I noticed that some people who had tragedy or enormous change happen to them gave up on life and some people were very vibrant and alive. I talked to people to find out what they did to become vibrant after their loss. I learned there is a process that follows a major change or a loss in our lives. It involves a transition period, a *limen*, that time in-between and in-between, when it's not the way it used to be and not yet the way it is going to be. Limen has the same origin as threshold, like the threshold of a door. I learned that making life-affirming choices would result in my reaching equilibrium. This process is transformational and liberating and begins in deep sorrow most of the time.

*You said this liberating process is available to us all.*

This possibility of making life-affirming choices as we move through the mourning process is available to every human being in

but to move through?

*Grief is so universal and is certainly not a new phenomenon. Why do you think that so many people don't successfully transform?*

every culture.

*If we live long enough we can't escape mourning.*

You're absolutely right.

*You say research suggests one out of three people don't experience positive resolution.*

Is that not a tragedy to our world that we do not recognize that there is a process to be moved through, not to be the victim of,

It's a complicated issue of course, but one force in our culture is denial about death or loss. Many people say, "Oh yes, she's just doing great." The best thing that can really be said is, "Oh yes, she's falling apart." "Oh yes, he's a basket case." Our culture won't tolerate that. Finding equilibrium is not the same as getting over

GEORGE WONG

## When Someone You Know Has Suffered a Loss

Family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors all want to help when someone they know becomes grief-stricken by the loss of a loved one. Too often, words and actions fail them — most of us just don't know what is helpful until we have lost someone in our own lives. Here are several suggestions that will help:

- Remember the three simple words people most appreciate hearing are, "I am sorry."
- Indicate a willingness and an openness to discuss the loss if the individual wishes to have a conversation.
- Acknowledge your own grief in the presence of the individual if you are also affected by the loss.
- Suggest ways the individual can physically take care of him or herself, for loss often dangerously affects the immune system, sleeping and eating cycles, the heart, and many other vital organs and functions of the body.
- Be aware that the experience of loss often affects a person's ability to concentrate, to see things from more than one perspective, to reason.
- Offer specific help, "I'll be over Saturday to mow the lawn" or "May I take the children while you visit your attorney."
- Recognize that the time of rebuilding, forging a new identity, and working through new conflicts related to life after the loss are as legitimate a part of grieving as the acute initial reactions to the loss.
- Provide support by continuing to be available throughout the entire grief process — until the individual has regained equilibrium and is no longer dominated by the grief.

*From "Seven Choices." Copyright 1990 by Neeld & Neeld, Inc.*

something. This experience becomes part of who we are, just like a stone in a mosaic. Our culture has said, "Don't talk about this and don't be honest about this."

*"Don't even feel it."*

The unacceptability of our feelings contributes to poor grief resolution. The hospice movement is making a huge contribution because hospice is saying it is honorable to discuss death. It is respectable to admit someone is dying. When people don't know how to feel their feelings and don't have societal permission to be authentic to their experience, many choose to stay stuck in their change process. Dr. Beverly Raphael in Australia said that she feared one out of every three people who has a traumatic change in his or her life does not reach peaceful or centered resolution.

*And we're in a society of such rapid change.*

We have to learn this process. We have to because we are going to have more change.

*When people don't resolve traumatic change what happens?*

There are several outcomes. For the rest of our days we live the change rather than living life. We live what has happened and our reactions rather than living our authentic life. We don't live life's mystery. We live reaction to the events that happened. It's so sad. Some of the specific outcomes are living illness perpetually; becom-

ing bitter, losing our dreams; not feeling connected spiritually; feeling helpless, lost, and empty; feeling like a victim; and experiencing life with no meaning.

*Without awareness that there is another way out...*

There is another way out. Viktor Frankl who had been in a Nazi concentration camp said, "It isn't what happens to us; it's how we choose to react to what happens to us." We are not helpless. It is not hopeless. There is nothing we can do about the events but we can choose to live this transformative liberation process and be launched by those events.

*I had a friend who said, "Embrace the struggle. Just keep embracing it. You'll come through it."*

I discovered in talking with people that there are specific choices that move us along the continuum and toward equilibrium again.

*Where are we likely to get stuck?*

The first place I got stuck is what I call the first choice, which is to tell the truth about our feelings and to feel them. A lot of us get stuck there because our feelings are terrible, painful, dark, or disruptive. We find it hard to tell the truth about our feelings and to feel them. I made that choice number one because if we are not able to face our feelings we are not able to live the process. That choice isn't optional; you have to do it. People are in touch with their feelings in different ways. For instance, when my young husband dropped dead, my father was 72. He was an old codger in the hills of Tennessee and a taciturn person. He was in touch with his feelings when fishing. He told me that while fishing he could talk to Greg and tell the fish what was true for him. Being in touch with our feelings and feeling them does

not look the same for everybody.

*So a person doesn't have to talk and cry a lot.*

Some people never do, and they can still be in touch with their feelings, feel them, and be authentic.

*Where else are we likely to get stuck?*

By identifying with the events that happened. Let me tell you what I mean with an example. A few months after Greg dropped dead I was having dinner with a friend who brought another guest. This guest cried all through dinner. She boo-hoo'd when the desert menu was brought. I knew her husband had died. When we left the restaurant I said to the woman, "I'm really sorry your husband died. How long has he been dead?" She said, "Eighteen years." At that moment I made what I call the choice to make a turn. I chose to make a turn internally. I said to myself, "Elizabeth, no matter what it takes, eighteen years from now you are not going to be walking across a room carrying this cardboard widow cut-out in front of your face." That woman had been seduced into identifying with what had happened to her. She had become a widow.

*So that was her identity?*

That had become her identity. It is very seductive to become our stories. It is a real paradox. In many ways we are saved by telling our stories. There is a point where to continue to tell our stories costs us our lives. We become identified with the story. We have to make a choice. We say, "My external world is different; it is no longer consistent with my internal world. I will now do the work, whatever it takes, to make those two parts of myself and my life consistent. Internally, I must somehow align with the truth of the external world, the change, and move with it." It's what you said, about embracing. Move with it and

make a turn.

I will illustrate one more place we get stuck. I call it the choice of working through. It is the willingness to work through the new problems that come because we are taking action towards a new life. A lot of folks think that when they start living life consistent with what has happened, everything will be okay. For example, I was going to do some small remodeling to my house to bring in more light. To add a skylight I had to move the walls of my late husband's office. I had to sell the office furnishings and let the wall be torn down. I had a whole new set of problems. I felt much of the pain and sadness that I had felt shortly after he died, two years earlier. The easy thing to do was cancel the project. The hard thing to do was choose to work through. Problems came as a result of my new actions.

I see people who do not identify with their events. They express their feelings authentic to who they are. But when the new problems come, because of the need to take new action, they stop. They stay stuck. Those are three examples of three places that are a danger point in the process.

*Please discuss the seven choices.*

The first one we've talked about. The choice to tell the truth about our feelings and to feel them. The second choice is to endure through darkness and blackness, through depression, hopelessness, and helplessness. In Old English to suffer means to allow yourself to be subjected to something that may be painful. When we are in depression or darkness the positive choice is to allow yourself to suffer that place, to allow and endure it. That is a very

## The Grieving Process: Phases and Choices

**Impact:** The moment when we receive the news of the death or divorce and our normal everyday lives are shattered. We must choose to experience and express our grief fully.

**Second Crisis:** The bleak periods of hopelessness and loneliness when we realize how devastatingly empty our lives have become in the absence of the loved one. We must choose to suffer (allow to happen) and endure.

**Observation:** A relatively quiet time of self-reflection when we stop dwelling on the event and begin to focus on how we are reacting to it. We must choose to look honestly at our situation and ourselves.

**The Turn:** The point at which we begin to think realistically about the future and realize that we must make long-term adjustments to our loss. We must choose to make an assertion, to proclaim either in words or in actions that we will go forward.

**Reconstruction:** The period when we begin to set goals and we dream about the future. We bravely start to build a new life without being certain of its outcome. We must choose to take action.

**Working Through:** The difficult time when problems and challenges related to our new life begin to conflict with those from our past. We must choose to acknowledge and address these conflicts.

**Integration:** The gradual return to a state of balance. We recognize our grief but we are no longer paralyzed by it. We must choose to continue to make choices.

.....  
*From "Seven Choices." Copyright 1990 by Neeld & Neeld, Inc.*



life-affirming choice.

The third choice is to look honestly. This is where we observe our own behavior. It is almost as if we are two people. We are the person the events happened to and we are the person observing us. This is very high state, this choice to look honestly. It allows us to sift through the past. This almost always involves solitude. This is a solitude of communing with ourselves. We ask questions. "How am I choosing to respond to this? Do I want to keep on doing this? Do I want life to feel like this forever? What do I want? What do I see here?" We find solitude in meditation, in prayer, and in walks in the woods. We find answers by the sea shore, while riding, dancing, or going to an aquarium. Looking honestly is such an important choice.

The fourth choice is to make a turn, an internal decision to live consistent with what has happened. We decide not to be identified with the event, not to take it as an identity. The fifth choice is at appropriate time to take the appropriate action. For some that means get a job. For some it is to be vulnerable to a new relationship, to relocate, to clear out a closet, to give away an item, or to have a conversation with somebody. We choose to take appropriate action at the right time. It's a dynamic process. You don't just make one turn, you may make a million turns. You don't choose to look honestly one time; you choose to look honestly for the rest of your life. The sixth choice is the choice to work through the new problems that come from taking new action. We choose to do that work. The seventh choice comes when these changes are integrated into our lives. We have become different. The choice now is to be willing to continue to make choices.

*Live and make the choices all*

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But a blanket  
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*over again...*

It is very dynamic. You learn the process; you learn the choices; then you make them in any order they show up in your life.

*And does that become a living process?*

It becomes your life. It becomes part of the very foundation about how you live your life. Then you are not afraid of change. To lots of folks any kind of change feels traumatic and devastating. Once you know that there is a process that you can move through toward equilibrium and spiritual peace, you are not afraid of change.

*In the earlier choices we deal with the reality of loss and the accompanying pain, then identification with the past. We turn to look at the future and finally live in the present.*

When you're at integration you are living in the present. You have integrated the experiences of the past and they are part of who you are now. You know peace and centered-ness. You probably have a greater sense of humor. Life becomes deep and spiritual.

*In our culture we use a lot of drugs during grief, especially medication for depression.*

It is very unfortunate that people are sedated to avoid their grief. There is a tendency in the medical profession to manage grief by giving sedatives. It does not allow a person to engage authentically in grief. Glen Davidson, in *Understanding Mourning*, cites statistics showing 87% of physicians in Illinois, prescribe barbiturates or tranquilizers as "standard care."

*Oh my goodness. That is appalling!*

That is the attitude in this culture. Give anti-depressants for grief, for something that is normal and healthy and life giving. People should take medicine that is life-giving for them. But a blanket attitude to respond to grief with medicine is very sad. We can't escape grief. If we don't deal with it through an active process, it will show up in another form. It will show up as illness. It will show up as accidents. It will show up as death. It will appear as meaninglessness and hopelessness.

*The temporary comfort of drugs can have some real long term ill effects.*

That temporary comfort can end up costing people their lives, metaphorically and literally.

*Let's talk about family and friends. How can we help mourners? And how can others help us mourn?*

Refrain from giving grieving people the benefit of your infinite wisdom. Refrain from repeating clichés like "every cloud has a silver lining," "there's a purpose to



all things,” and “everything turns out right.” Those statements are irrelevant when people are in the first phases of grieving. We need to be with people, not tell them things. We need to be with them in a way that they know that we are comfortable with, however it is they grieve. That’s the greatest gift.

*We honor the process rather than trying to alter it.*

We intercede if a person is stuck in identifying with the events that have happened. We may do what I call ruthless compassion and tell them there are other choices that they can make. The most important help though is to be willing to be with them in their process.

*You wouldn’t prompt people along in those early months?*

You would not make judgment or say, “You’ve already cried over that or already looked at those pictures.” This is a very recursive process. We make these choices again and again. The greatest support is to be present to that person’s process.

*By supporting another we also learn about the grief process.*

When we are able to be present to others’ process they are giving us a gift for our own process.

*When we are grieving, what we can ask from our family and friends?*

We ask for what we need. We ask for companionship. We ask for physical assistance. We ask for moral support. We tell our own truths. We don’t let ourselves be shaped or our process structured by how others think we ought to be doing it. We affirm our process and we do it consistent with who we are.

*We’re in a culture that says we should grieve for a week or two and be on with it. Our process is undervalued. We have to say, “This is my truth, my ongo-*

*ing grief.”*

It’s very difficult. It’s very important to surround ourselves with people during this process who have made life-affirming choices in their lives.

*How do we find those people?*

Here’s the good news. Research shows that it only takes one. The whole culture doesn’t have to change for us to be able to do this. You look for this person. You look for him or her in a support group or in therapy. I really believe in getting professional support as you move through this process. One of the greatest gifts we give ourselves is professional support whether it’s a spiritual teacher, or a therapist, or a grief counselor. Make a commitment to find this person. Sometimes you have at least temporarily to get rid of some old friends. There are people who are the happiest when things are going bad.

*...Who have an identity with suffering?*

They’ve made it a life style. We have to get away from people who are nay-sayers and surround ourselves with people who are yeasayers, who affirm good and bad, pain and ecstasy.

*How long do we grieve?*

There are two kinds of time to think about. There is Chronos time, measured by the calendar. There is Kairos time, measured by our insights, by our own inner movements, by our own inner truths. People make these life-affirming choices at different paces, over different amounts of time. Each has his-or-her own Kairos time. Chronologically this process is longer rather than shorter. Three hundred and some people were studied at the medical school in San Diego University. The average length of time to reach equilibrium following a major change was four years. It doesn’t depress me to think it’s

## Suggestions on What Not to Do:

- Do not try to comfort with clichés: “You’ll bounce back... He wouldn’t want you to cry... This will make you a stronger person... You can handle this... There is a reason this happened.”
- Do not avoid mentioning the loss and do not shy away from the individual’s expressions of pain, anger, or grief.
- Do not think the need for your support is over when the initial impact of the loss is over.
- Do not expect everyone to experience grief in the same way, at the same pace, or with the same intensity.
- Do not treat the individual as incapacitated, too weak or damaged to make choices and to take actions that allow movement through the grief process.
- Do not attempt to do the job of a minister, rabbi, or priest or the work of a professional counselor or therapist.
- Do not try to rush the individual through the grieving process for your own comfort or ease of mind.
- Do not expect the passage of time to heal all wounds, but recognize that the integration of a traumatic loss is determined over time by the individual’s choice.

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going to take four years or three years or two months. It doesn't depress me because it's not like you live in a cave during this time.

*It's not all miserable.*

This is life. When we are at equilibrium we are living this process as a way of life. We have changes every day. Tragedies happen. All of us know loss at some point. We are living this process and it's not all painful. It is dynamic, like a river flowing through all different types of terrains. Sometimes it flows through the rocks and sometimes it flows through meadows. To try to measure grief in chronological time is not useful.

*We are in an instantaneous culture that grants us a few weeks to grieve. Research that reports four years recovery time is permission giving.*

I agree.

*It is reassuring to know that one is not abnormal.*

It is a great relief for people to find out that they are not crazy or remedial. I thought I was a remedial griever because I misconstrued the wonderful work by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. The grief process she identified was for people who were dying, not for survivors. I tried to apply her ideas to my own life. I thought I was a remedial griever because I could never get to acceptance. Acceptance is not where you want to go. For most people acceptance equals resignation. Where you want to go is embracing the process, living the life-affirming choices, making the new moves when they are appropriate, working through the new problems, and suffering and enduring when that happens. Our process moves back and forth in a very fluid river. I thought I was deficient because I could not hop through those stages to acceptance and be

*The fear is gone... Once you have engaged in the process and made the life-affirming choices you know that you don't have to be undone by these things.*

done with it. Any process for dealing with changes for survivors has to include living life again.

*Which gives us hope.*

Hope lies in the recognition of this life-giving, life-affirming, transformational process. Some medical researchers assert it is built into our genes. Dr. George Polluck from Northwestern Medical School believes that this process of going from dis-equilibrium to equilibrium is built into the human cell system. The process is our hope. We have a choice making mechanism in our brains. We have this gift of being able to make choices. There's wonderful hope here.

*Hope is also in our knowledge that after we have chosen to live this process we don't numb our-*

*selves. We live fully.*

We become enlarged. We become more who we are through this process. We have more compassion for ourselves and the world. We have more confidence. It is ironic that we end up with more self-esteem and more confidence. We suffered and endured but we know that the process leads to equilibrium. No matter how terrible it is at any point it is not an end point. That is Hope. It makes me happy.

*Please discuss how this process leads us to a deeper connection with our spiritual self.*

After we choose to look honestly we began to be in touch with the spiritual part of ourselves, our spiritual core. Looking honestly involves solitude and communing with oneself. It involves observing ourselves. In quietness we start to hear the inner voice. In stillness we hear with much more hearing. We hear the inner voice of wisdom, God's voice. When we look honestly we are making the opportunity to be in touch with ever present wisdom. We quiet down and are more available to connect with a deep river of wisdom. As we take new action and work through the problems, we integrate the choice of looking honestly. We learned through trial and error to wait with patience. Wisdom will come as we reach equilibrium. Having these experiences is part of the flow of our lives.

*What about transcending experiences of feeling connected to something beyond self?*

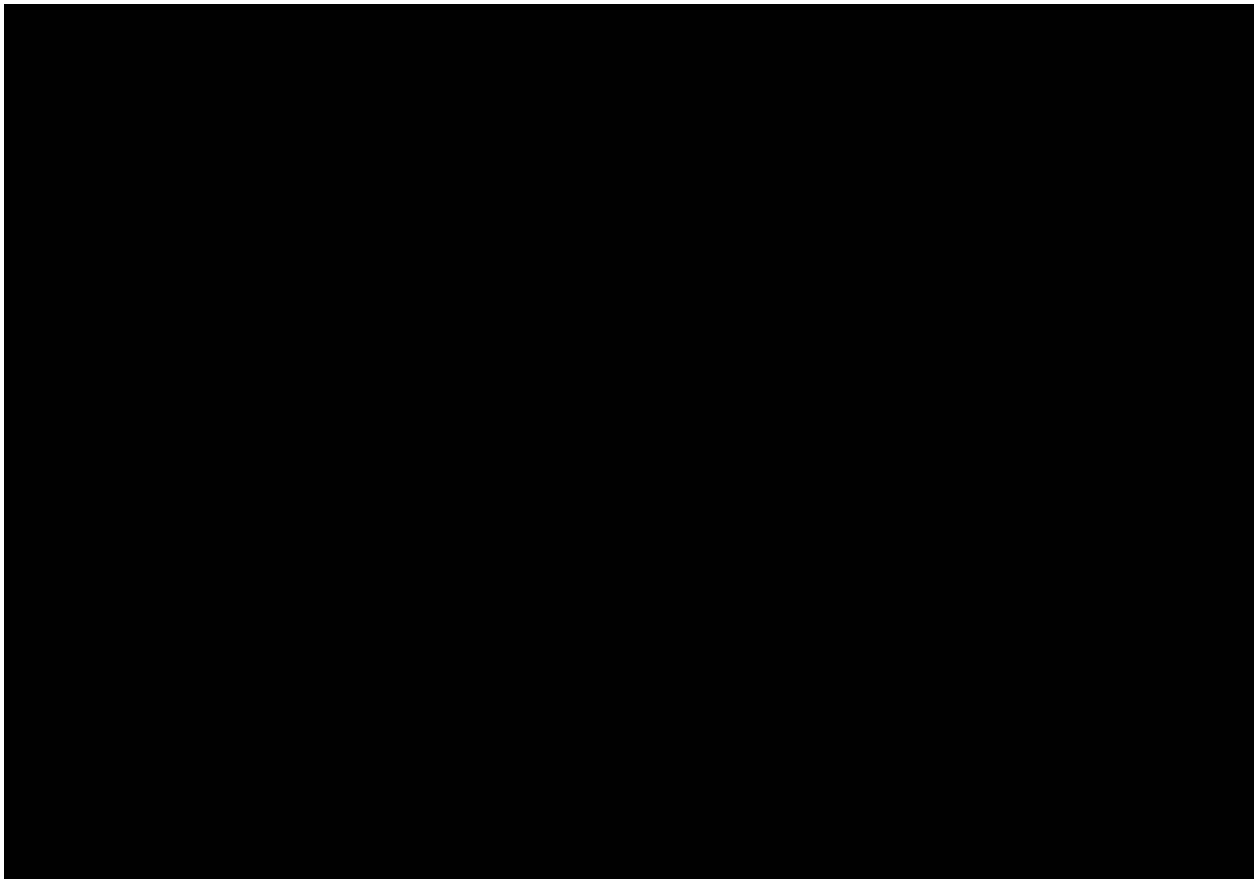
That happens in a very natural way. It's a moment of total transcendence, of other-ness, that sweeps over us. It's like an oceanic wave. It gives us mystery and holiness and it forever changes us. One of those moments alters us for a lifetime. You don't seek those

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L U C Y O L I V E R

# Clarity, Will–Power, Creativity:

The Gifts of Spontaneous Meditation



MYRLEEN FERGUSON CATE

*Lucy Oliver was born in Australia. She moved to England in 1972. She is trained in the Saros tradition of meditation, which she has taught for more than twelve years.*



**M**editation arises naturally when the conditions are right, and people often seek out the conditions without realizing what it is that draws them to the experience. For example, one of the characteristics of such situations is repetition. You can imagine our earliest ancestors sitting around a fire and watching its flames licking upwards and flickering, holding their translucent outlines but continually changing, swaying and leaping off at a point into the darkness. When vision is held by watching the fire, words tend to die away into an inner reverie and, for moments, even wandering thoughts sink into silence and there are only the flames. When this happens, meditation enters.

The same can occur to a watcher on the bank of a river, whose attention rests lightly on the swirls and eddies of the current, on the perpetual fans of water round rocks in the stream, on the slow procession of leaves floating into and out of vision.

The combination of the sight and the steady sound of rushing water may produce a similar effect by a waterfall or if your attention is caught by a repeated sound such as the cooing of a dove in the morning, a soft little sound always the same, yet always subtly different. There are forms of music, notably Eastern modes or Gregorian chant, which lend themselves to inducing meditation—music without distinct melodic lines that carries on and on without seeming to arrive anywhere in particular, but in which

the notes and patterns are always fresh to an ear which hears them with a relaxed, alert attention. The experience differs from being lulled into a light stupor or doze; and no emotion, as it is commonly considered, is present. Music which raises a strong emotional response can produce a temporary state of heightened energy and

**You do not have to push the body to its limits or dance with death to bring about a state of clarity, power, and expanded perception. There is a much more economical way...**

feeling, but this is not meditation.

Some types of rhythmical movement are linked to natural meditation. Swinging or rocking—whether in a rocking chair or in the rhythmic sway of Jewish prayer—is an instinctive action conducive to it. Walking is another, and many a dedicated walker or rambler knows the state which can arise after hours of solitary walking when the internal monologue is finally exhausted and the steady plodding of the feet takes place in

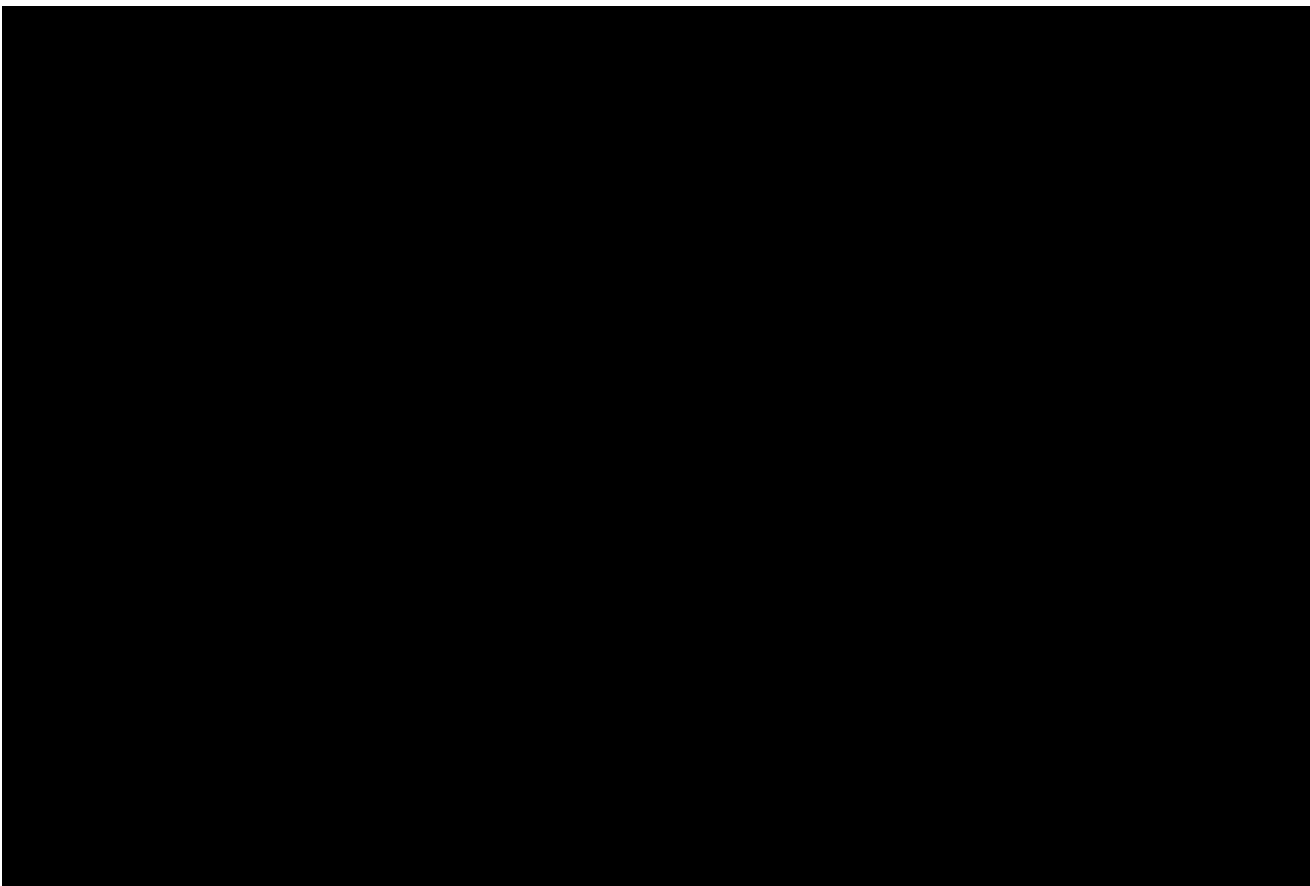
an internal silence. The senses are actually very acute and the cry of a bird overhead strikes into the silence as if laden with significance. There is a sense of everything being full of meaning, poised, and about to be grasped. Then you think about it, and instantly the familiar self reasserts, your usual thought processes return, and suddenly you are hungry, or in fact rather tired and looking forward to reaching your destination.

But that brief space when it seemed “you” were not there, and only the world was, has fed something, rejuvenated a nameless part in a way which makes the day worthwhile and slightly wonderful. “You” were present doing the watching but as an objective observer, part of, yet apart from that observed. All the trappings of your personality and personal view, which normally interpose between that which sees and that which is seen, had somehow dropped away. Suddenly a more essential You, different from your personality, was seeing; and essence beheld essence.

#### *T H E M E C H A N I S M*

There are certain conditions which facilitate such instances of spontaneous meditation. The body tends to be out of its normal patterns, either very relaxed or wearied. This affects the rhythm of the breath, which in turn calms the feelings and establishes an emotionally tranquil and receptive state. In addition, there is usually some form of repetitive stimulus which acts as a device for sidestepping the continuous mental babble of associative trains of thought and feeling which occupy any unconcentrated mind.

This internal babbling constitutes an obstacle which is very difficult to bypass. Anyone who tries to make his or her mind go blank



AMY ETTRA

quickly discovers that it is almost impossible to put a stop to the internal chatter. It has a life and energy of its own; and the more you try to quash it directly, the more active it becomes, as if you are fuelling it in the attempt. Try it and see! A more indirect and skillful approach is required, which amounts to wearing it out. The perpetual self-generating mental activity dies away if it is deprived of the energy which keeps it running. Energy follows attention. When conscious attention is hooked by a gentle repetitive stimulus and held steady, energy is directed to this place and the associative engine runs out of steam. Silence ensues in what we ordinarily know as the mind. It is like opening oneself to a different dimension of experience.

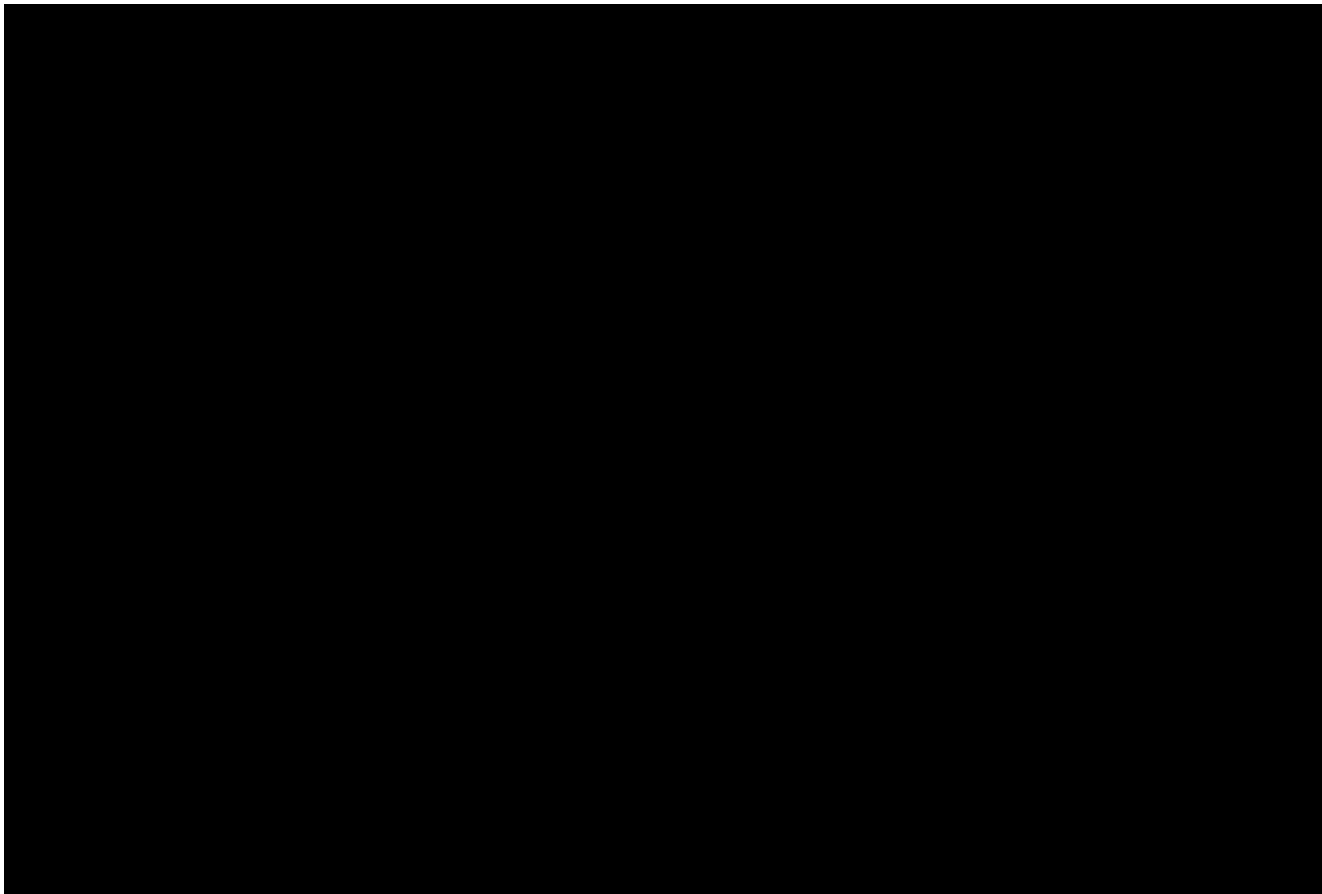
The silence, or space, combined with steadiness of attention, allows a particular sort of awareness, not normally present when

the familiar busy mind holds sway. It is a simple focusing, which is alert and open. The world looks different. Everything inside and out is subject to a completely different type of perception.

This is in no way comparable to losing one's grip on reality. Clarity and the *Ability* to focus are enhanced. Neither is it the same as concentration, which focuses down to a particular object, and therefore narrows awareness. The meditative awareness is wide, poised and potent. Its focus does not need to have a particular object, but rather resembles a shaping in the "substance" of the mind itself, a shape containing silence and perfect receptivity. When the organ through which we perceive the universe is in this "shape," the universe is not the one we habitually inhabit, and which we accept as "reality." Reality tends to be a name for what we have labeled. It changes as we alter the criteria by

which we demarcate and classify experience.

**E**xperiences of spontaneous meditation occur almost certainly to everyone, at some stage of life, though not all as full-blown as those collected in books which describe mystical experiences. It may be just a moment, quickly forgotten, when the world looks different, or an extraordinary peace descends, or everything seems to stop, or acquires an unusual clarity, or seems transparent and suddenly meaningful. It may be as momentary as the pause between the out-breath and the in-breath. For some people these moments bring about changes in their lives, even if they never try to recapture them, and would not know where to begin. Some may identify them with the religion they practice and receive a boost in their faith. For others, they are quickly buried as too strange and momentary to be



MYRELEN FERGUSON

believed, too unfamiliar, too unnerving.

Other people again go to extraordinary lengths to recreate the conditions in which such moments occurred or may occur. Sex can be used in this way, and mountain-climbing, exploration and treks through difficult terrain, sport, racing cars, testing fighter aircraft. What compels people towards all kinds of challenging, dangerous or emotionally demanding pursuits is that, under extreme conditions, the normal modes of functioning which shield us from immensity may cut out. Such situations knock out personality and force people to the edge of themselves, the edge of endurance or the edge of death where something else takes over. The results are well documented: a surge of power; renewal of energy; an opening out into a space of clarity, insight, carefreeness and detachment; intimations of immense

potential, of joy, of peace, of feeling more and more alive. These states are of ultimate value to those who encounter them, such that they justify all the effort, and indeed the desire to re-create them may become a drive shaping a person's life, beside which all other activities are secondary.

#### MAINTAINING THE MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE

Experiences of spontaneous meditation raise important questions. Do they have to be so brief? To what extent are these meaningful states dependent on setting up *external* conditions? Those moments when a curtain seems to lift or be rent, when a thick cloud or stone rolls away, when it feels as if some heavy garment or set of veils has been shed—are they by nature only fleeting and fortuitous, occurring just when conditions can be manipulated or arise

accidentally? If such experiences are so rare and difficult to achieve, they would seem to be rather irrelevant to the average sort of person leading an average sort of life!

You do not have to push the body to its limits or dance with death to bring about a state of clarity, power, and expanded perception. There is a much more economical way of doing the same thing, which because it is not tied to physical conditions also allows a more enduring experience, irrespective of circumstances. There is the art of meditation.

Meditation is a systematic procedure for bringing into conscious (that is, ordinary) life the dimensions of being which are part of our normal potential, but which otherwise remain unconscious, or are but fleetingly and erratically experienced. A changed perspective, and all that goes with it in the way of energy and clarity, can be through meditation sustained



for longer in the life of an individual, and become more and more normal instead of extraordinary. No extremes are needed, no extraordinary conditions, and there are no pre-requisites of personality, skill, cleverness, or anything else except intention and will.

### *T H E M I N D I N I T S P L A C E*

Meditation techniques have evolved on a very practical basis and all methods work on identical principles. There may be complicated or inspirational philosophies elaborating upon them but the methods are basically simple and designed to get over the big problem of the traveling circus of the mind. You have to find a way to disestablish its dominion. It comes down to a procedure for “sneaking past” it by giving it something with which to occupy itself, while the self-aware and observing You, who are not the same as your mind, grow like a crystal in the space which appears. Then the mind with all its abilities becomes a useful servant. The function of a meditation technique is not to control anything or to block anything, but to act as an anchor and guide for finding out more about the mind and its characteristics and for bringing into operation faculties which belong to a wider organization than the mental processes we know as the ordinary mind.

### *B E I N G*

A human being is much bigger in size than the form enclosed in skin. The latter is merely its physical body. Each individual being however extends as far as its interests and preoccupation’s reach, that is, to the limits of its day-to-day awareness. The things which make life meaningful for you are setting the parameters of your

being. You could almost see people as interpenetrating spheres, overlapping where their interests and occupations come together, but each with a focus of identity which maintains its integrity as an individual being.

Some people are “bigger” than others. You know when you encounter a really “big” man or woman. His or her presence is not only stronger, seeming more con-

**Meditation is not about avoiding conflict or about achieving some sort of harmonious platform where the push and tug of conflicts cannot touch you.**

centrated and focused, but also extends a great deal wider, in an indefinable way. Contrary to expectation, a public figure, a politician perhaps, with a large range of responsibilities and weighty decisions to make for others, is not necessarily big at all although there are some who are. There may be a faint, borrowed extension conferred by publicity

and the attention of others but these factors are no measure of the extent of being.

There is no objective standard for measuring it. It is a question of presence. Presence can be perceived almost like a field of energy surrounding a person. It is difficult to “take the measure” of such people because they may seem to transcend familiar stereotypes. For example, occasionally someone enters a social gathering and nearly everyone in the room is aware of him or her. It has nothing to do with the person’s appearance or witty conversation, nor with extrovert behavior or any form of attention-seeking, but there is a quality of power and self-possession which compels respect. The qualities of presence cannot be counterfeited. It is not a matter of wide interests but of a life and being on wide foundations. Having a lot of cosmic or spiritual ideals does not extend awareness, nor does diffuse thinking and emotion in any way ‘raise’ consciousness.

Largeness of being is difficult to categorize but perceptible, and it is invariably accompanied by a life-style which is strong, clear, and disciplined—for good or ill; it may not necessarily be turned to positive ends. A capacity for self-discipline is necessary because the energy which is spent in useless and self-imposed suffering, stress and emotional difficulties is the energy which is needed to feed the growth of being. Energy for living is a finite store and much depends on where it is directed and how positively it is managed. Suffering, for example, can either generate energy or drain it. So can relationships. The transformer is consciousness.

Living is a skill. The pursuit of excellence in any field demands discipline and the exclusion of much that is not relevant to, or



that works against, achieving the goal. Indeed the higher your aspirations, the more your life-style must be organized. There is not only a limited amount of energy but a limited amount of *time* available, and neither can be wasted if particular skills are sought. The effort of self-discipline is even more critical if what you seek is not a particular skill but a question of knowing more and being more, of becoming bigger as a person in the sense we have been discussing. The "muscles" or skills involved in this primary enterprise of living more creatively are the mind and emotions. If either mental processes or emotional foundation is flabby or chaotic, they cannot do the job. The greatest assistance for the growth of being is a method for maintaining an overall direction, for setting standards, and for resolving the conflicts of life creatively. Meditation offers a method of this kind.

### THE ROLE OF CONFLICT

Living is full of conflicts on the grand scale and on the personal scale. It could almost be said that life is a study in conflict, from the struggle of saplings to reach the light, to the struggle of different species of animals to survive in the one environment, or of people aspiring to the same job, and so on. If conflict were eradicated, so would be life as we know it.

Meditation is not about avoiding conflict or about achieving some sort of harmonious platform where the push and tug of conflicts cannot touch you. It is a widely prevailing notion that the peace which the struggling human heart seeks is of this order but if it were so, the state achieved would not be one of more abundant life. It would be the imposition of an unreal desire, an idol, like resort-

ing to the worship of a golden calf when the trials of wandering in the desert in the service of a living god seem too much for one's faith or will.

In fact, beginning meditation creates more conflict rather than less. For example, there is the conflict to do with time. Finding the time to meditate in a busy life means a continual reaffirmation of the decision as to whether meditating is really employing time more fruitfully than doing task X. The instant you allow a focusing factor like the decision to meditate to enter your life, it will come into conflict with your established patterns of activity and with your internal "freedom" to wander in every direction at the behest of your habitual patterns of thought and feeling reactions.

Conflict is unavoidable. You are continually in conflict with your environment in order to survive. Every breath you need to maintain your life destroys the lives of millions of microorganisms; if you occupy a house, thousands of other needy or homeless people cannot occupy it; if you have a job, there are others equally well-qualified who cannot have it; if you do not have a job, you increase the pressures on others. And so on.

Given that conflict is unavoidable, you are left with a choice of making it constructive, destructive, or futile. From constructive conflict life grows, from destructive it perishes, while futility is maintaining conflicts which need not be maintained. Every constructive/creative conflict has a destructive side. What is constructive for one objective is inevitably destructive for something else, but through a chain of balances and a hierarchy of interests, the harmony of life is maintained. Any ecosystem illustrates the principle, but

the complication is that every ecosystem exists within and serves a larger one as well. Only futile conflict benefits nobody.

You will not have to look very far to identify an example of *futile* conflict in your own life. All kinds of internal agonizing, anxieties, chronic bickering and bad feeling, either within yourself or relating to others come into this category. You will also see examples of *destructive* conflict without too much effort when some project or intention failed to fully materialize. Lack of money, lack of time, lack of will won the day and like a small sapling in the forest, the development which was initiated lost out to the bigger, more established trees. Not every tree *can* grow in the same space but as far as *you* are concerned, and your aim, the outcome was destructive. The mark of *creative* conflict is not only achievement in the face of difficulties but also whether you learned something. If you did, there was a creative element in the conflict (for you). For example even if you lose a particular "battle," if you have truly learned something, the conflict was to that extent creative for you. Everything you have ever achieved will have been at the expense of something else. The achievements which are most valuable and meaningful have a trail of at least internal conflict behind them, such as the overcoming of indolence or having to reject some other persuasive option and probably external conflict as well.

### WILL

In the end it is your will which both sets and maintains a course of action. You may choose to do something but the desire alone cannot carry it to conclusion.

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# *Your Golden Shadow*

**W***e can be much more than we are. Researchers regularly remind us that we utilize only a small portion of our potential for development. No matter how long we live, most of us tap into only a comparatively tiny portion of the vast internal resources available to us. The great reservoir of possibilities is our hidden self or shadow. Our shadow is our “private life,” as compared to the “public life” of our personality. This private life is so private that it is largely unknown even to ourselves. Our shadow is an unconscious force within us—a source of power and possibility that we can bring into consciousness and use creatively and constructively for a fuller and more enriching experience of life.*

William A. Miller is a former president of the Minnesota C.G. Jung Association. He is author of several books, including "The Joy of Feeling Good," "Make Friends with your Shadow," and "When Going to Pieces Holds You Together."



Because all human beings are capable of both great good and great evil, our shadow is likewise a source of both. The usual treatment of shadow is to perceive it as a dark, sinister counterpart to the bright *persona* we present to the world. Our shadow certainly is all that—it possesses the potential for the enactment of great evil. But the shadow is much more than that. It is the potential resource for the enactment of great good. It can be the gold mine of our lives, and we may enter it to uncover its treasures and bring them to the surface.

Most of us intuitively know that there *is* more to us than meets the eye, but we are uncertain about how to bring the gold of shadow into consciousness. We may also be reluctant to act on a revelation of our Golden Shadow when, of its own accord, it taps us on the shoulder and suggests, "Try this."

Many people in their later years say, "If I could live my life again, I would take more risks, be more assertive, and exercise greater self-discipline." The discovery and fulfillment of our undeveloped selves peaks directly to these concerns. We don't have to wish for another chance at life. All of us, if we wish, can make these changes now.

A concept such as the "the Golden Shadow" conjures up all sorts of images in our minds. Shadows themselves are not particularly inviting; they seem to bode ill because of their darkness. We are almost intuitively reluctant to approach darkness because

*The Golden Shadow is the potential resource for the enactment of great good. It can be the gold mine of our lives, and we may enter it to uncover its treasures and bring them to the surface.*

of the unknown and the indistinguishable within it.

Gold, on the other hand, is highly to be desired. It is precious and valuable; it offers promise because of its great potential. We are drawn to it and eagerly surrender to its drawing power, hoping to possess it and capitalize on the multitude of possibilities it promises.

How can there be gold in the shadow? The concept of "Golden Shadow" almost appears to be a contradiction... unless, of course, it is possible to perceive the brilliance of gold in the darkness of shadows. The concept becomes intriguing as we consider the pos-

sibility, and our interest grows cautiously. We want to seek the gold, and this desire gives us more courage to risk the foreboding darkness and the unknown of shadows. Soon we are on our journey, our quest for the Golden Shadow.

A woman once told me in all sincerity that she had no shadow. It was during a retreat for married couples where I had been speaking about the projection of shadow onto one's spouse in a marriage relationship; how it is imperative that we own our own dark side so that we do not unconsciously project it onto and accuse our spouse of our own shortcomings.

It was a Sunday afternoon in autumn. During the refreshment break this woman attending the seminar approached me at the coffee urn and pleasantly reported to me, "All this stuff about the shadow is very interesting and all but I don't have a shadow. I would never *think* of doing such terrible things that you say I have the potential to do."

She was a pleasant and bright woman who appeared to me to be quite genuine and authentic in her declaration. Her statement was not atypical; most of us initially find shadow concepts to be interesting observations, but not necessarily applicable to ourselves.

Before I could respond, however, a man approached. He acknowledged my presence but quickly said to the woman, "I'm going home now; I'll see you there," and turned and left. *Immediately* the woman's face changed from a pleasant smile to a scowl.

"That was my husband," she snarled. She was a slight woman, but feisty. As she spoke, she became quite animated.

I chuckled and started to say, "Yes, I gathered..." but those were the only words I got out.

"Do you know where he's going?" she interrupted.

"Well, he said he was going home..."

"Do you know what he's going to do?" she snapped.

"No."

"He's going home to watch that stupid football game. He's going home and sit down in front of that stupid television set and watch that stupid football game with a can of beer in his hand."

As she became more agitated, her animation increased and the volume of her voice rose steadily.

"I tell you I am sick and tired of his attachment to that stupid game and that stupid set. I call him to come to dinner and he calls back, 'Just another minute, honey.' I call him again, and I say, 'C'mon Harry, everything is on the table,' and he hollers back, 'Wait just a minute; I want to see this one more play.'"

By now she was speaking quite

rapidly and loudly, so that others from the seminar standing nearby had stopped their conversations and were listening intently. The woman went on, oblivious to them.

"I say, 'Harry! Will you come out here before everything is cold as ice!' And he yells back, 'Yeah, I'm coming. I just want to see if they're going to kick or try to run it.'"

"I tell you," she said to me with a steel-cold voice and fiery eyes, "I tell you, one of these days I'm going into that living room and I'm going to take that can of beer out of his hand and I'm going to pour it over his head and smash that can down on his bald skull..."

She ended in mid-sentence, her voice loud and at high pitch, her arm poised over her head, clutching an imaginary beer can. Suddenly she had become aware that there was no sound in the

room save her voice and that all eyes were on her, gleefully observing her performance.

She turned red with embarrassment and began to shuffle her feet. She straightened up and smiled a Cheshire cat smile. She giggled a nervous laugh and by then the hubbub of conversation had resumed.

The "woman with no shadow" had just experienced her first conscious glimpse of the dark side. This small, gentle woman who shortly before told me she "would never *think* of doing such terrible things" had just heard herself plotting to assault her husband with the intent to do him physical harm.

THE DIFFICULTY  
OF FACING  
SHADOW

Some may discount such an account as this and dub it only a humorous anecdote that one

should not take too seriously. "After all, people do tend to exaggerate things in colorful ways," they may say and want to let it go at that. This kind of response is fairly typical of those who are afraid that there might just be some truth to it all for them and will therefore not allow it to have any veracity at all. They either laugh it off as something not to be taken seriously or they become highly defensive and quite adamant in their denial of any shadow possibility within them.

And yet, if we are even slightly aware of ourselves, we know that experiences such as the above anecdote are far from rare. In fact, this turns out to be one of the clearest ways to identify our shadow's attributes—through slips of the tongue and slips of behavior. Any time we hear ourselves saying something we claim we would *absolutely never say*, we have come face to face with a facet of our personal shadow. Any time we experience ourselves doing something we have said we would *absolutely never do under any circumstances*, we have come face to face with another facet of our personal shadow.

These experiences are not uncommon occurrences to those who are aware of themselves. Since shadow is a part of us, it accompanies us wherever we go and is present in whatever we do. When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the children's poem, "My Shadow," was it only a children's poem about the shadow that our body casts when we stand in the light? Or was it about the dark and hidden side—the shadow side—of our personality?

*I have a little shadow that goes  
in and out with me,*

*And what can be the use of him  
is more than I can see.*

*He is very, very like me from the  
heels up to the head;*

*To discover our  
Golden Shadow  
we lay prudence  
aside and  
journey into the  
unconscious;  
and our labors  
are not  
unrewarded.  
The surprise of  
discovery may be  
shocking,  
healing, and  
growth-  
producing.*

*And I see him jump before me  
when I jump into my bed.*

*The funniest thing about him is  
the way he likes to grow—*

*Not at all like proper children,  
which is always very slow;*

*For he sometimes shoots up taller  
like an India-rubber ball,*

*And he sometimes gets so little  
that there's none of him at all.*

*He hasn't got a notion of how  
children ought to play,*

*And can only make a fool of me  
in every sort of way.*

*He stays so close beside me, he's  
a coward you can see;*

*I'd think shame to stick to nur-  
sie as that shadow sticks to me!*

*One morning very early, before  
the sun was up,*

*I rose and found the shining  
dew on every buttercup;*

*But my lazy little shadow, like  
an ardent sleepyhead,*

*Had stayed at home behind me  
and was fast asleep in bed.*

Most of us know more about our shadow than we think we know or even want to know. Shadow taps us on the shoulder quite regularly, pressing for equal time on the stage. But we elbow our shadow back to where it belongs and smile broadly to the "audience," assuring them that we truly are what they see. But shadow persists and begins to push and shove, and we nervously kick and elbow it back into the wings or down the trap door into the dark room under the stage, tensely shouting out of the side of our mouth and over our shoulder (so the audience cannot see or hear), "Shut up, you devil, and get back down there. Do you want to ruin me?" If we do happen to glance over our shoulder and get a glimpse of this dark counterpart, we quickly snap our head back front and say, "I didn't see that."

Children watching a horror movie will cover their eyes at a particularly frightening scene. But their curiosity is so great that they will spread their fingers ever so slightly to get a shaded glimpse of the terrifying pictures on the screen. Likewise we and our shadows.

There is no point in hedging or trying to disguise the possible fear of entering into our shadow. It is both attractive and repulsive, inviting and frightening. Because our initial perception is more neg-



ative than positive, we are more highly motivated to put it off than to enter into the journey.

*O U R R E L U C T A N C E  
T O L O O K I N W A R D*

We are not alone in our reluctance to make the journey inward. In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, psychiatrist Carl Jung describes a dream often dreamed by an unnamed Protestant theologian of his acquaintance:

[In the dream this man] stood on a mountain slope with a deep valley below, and in it a dark lake. He knew in the dream that something had always prevented him from approaching the lake. This time he resolved to go to the water. As he approached the shore, everything grew dark and uncanny, and a gust of wind suddenly rushed over the face of the water. He was seized by a panic fear and awoke.

The clergyman had dreamed this same dream many times. Each time was identical to the others. In the dream he has begun his journey inward, obviously in search. He has descended into the valley as he has numerous times before. In the past, however, he has gone only so far; he has stopped short of going further to the dark body of water. Since water is the universal symbol for the unconscious, we know that while the dreamer has apparently wanted (or has told himself he wanted) to enter into his unconscious for healing, for insight, for growth, he has stopped short each time. And it happens again. For in this dream, as in dreams past, he has become frightened and panicky because the experience suddenly becomes supernatural. Everything becomes dark and a spiritual power rushes over the dark water, a power that is so real and spontaneous it spooks the



JIM WHITMER

dreamer and he must flee by awakening.

Jung concluded that the dream is quite right in telling the man that down by the dark waters, foreboding as they are, he could “experience the working of the living spirit like a miracle of healing in the pool of Bethesda.” But the dreamer was still reluctant to journey ahead.

In the same volume, Jung tells of another theologian who dreamed that he saw on a mountain a kind of Castle of the Grail. He went along a road that seemed

to lead straight to the foot of the mountain and up it. But as he drew nearer, he discovered to his great disappointment that a chasm separated him from the mountain, a deep darksome gorge with underworldly water rushing along the bottom. A steep path led downwards and toilsomely climbed up again on the other side. But the prospect looked uninviting and the dreamer awoke.

Moving into the unconscious for the sake of self-discovery is hard work but it is rewarding.

What will we find? Shall we take the risk? This dreamer saw the very desirable goal of the "shining height," the mountain top, the peak. But to achieve the goal of ascending the mountain he had first to descend into the depths of the foreboding gorge and then climb the other side. It is a highly symbolic dream of the great quest.

This theme is repeated over and over in myths, legends, tales, and stories throughout the history of humankind. But people in general discount the significance of this great symbolism and believe the Grail may be won by a straight upward climb. This is particularly true of people in our Western culture, whose grail is only material with no spiritual interest who *do* climb the mountain and reach the peak without having descended into the gorge. Many, however, find the victory strangely empty and unsatisfying.

The dreamer was a cautious, moderate, judicious man. He chose to play it safe. Prudence was the better part for him. Certainly no one may be critical of such a decision. After all, did we not learn early on that if we do not look out for our own neck, who will? Where do we find truth, wisdom, spirit, insight, knowledge, understanding? Is it not in the heights? What is in the depths but refuse, slime, disgust, rot? Mythically, the spirits soar overhead in the heights; demons inhabit the underworld. Light is up; darkness is down. Heaven is above; hell is the pits.

In the face of such overwhelming "evidence," it is not too difficult to understand the "reasonableness" of the dreamer's choice in his dream. Many, if not most of us human beings live under this great hoax that "enlightened" civilization has perpetrated for centuries. After all, as Nathanael said of Jesus, "What good thing could come out of *Nazareth?*" (John 1:46).

Nathanael was wrong and the

hoax is just that. Returning to the dream noted earlier, Jung says,

For people who think in this way [the way of the hoax], spirit means highest freedom, a soaring over the depths, deliverance from the prison of the chthonic world, and hence a refuge for all those timorous souls who do not want to become anything different. But water is earthy and tangible, it is also the fluid of the instinct-driven body, blood and the flowing of blood, the odor of the beast, carnality heavy with passion.

Gold is mined out of the earth and washed out of the water. To discover our Golden Shadow we lay prudence aside and journey into the unconscious; and our labors are not unrewarded. The surprise of discovery may be shocking, healing, and growth-producing.

In the myths, legends, and tales of "the great quest" theme, it is always necessary to surmount a series of obstacles before the quest can be successfully completed and the object of the quest is won. Our quest for the Golden Shadow is no exception. We, too, have obstacles to surmount and hurdles to clear on our journey inward to the Golden Shadow. The major obstacle we face is the interference and influence of the outer world. Most of us develop in an environment that is not only not conducive to looking inward, but may actually discourage or even forbid such behavior.

Imagine, if you will, young Bobby sitting quietly in his room, simply looking at the wall, rather void of expression. Mama enters and asks,

"What are you doing, honey?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, dear, I can see that; but what are you doing?"

"Just thinking."

"But it's such a beautiful afternoon, why don't you go out and play with the kids?"

"I'd rather just sit here."

"Billy is working on that model airplane in the garage; why don't you go help him?"

"I don't want to."

"What are you thinking about?"

"I guess I'm sort of contemplating."

"Bobby, do you feel all right?"

"Yeab, I'm OK."

"Let me feel your forehead; do you have a temperature?"

"No, I'm fine."

"Are you tired, is that it?"

"No, I'm not tired."

"Well, I just don't understand."

"Understand what?"

"Why anyone would want to just sit here doing nothing!"

When mama speaks with daddy later in the day she will be sure to report this incident and possibly suggest that they take Bobby to the doctor to determine if there isn't indeed something physically wrong. After all, no healthy, red-blooded, developing boy should want to sit quietly in his room "contemplating" when he could be outside romping with his fellows, or working on a model airplane with his brother, or doing *something*.

For most of us the outer world is virtually all that we know; the inner world has never been a very vital part of our experience. It is a true stranger. Few of us realize how powerful the influence of the outer world has been and continues to be on our development. It is therefore important and necessary that we review this issue, so we may be as realistic and practical as possible in our quest. •

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# The Magic of Profound Self-Acceptance

**T** *True change means becoming who you really are in a natural and organic way. Although true change is possible and sometimes happens during therapy or in good recovery programs, it seldom results from self-improvement promises or programs. It occurs in three ways:*

- ▲ *A near-death or life renewal experience.*
- ▲ *Bottoming out—a state of physical, emotional, or spiritual bankruptcy.*
- ▲ *Profound self-acceptance.*

Roberta Jean Bryant, the author of "Anybody Can Write A Playful Approach," was educated in the libraries of the West. She has raised four children and has written many published articles and stories.



“There is another way,” Aaron protested after hearing me lecture one evening. “When I’m around a person who is loving and nurturing, then I begin to change.” His changing, however, was dependent on having someone else for a catalyst, and he admitted that once again he was seeking the kind of person who could provide it.

Examples of this kind of dependent change occur for persons involved in self-improvement groups or programs. That is one way of experiencing profound self-acceptance. However, the changes that happen are the result of “I accept myself, because this person or group that I esteem accepts me.” The falling-in-love phenomenon and the therapist-as-guru relationship are two examples of this kind of conditional change.

These routes to change are often less productive, less lasting, and less satisfying than seeking that experience of acceptance within oneself. The dependence on an outside source for a positive sense of self always places our “okayness” and our authenticity at risk. Good therapists do not encourage that kind of dependency, but consistently remind clients that their quality of life is determined by themselves, not the therapist or well-meaning friends and family.

“When we must deal with problems,” observed Carl Jung, “we instinctively refuse to try the way that leads through darkness and obscurity. We wish to hear only of unequivocal results and

**Change occurs when you become what you are, not when you try to become what you are not... Change seems to happen when you have abandoned the chase after what you want to be (or think you should be) and have accepted and fully experienced what you are.**

—Janette Rainwater

completely forget that these results can only be brought about when we have ventured into and emerged again from the darkness.”

Profound self-acceptance is a search for truth within the darkness of oneself. Albert Schweitzer noted, “Truth has no special time of its own. Its hour is now—always.” As a matter of fact, people always tell the truth; even their lies reflect the truth of their secret wishes, hopes, and dreams. Truth, however, is layered, like an onion or an artichoke. So the task of becoming free is akin to peeling away layers of truth, like the leaves of an artichoke, to uncover

that core truth that transforms experience.

Profound self-acceptance is a search for the truth, the individual and personal truth of the seeker, not some abstract eternal truth. This ongoing search requires hard work, an investment of time in self-examination, and honesty—honesty with oneself primarily and possibly with a trusted friend, spiritual advisor, or therapist.

#### JANE’S STORY

Jane, an insecure homemaker and mother of two, found it impossible to accept herself. Years earlier, when she was first married, her greatest fear was that if her husband ever found out what she was really like, he wouldn’t like her anymore. Therefore, she was also unconsciously afraid of even allowing *herself* to know what she was really like because if that happened, it could rock the boat.

Her belief that if she discovered something wasn’t right she had to do something about it kept her stuck in denial of her unhappy marriage. She unconsciously knew that doing something about it would be too difficult and would jeopardize her family’s security. Those fears, conscious and unconscious, were one layer of truth.

Eventually, Jane began to become more honest with herself and to risk sharing that discovered self with her husband. She also spoke up more often and on occasion even contradicted what he said. Sure enough, he complained about her getting “uppity,” they began quarreling more frequently, and she felt that he didn’t like her—her greatest fear come true. That layer of truth ultimately led to divorce, which did indeed jeopardize her family’s security. Soon after her divorce, Jane experienced a chaos of emotions but also discovered a core truth that trans-

formed a major emotional problem in her life.

Jane had emerged from her divorce at the tender age of forty feeling profoundly abandoned by her ex-husband who did not like her and irrationally angry at his refusal to contest the divorce. She was devastated by his plans to remarry. A confusing jumble of resentment and self-pity about her abandonment dominated her waking moments. No matter what else happened to her, those deeply felt obsessive thoughts and feelings overshadowed the rest of her life.

This wasn't the first time she'd felt so hurt and lost.

When Jane was five years old her mother had deserted her father, packing hurriedly and sneaking off one afternoon with Janie and her brother. Janie had not understood what was happening and had no chance to say good-bye to her father. Also, she was never allowed to talk about it. Consequently, a part of her often felt hurt and lost when people did not keep their agreements, and on occasion when a trusted person let her down, the abandonment feelings overwhelmed and devastated her.

Whenever those feelings were triggered, she became in effect an adult Jane with five-year-old Janie in the driver's seat; she looked and often acted like a responsible adult, but emotionally the hurt child ruled. Her relationships suffered because other people often became targets of Janie's unprovoked and irrational emotional outbursts. Jane herself found it terrifying to be an unpredictable adult with no control over her reactions and feelings. Even understanding the whys of her problem didn't help her to react or feel different. Insight brought no relief, just greater frustration.

The day things changed was

### Accepting Your Imperfect Self Includes Accepting:

- The ways you are like your parents
- Any socially inappropriate behavior
- All your thoughts—past, present, and future
- All your feelings
- The physical body you were born with
- Your looks, your height, your weight
- Any relationships that didn't work out
- Your income and social status
- All your faults and character defects
- All the ways you have discounted yourself
- Anything you've ever tried to improve or change about yourself

the day when she uncovered and accepted the core truth about her abandonment issue.

Jane and her best friend Tom, whom she thought of as the older brother she'd always wanted, usually shared their problems over lunch in local restaurants. That day Jane, feeling bereft and lonely, began weeping as she often did in those days following her divorce. "How could he let me divorce him?" she wailed, recounting her grievances against her former husband. "And now he's planning to marry her! How dare he abandon me and the children like this?"

Finally Tom reached across the table, touched her hand to get her attention and said, "Janie, I will

never abandon you." That sincere promise from a man she totally trusted stopped her litany of self-pity and resentment. That moment of affirmation and friendship warmed a frozen place within her; she began to feel loved again. At the same instant, though, inside her head a little voice whispered, "But, it's not enough!"

She couldn't believe what was happening. That clear moment when Tom expressed his loyalty to her was rudely interrupted by that invalidating whisper. Then, just to make sure she couldn't ignore it, the little voice repeated, "But, it's not enough."

Later, at home with her journal, Jane attempted to reason with that little voice. "Don't you believe Tom?" she wrote.

"Yes, but it's still not enough." Janie, the abandoned child within her, wouldn't be persuaded. Finally, discouraged by the determined stance of that young part of herself, she remembered how she'd learned to deal with her own children during their temper tantrums—putting her arms around them, saying, "There, there, everything's going to be all right." So, Jane began listing all the things she really appreciated about that young part of herself, comforting and consoling Janie without being dishonest.

Finally she wrote, "I will never abandon you." Jane, the grown-up part of her, would not abandon or invalidate the feelings of the Janie part of herself. Jane's core truth was the realization that she could not experience such total devastation unless she also ran out on—abandoned—that hurting child within. At that moment her experience of feeling abandoned profoundly changed and improved her control over her own life. However, she continued to struggle with a festering load of resentment against her former husband

and sought relief from that growing obsession. Three years after the divorce, still engaged in her search for truths, she peeled off the final leaf and encountered the heart of the artichoke—the core truth—about her relationship with her former husband.

CORE TRUTHS  
ALWAYS  
TRANSFORM  
EXPERIENCE

That final leaf was the sudden realization that she was spending so much time reacting to what he had said or had done, it was as if she was still married to him. After she'd acknowledged that, the core truth lay revealed. Jane finally discovered what she was really like and had to admit that she hadn't liked her husband very much. Divorce had been her idea, not his.

Recognizing and accepting her responsibility for all that had happened freed her from the resentment of "Look what he did to me!" Core truths always transform experience and always have to do with oneself, never with one's upbringing or what anyone else says or does, past or present. Core truths always evolve from profound self-acceptance.

THE FOUR LEVELS  
OF PROFOUND  
SELF-  
ACCEPTANCE

Profound self-acceptance is not a fixed state of being, but a spiraling evolution of truth and awareness that seems to consist of four levels. During the course of any period of growth, we move up and down the spiral many times, or move from one level to the next, or even back to the previous one.

The first level of profound self-acceptance appears to be negative and may not be experienced by everyone. A person at this level says, "Something is wrong with me. I know I'm not okay." No one

**Profound self-acceptance saves us from the ego trips of the comparison game, the I'm-better-than or holier-than-thou attitudes of arrogance and righteousness, or the lesser-than comparisons resulting in "poor me" or self-pity.**

can talk the person out of this feeling. "I don't need anybody. Nobody cares anyway. I'm not even worth improving. People don't like me; they won't give me a chance."

The person is passive, depressive, and feels and sounds like a victim: alienated, unconnected, feeling unworthy of human companionship.

These individuals either lack heroes and goals, or their standards for themselves and others are so perfectionistic that they tend to hear only negative feedback or to insist on a gloomy interpretation of all events. But in this stage, the beginning of profound self-acceptance is becoming aware of how nonaccepting one really is, accepting it, and not punishing oneself further for it.

The second level is characterized by what is now being called codependency—in which another person's behavior affects us so intensely that we are obsessed with controlling that other person. On the second level the focus often shifts from knowing something is wrong with me to knowing there's something wrong with you, too, and often evolving to "What's wrong with me is all your fault," or the notion that if *you* get help, then everything will be just fine with *me*.

Moving from the first level to the second level sounds like this at first: "I'm okay, if you tell me I'm okay." The person works hard at self-improvement and at pleasing others to get approval. Sometimes the person tries to "fix" others and thereby gets the illusion of control over people, events, and circumstances.

In another variation the individual moves from self-blame to blaming others: "I'm okay if you're not okay" or "I wouldn't overspend if you only earned enough money" or "I wouldn't drink if you didn't nag me so much" or "I wouldn't nag you so much if you didn't drink." It's a vulnerable and volatile level, however, because the person's worth is dependent on outside reassurance.

Individuals at level two live on an emotional seesaw, seldom in touch with their true feelings, usually operating out of fear—fear of anger or fear of rejection. They often have unrealistic expectations of themselves and others and ignore reality, lie, or manipulate to avoid direct conflict. They over idealize their role models and objects of affection. Addicted to immediate gratification, intensity, and drama—the soap opera of their own lives—they live in a world of denial and fantasy.

Cultivating profound self-acceptance creates awareness; awareness is the opposite of denial;

becoming aware and accepting small truths begins to replace denial. Denial diminishes with every accepting thought or statement; an attitude of profound self-acceptance also fosters true responsibility that gradually replaces fantasy.

On the third level individuals say, "I'm okay, even by myself," accepting responsibility for their happiness and solving their problems. They work hard at helping others for their own satisfaction and not just to please others. Active, reality oriented, and often self-actualizing, they value themselves and others and see former heroes and role models as equals. If no one is any better than I am, if no one is any lesser than I am, if I see all of us as imperfect human beings, then I can be open and learn from all human encounters. This level is where people tend to be goal-oriented.

The fourth level attitude is, "Isn't this interesting!" There's a cheerful curiosity toward possibilities and a willingness to show up and see what will happen today. For these individuals the whole notion of self-improvement is alien; the idea wouldn't even arise. They have an easy acceptance of all events, circumstances, and people. Value judgments of good and bad or right and wrong seldom are made. At this level they remain detached, immune to being influenced by popular opinion—like the best mothers, who, according to Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, "learn not to care; to separate." Open and flexible, happy more often than not, they live fully in the moment with great appreciation of the cosmic humor of the human condition.

#### ACCEPTING YOUR IMPERFECT SELF

Whatever level you find yourself at, profound self-acceptance does not require approving of

**As human beings there are more similarities among us than real differences; we all are led or driven by our feelings—our sorrows and joys as well as our assumptions and beliefs about ourselves and others.**

yourself or liking all aspects of yourself; neither does it mean a superficial Pollyannaish counting of blessings. Accepting yourself does not require you to announce the character defects you discover; neither does it entail defiance—"That's just the way I am; take it or leave it!"—or apologizing for what you find. There's no blaming yourself or others and no explaining or over-explaining.

Profound self-acceptance saves us from the ego trips of the comparison game, the I'm-better-than or holier-than-thou attitudes of arrogance and righteousness, or the lesser-than comparisons resulting in "poor me" or self-pity. The magic in profound self-acceptance is that the more you are willing to know and accept in yourself, the

more you know about and accept in other people. As human beings there are more similarities among us than real differences; we all are led or driven by our feelings—our sorrows and joys as well as our assumptions and beliefs about ourselves and others.

Profound self-acceptance is sometimes bound to be difficult. To love and accept ourselves unconditionally is no problem when things are going well; it's easy when we get up in the morning, look in the mirror, smile at ourselves, and like what we see. The real challenge is to accept ourselves when we're really messing up. We straggle out of bed; we don't want to look in the mirror; things are definitely not okay. That's when profound self-acceptance is most necessary.

The process of profound self-acceptance is simple but not necessarily easy. I start by acknowledging the obvious, making a detailed inventory of everything that's going on for me at the present moment. It may sound like I was crabby: "I don't feel like getting up today and I don't want to look in the mirror."

Then I look in the mirror and describe what I see. "That face does not look happy. That is an angry-looking face. I do not like feeling angry; I don't want to know what I might be angry about. I really blew it yesterday with the boss. Today I can't even figure out what to wear. I'd like to cancel my dental appointment." I continue in that vein until I become bored or run out of time, and I conclude with the statement, "I unconditionally accept myself with all my weaknesses and shortcomings."•

*From "Stop Improving Yourself and Start Living." Copyright 1991 by Roberta Jean Bryant. Printed with permission of New World Library. Call (800)227-3900 or (800)632-2122 in California to order the book, (\$10.95).*



# Standing Up And Speaking Out:

## The Challenge of Expressing Personal Power

**M**arcia showed up for church at her regular time, as she had for twenty years. Seating herself on her familiar, worn organ bench, she began to play the Prelude. Then suddenly, something took over—Marcia began to pommel the keyboard, her fingers expressing the most intense feeling she had ever felt. Congregants stared as they entered the church; those seated in their pews turned their heads and looked up at her in contained disbelief. The sounds thundered louder and stronger. Marcia, very present, was also very present with her self. What her congregation did not know was that Marcia was playing the Prelude backward!



Marilyn J. Mason is the co-author of "Facing Shame: Families in Recovery" and is a Licensed Consulting Psychologist in private practice. She teaches on the clinical faculty in Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota, leads workshops nationally and internationally, and directs wilderness expeditions as founder and director of Journeys Inward.



All her life Marcia had been obedient to her family, her religion, and her community. Recently, however, she had been reflecting on how trapped she felt and had been reading women's books in her Women's Identity course. Her agitation grew about as rapidly as her awareness. She described her act as something that just happened; she had not planned it. She realized she had made a statement. When she told me about it later, I commented, "Well, you surely were expressing your personal power!"

Personal power? Just what is personal power? How does personal power, our real power, differ from role power and power by association? Where does personal power come from? What do we do with it once we feel it? Before we exercise our power, we have to search for meanings that fit our life experiences.

### JUST WHAT IS PERSONAL POWER?

I thought of Rosa Parks, the courageous black woman who became the "mother" of the civil rights movement by sitting in the whites-only section of a bus in Selma, Alabama. I thought of Bella Abzug, a powerful role model for women in politics, and activist Dorothy Day, whose inspiring words "speak truth to power" are reflected in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*

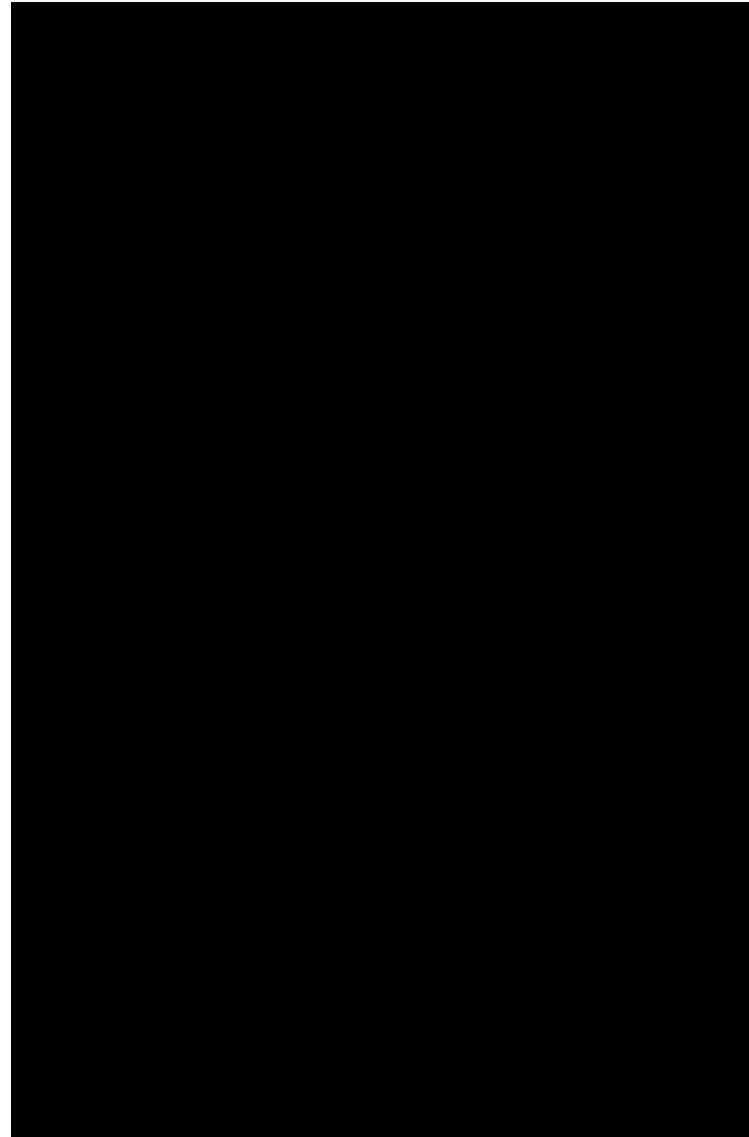
and in Jean Baker Miller's *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. I thought of Gloria Steinem, who founded Ms. magazine, and Carol Gilligan, who in her book *In a Different Voice*, refuted the traditional (male) thinking on women's moral development. All these women acted on personal power in the public domain.

Whether expressed through action or nonaction, in public or private, power simply is. The word power comes from the Latin word *potere* which means "to be able." The essence of personal power is reflected in the way we live our daily lives through our everyday acts. Lecturer and author Janet Hagberg describes personal power as, "the extent to which one is able to link the outer capacity for action (external power) with the inner capacity for reflection (internal power)."

We exercise personal power when we tell a doctor that

we no longer will be his or her patient because we refuse to be kept waiting for more than one hour each visit. We exercise it when we say no to our children and refuse to deny them their own life struggles, even though a part of us wants to protect them from life's pain. We exercise personal

power when we confront a friend who has hurt us. We act on personal power when we write a letter on the abortion controversy to the editor of the local newspaper. Jean felt personal power when, several



ROBERT BRENNER

years after her divorce, she moved from the "passenger" side to the "driver's" side of her bed. My friend Ann has exercised her personal power by influencing a great many women to enter doctoral programs. Clearly, personal power means acting on what deeply matters to us. When we express and

act on our personal power, we honor our inner knowing, our “infallible gut.” Each act of “personal authority” shapes and enriches our life story of which we alone are the “author.” Acting on our inner power to give and to nurture is also called actualization power.

My friend Moira is a glowing example of actualization power. She and Dan, her husband, share an equal commitment to work in the social justice movement. A psychologist, Dan’s primary role is to earn the family income; Moira’s primary role is to engage in acts of civil disobedience which has led to her spending several months at a time in jail. With each passing year, Moira’s voice has grown stronger and more passionate. As a result, she has empowered many others to act with purpose and face life’s challenges.

*P E R S O N A L P O W E R  
V S . R O L E P O W E R*

Power has been and for the most part still is bound to status and success in our patriarchy, where domination, whatever the cost, is the name of the game. No one in this society has escaped the domination, authority, and control inherent in the role power wielded by parents, bosses, clergy, teachers, and political leaders. (And a good share of us exercise role power ourselves to negative or positive effect.) Moreover, women and men alike know only too well about power imbalances imposed by language, appearance, class, age, ethnicity, and race. For women, gender heads this list.

Lacking real power in the male-dominated public domain, women tend to adopt power by association, that is, power bestowed through relationship with someone else’s name or role. Socialized

**Somewhere along  
the line of  
development we  
discover what we  
really are and then  
we make our real  
decision for which  
we are responsible.  
Make that decision  
primarily for yourself  
because you can  
never really have  
anyone else’s life,  
not even your  
child’s. The influence  
you have is through  
your own life and  
what you become  
yourself.**

—Eleanor Roosevelt

to accept and value this “unreal” power, many women either are unaware of the flimsy security it affords or fear the consequences of asserting their “real” power. One such consequence is poverty; another is the stigma attached to powerful women who traditionally have been viewed as dangerous, devouring, and castrating.

The meaning of power is gradually changing. Today we are rediscovering the old ways of ancients like the Cretans to whom power meant responsibility, care, and nurturing. We dip back to the past to move forward. The movement is universal, not limited to American women. For example, the women in an African village demanded that their daughters not be subjected to clitoridectomy (removal of the clitoris). Connected by their values of responsibility and care, they exerted their nurturing power to face and overcome a challenge to their daughters’ physical and sexual well-being. These women made a moral decision. They took responsibility for their relationships.

*W H A T D O W E D O  
W I T H I T , O N C E  
W E F E E L I T ?*

It is not enough to know; we must give voice to our knowledge and we must act. Kathleen Michels, freelance editor, says, “Only if you can disclose what’s real do you have personal power.” Those around us sense it when we have personal power; we don’t have to advertise it or lean on a role or someone else to express it.

*F I N D I N G O U R  
V O I C E S ,  
S P E A K I N G O U R  
T R U T H*

In live burial for many years,

my personal power did not have a clear, direct route of expression. Calling myself a “recovering nice lady,” I felt overwhelmed and frightened when I began to move from my anonymous, unknown self and recognize my personal power. I can recall words getting stuck or coming out in “fast forward” or sometimes even in “reverse.” And I can still recall with some embarrassment those times when I was discovering my anger, seeing it flash out inappropriately, not only toward those around me but myself as well. My unconscious seemed to speak loudly and clearly, almost without my filtering. I asked myself, “Did I really say that?” I saw how hurtful I could be. Not that I had never been hurtful to others; of course I had. But now I was *aware* of my personal power and felt responsible for the way in which I expressed my voice. Others probably called me a troublemaker or deviant. For a while I thought, “Maybe I’ll have growth with no friends.” But of course that was not the case; I was a beginner and in transition. Disclosing what is real is a risk. Sometimes we can disclose and don’t, sometimes we can disclose and won’t. I could list pages of incidents when I didn’t speak up because I didn’t even see the injustices or hear insults. I hadn’t known what personal power was then.

Later came incidents when, after I *had* learned about personal power, I still walked away. I walked away feeling shameful and guilty because I *did* know and did not act. At those moments I was afraid to take the risk—fearful of disapproval, anger, or confrontation. As I look back, I would also add that risk-taking was often politically unwise. Often I have felt guilty when I heard myself

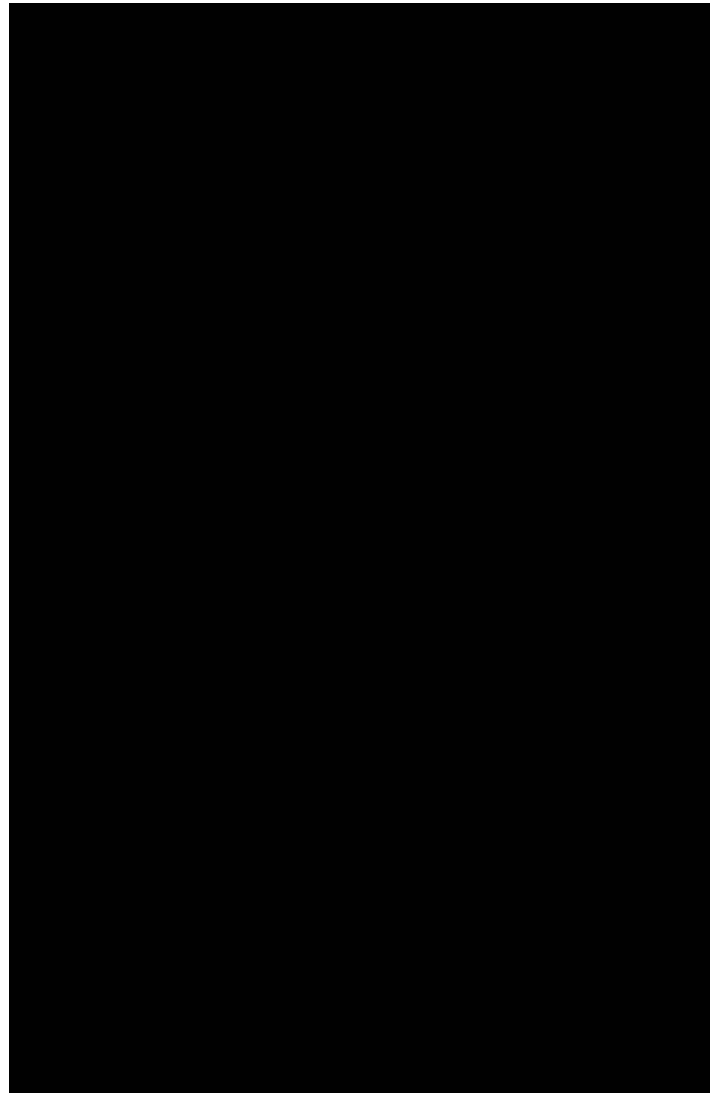
recounting my stand in a risking scene in much fuller strength than I actually took at the time. Other women tell me that they too have reported scenes the way they *would* like to have heard them. Perhaps these are rehearsals for the next scene; each “stand” is still a victory.

As we develop our voice, we often experience a real transformation in our self-concept. As we examine our relationships and develop new ones, we often feel a waffling of the self as our integrated voice strengthens. Moving through our adult challenges we listen and develop empathy, including others with differences. But we must also listen to our own self.

The integration of the layers of our voice takes a long time. First, we find our voice within us by hearing our own voice. Inner voices that told you to follow the family’s unspoken rules—that voice that meant survival in a pain-filled family. That voice tenaciously held the delusional beliefs. Learning more about the language, voices, and meaning systems of women, we find our true voice is often muffled by delusional messages we tell ourselves to survive and to protect others.

Polly found her voice to be delusional. When she heard herself tell the police, “Everything is

okay,” after Tom, drunk at the time, had tried to throw her out of the car, Polly realized she was in trouble. She had just lied about a life-threatening event; this time



*Anita Hill helped empower women by speaking out about sexual harassment at the Senate hearings for Clarence Thomas.*

she heard herself.

Polly had to hear herself before she could claim her core voice and talk back. In “talking back,” we express our movement “from object to subject—the liberated voice.” Polly began acting like a subject when she let herself hear her words of denial. Polly knew she had to act after hearing her

delusional voice. She told herself she was going to live and that meant taking responsibility for her life. Polly told her husband she was through being self-deceptive and would no longer be party to his self-destruction. She affirmed that she truly cared about him. Then she said she was going for help on her own, since he refused to seek outside help. She made it clear that she would no longer live in terror.

This was her "different voice," coming from her caring and her responsibility to herself. No longer would she focus on understanding Tom and neglect to care about herself. She had "had it" with the selfless, over-responsible caretaking into which women are socialized. Polly had begun meeting the challenge of expressing her personal power.

#### *M E E T I N G   T H E C H A L L E N G E*

Polly's statement to her husband was a dramatic turning point in her life. Polly's story is her story; yours will be yours. Each of us will find our own way as we recognize and master the five underpinnings of personal power: valuing, finding our feelings, setting limits, taking risks, and giving up control.

#### *A C T I N G   O N   W H A T W E   K N O W*

Polly's decision was based on her values. She valued her marriage and her commitment to it. She cared deeply about their child, families, and friends—all of whom were tightly intertwined in her life. Reflecting on the scene after the car episode, she realized her values of self-respect and honesty meant little unless she acted on them. Our moral decisions require

acting on our values, which means we unravel our own concealed values from those we internalized from others. Our "truth" is trusting our intuition, our "gut." This is our "home-brewed epistemology," the part of us that simply knows and knows that we know. When we know that we know, we must act.

#### *F I N D I N G   A N D F A C I N G   F E E L I N G S*

Polly had been unaware of how resentful she had been. In her denial, she had lied to herself, telling herself to be patient. In therapy, she took a good look at the smoldering chamber in her gut that burned each time she faced another drinking scene. She said it almost felt like an internal organ.

Have you ever noticed how clearly you see situations when you are angry? We often have a near shift in consciousness when this clarity illuminates our inner knowing. When we feel the injustices, our center is touched and we know. We cannot have grown up in an oppressed group without being totally unaware of the injustices and discrimination of race, class, and gender. Many women go through several years of anger, working through the buried wounds of the past. Socialized to please others, we have often directed our anger against ourselves or our children. When we speak directly, we will often be labeled a "hostile bitch." This, of course, is often a way for others to control our voices.

We know when our anger is true; we also eventually learn to discern when our anger is expressed through manipulation, defensive rage, or survival tactics. It becomes easy to blame the vic-

tim when we encounter this anger and rage. This defensive power is, for some women, a necessary pendulum swing in their process of developing real power out of victimization experiences. Therefore for many women, the feelings aspect of personal power involves facing hurt, sadness, and unresolved grief. Any of these feelings can be motivating.

#### *S E T T I N G   L I M I T S*

When Polly took a stand that day, she knew she was doing it for herself. Her feelings reflected her values; and her values tugged at her emotional cords. As we learn and live our values, we become more definite in saying no and yes. Often we have been saying no inwardly before we express it outwardly. Polly had been taking stands in other places in her life; now it was time to make a statement to her husband. Drawing our lines, setting limits, our boundaries become firmly defined. No longer walking away from our values, we no longer walk away from our core self, going deeper in nourishing our self-worth.

#### *T A K I N G   R I S K S*

Polly had to consider the outcome. She knew about Tom's temper and his control over the money. She also knew her work as a nurse could never bring in enough to keep her in their present life-style. She also knew that she would be working full-time if she left her marriage and would probably end up with responsibility for child care. She also knew as a woman in her late thirties that she would most likely be single for the rest of her life. We consider the relationship consequences as

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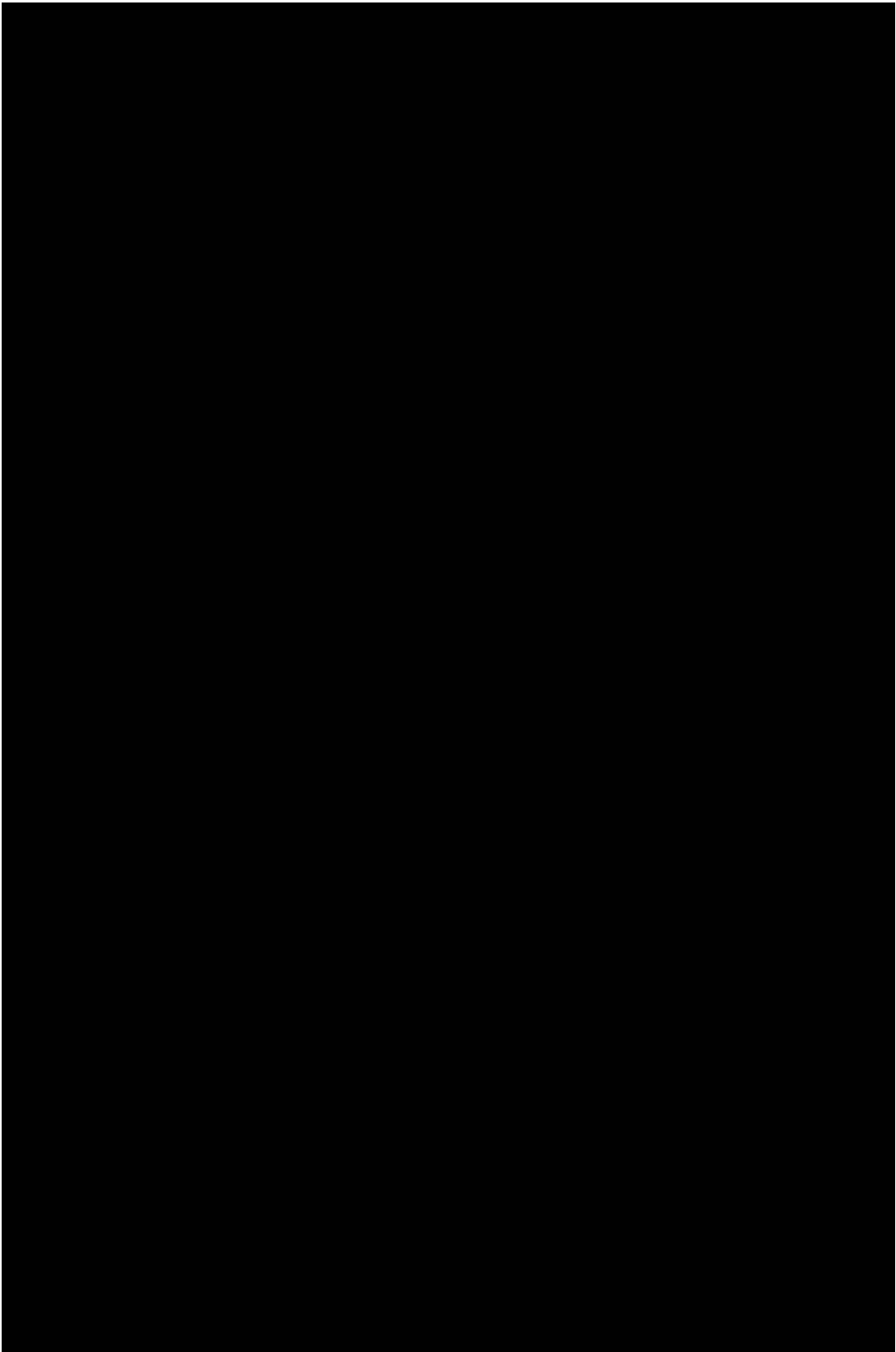
# Making Peace

*A photographic exhibit of Antelope Canyon in southern Arizona.*

M A R G A R I T E H O E F L E R

MARGARITE HOFELER

*Seek peace in your own place.*



MARGARITE HOFELER

*You cannot find peace anywhere but in  
yourself.*

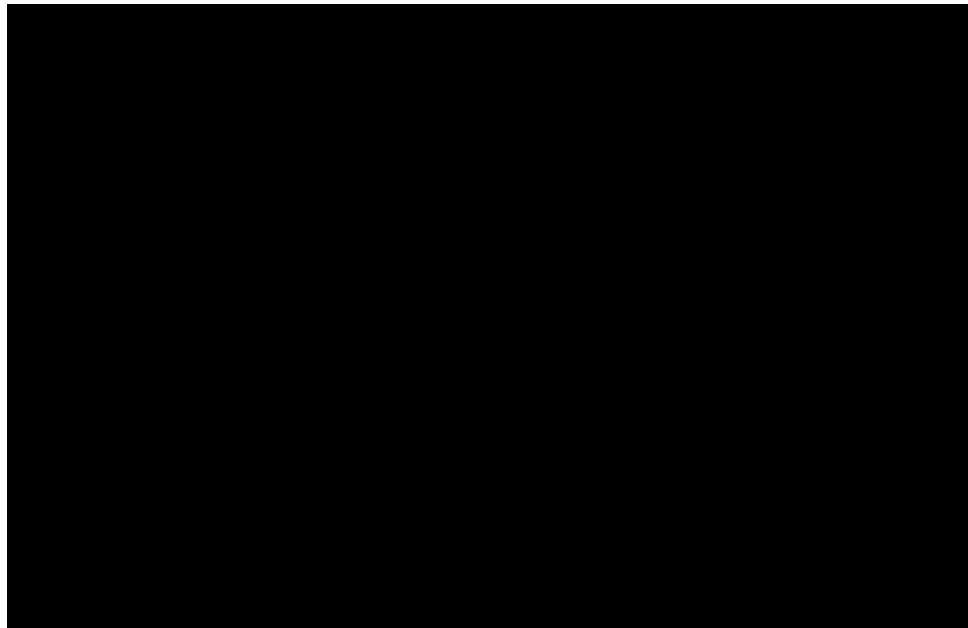


MARGARITE HOEFLER

*When we have made peace with ourselves,  
then we can make peace with others.*

C R I S T H U R M A N

# TRUTH COMES PIECE BY PIECE



ROBERT C. BURKE

**T***ruth is reality as it is, not as it seems to be. Can we know the unvarnished truth of a situation? Yes, but seeing and understanding the truth are skills that have to be learned, and as with most skills, learning them can be quite difficult and painful at times. But the more you practice, the better you get. The better you get, the healthier you become.*

*Dr. Chris Thurman is a licensed psychologist who maintains a counseling practice at the Minirth-Meier Clinic in Richardson, Texas. He is a consultant to major corporations in the areas of stress management, self-esteem, assertiveness, and self-talk. Dr. Thurman lives in Richardson, Texas, with his wife, Holly, and their two children, Matthew and Ashley.*



Truth, generally speaking, is not something we receive all at once in a life-changing, road to Damascus manner. Anais Nin said that there are very few human beings who receive truth, complete and staggering, by instant illumination. Most of them, she said, “acquire it fragment by fragment on a small scale... like a laborious mosaic.” That’s a good mental image. I see truth more like putting together a thousand-piece puzzle. Piece by piece, we look for truth and attempt to “fit” it together. The effort to see what fits and what doesn’t is painstaking. Our lies, the false pieces that don’t fit in, didn’t get there overnight, nor will they leave overnight. So we have to be patient with the process of exchanging our lies for the truth.

There’s another painful truth about truth. With our truth puzzle, we don’t have all thousand pieces to work with and we won’t before our time for putting the puzzle together is over. Simply put, we just don’t know the whole truth while we live.

Carl Jung, one of the leaders of modern psychology, put it, “Are we related to something infinite or not? That is the telling question of life.”

Almost everyone wonders whether or not something infinite exists. Highly intelligent people have argued all positions on this

issue, some concluding that there is no infinite being, some concluding that there is (giving us an amazing array to choose from), and some deciding that we can’t know so we shouldn’t worry about it. I agree with Jung, though. Whether or not there is an infinite being and whether or not we are related to it is life’s most telling question. If “it” does exist, then we must ask, “What is ‘it’ like?” and “What does ‘it’ want?”

Hundreds of writers have addressed this question, and the answer is beyond the scope of this article. But I am convinced that we have to address Jung’s question in our personal lives before we can move on to deeper levels of understanding and recognizing truth. My own answer to Jung’s question is “Yes!” and that the “something infinite” is the Creator—God—and he alone knows the whole truth. As Montaigne put it, “We are born to inquire into the truth; it belongs to a greater power to possess it.” He will make the important pieces of the puzzle, those which keep our lives connected and whole, available to us if we seek the truth through him. And that is what I attempt to lead my patients to do—to seek out the truth available to them and to live by it.

We must seek truth and live by what is true because what we see as truth is what primarily determines our path through life. Psychiatrist Scott Peck states this nicely:

For truth is reality. That which is false is unreal. The more clearly we see the reality of the world, the better equipped we are to deal with the world. The less clearly we see the reality of the world—the more our minds are befuddled by falsehood, misperceptions, and illusions

—the less able we will be to determine correct courses of action and make wise decisions. Our view of reality is like a map... If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know where we are, and if we have decided where we want to go, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we generally will be lost.

There is another important reason why we must seek the truth and live by it. There is a direct, inescapable connection between our self-esteem and whether or not we are dedicated to truth. If dedication to truth characterizes our way of living, we develop stable positive feelings of worth. The moment we wrap our lives around lies, genuine feelings of self-worth are virtually impossible. We’ve all had moments in our lives when we suddenly saw that something we believed to be true was false. Instantly, the truth cuts like a knife. The writer of Proverbs wrote that as a man “thinks in his heart, so is he.”

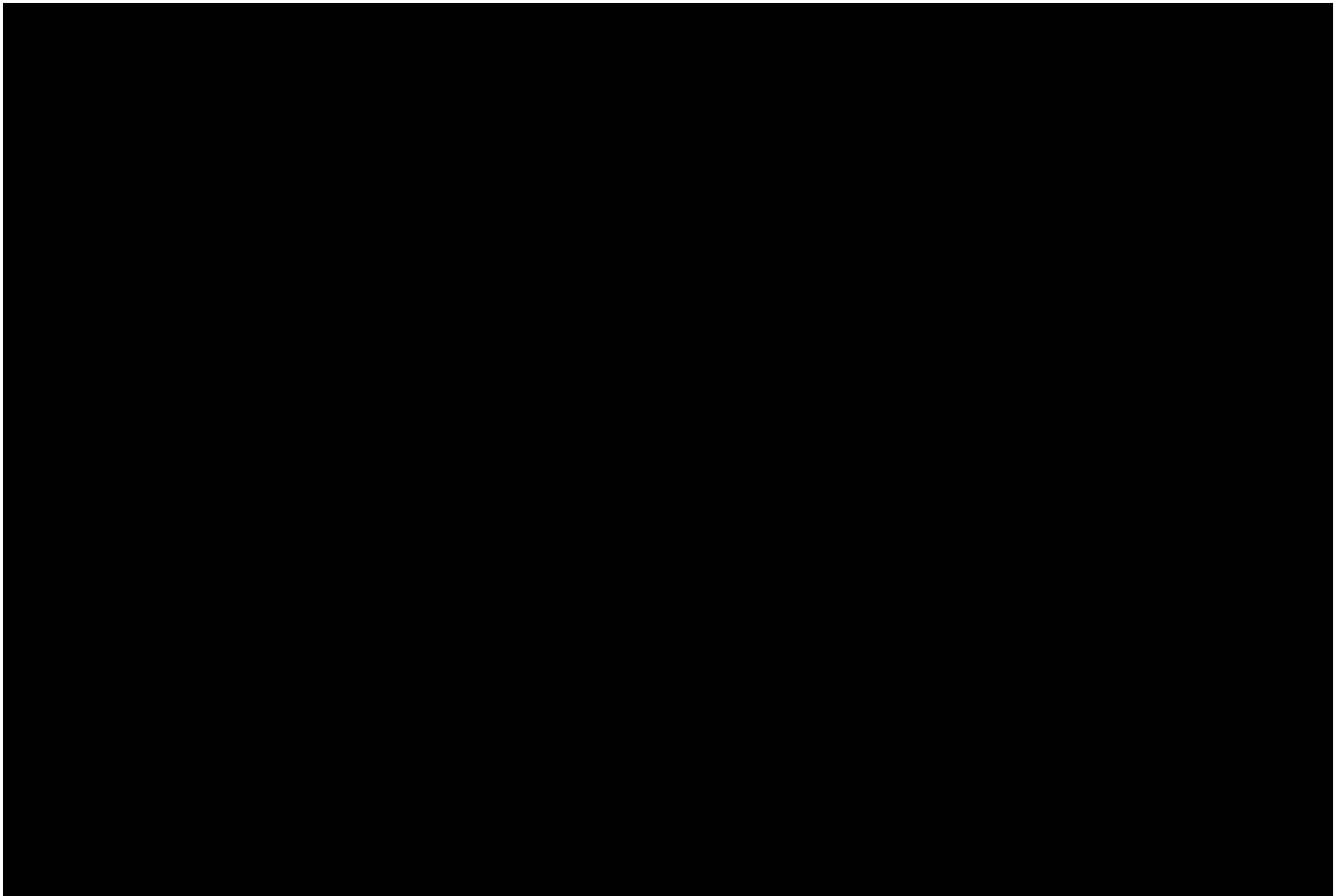
#### BARRIERS TO KNOWING THE TRUTH

Among the many barriers to knowing the truth are prejudice and pride. Prejudice is a barrier to knowing the truth because your mind is already made up. Pride is a significant barrier to knowing the truth because it makes us arrogantly believe we already know the truth whether we do or not. With prejudice and pride, the truth can come right up and bite us on the nose and still go unnoticed. •

*From the book “The Lies We Believe.”  
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C H A R L E S M E Y E R

# Examining Death Myths



RON CHAPPLE

Charles Meyer is the director of Pastoral Care at St. David's Hospital in Austin, Texas. He has had over twenty years of bedside experience with dying persons and their families, and lectures nationally on death-related issues.



As everyone knows, medical decision making in the area of withholding, refusing, or withdrawing life support has become increasingly complex and difficult. New technology has had the most obvious impact on these dilemmas as patients, families, and physicians are offered more and ever newer diagnostic and life prolonging equipment.

- CAT scanners have been supplanted by Magnetic Resonance Imagery (MRI) machines which use no radioactive materials and produce incredibly clear (computer assisted) pictures. They will soon be able to do blood chemistry and enzyme analysis without venipuncture (drawing blood).

- New neonatal respirators push air into the undeveloped lungs of infants with greater impact, forcing more oxygen exchange and enabling even more and smaller premature babies to stay alive longer.

- Laser technology will soon be used in cardiology to replace the current "balloon" technique of destroying plaque inside clogged arteries, virtually opening them entirely.

While technology has increased our options for treatment (or non-treatment) in both crisis and long term illnesses, it is usually not the determining factor in making such decisions. Rather, there exists a set of subtle and extremely powerful internal presuppositions which inform and direct our choices regarding withdrawing, withholding, or refusing life support. It is necessary to examine these deep seated, culturally reinforced death myths in order to more openly and realistically evaluate the appropriate options for and with dying patients and their families.

Whether based on medical tradition, social obligation, or religious teaching, the death myths influencing which treatment decisions we make are indelibly embedded within our collective psyche. They flash through our minds when the doctor tells us the patient's condition is poor. They are the screens

through which we hear the diagnosis of serious illness. They are the standards against which we weigh our response to the terminal prognosis. They are not "myths" in the traditional sense of beliefs which represent symbolic truth, but are myths in the usual, popular sense of ideas which obscure the truth or even serve to perpetuate falsehoods. The death myths most prominent in our culture are as follows:

1 "Only old people die." Conversely stated, This means that "Young people should not die." Neither assumption is true. The mortality information from most hospitals shows that nearly equal (and, as AIDS patients become more prominent, increasingly greater) numbers of people under age 65 die, especially in the 0 to 10 category.

It is agism at its worst to think that an old person has "lived his or her life" and therefore is more accepting or more deserving of death than a younger, 20- to 40-year-old counterpart. In fact, it is entirely possible for the situation to be quite the reverse; the aged person may be more vital and have more to live for than the youth.

Belief in this myth can result in young persons undergoing extraordinary efforts from chemotherapy to intubation *just because* they are young, or old persons prematurely denying further treatment *just because* they are old. The myth also serves to reinforce our own wish for a long life and to defend against our fear of our own death coming "prematurely."

The truth is, whether we like it or not, people of all ages die. Death is no respecter of age. There is no guarantee of life span given with

conception. Each death is sad, tragic, acceptable or a relief based on the life of the person, the quality of that life, and the kinds of relationships that person has had. Each dying situation, therefore, where a decision must be made to withhold or withdraw artificial intervention, needs to be evaluated on those criteria, not on a myth about age that presumes that it is "okay" for old (but not young) persons to die, perhaps intimating that the elderly want to die or even ought to die.

2 "Medicine can cure everything." Even in the face of long term illness when the patient is finally about to die, panicked family members frequently ask,

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or not, people of  
all ages die.  
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conception.**

“Can’t you do something?” The panic and the request (or demand) reflect a strong belief in this country that medicine can find and cure all illness and physicians are or should be omniscient.

The media to the contrary, most physicians and other health care professionals do not act to reinforce this image. (They know better.) Rather, the myth persists because it is what people very much want to believe. As another denial of the inevitability of illness or death it is we ourselves who want to believe that drugs, medical technology, and their physician purveyors can prevent or cure the effects of disease, self inflicted injury (smoking, diet, lifestyle), and aging.

But it is also true that the medical community has frequently oversold the efficacy or advisability of a particular technical or therapeutic breakthrough. The artificial heart was an example of such a media event. Regardless of the availability, advisability, and ruinous financial cost of this device, the heart was proffered as another example of technology’s ability to cheat death, and the myth was reinforced. Similar claims are being made for transplantation of fetal brain tissue and for the use of other exotic, experimental, and expensive treatments that often later prove to be equally or less effective than the previous treatment.

It is more honest to be straight with patients and ourselves about the limits of tests, treatments, medications, and tentative prognoses. Not to do so is to embrace this myth of medicine and to end up feeling angry, disappointed, guilty, and resentful.

Medicine cannot cure everything. Death is a normal bodily function. It is not optional for the human race.

3 “*Life is always the highest value.*” The initial presumption in nearly any accident or illness is always in favor of preserving life. But once the patient is stabilized and the prognosis is clear, considerations other than the priority of “life” come into effect. It is at this point that the meaning and quality of life *as the patient experiences them* are of the highest value in making the hard decisions of treatment and life support.

The easy temptation is to presume the patient either believes or ought to believe this myth, especially if the physician does. To presume that life is of the highest value supports our own refusal to see death as an acceptable outcome for the patient and for ourselves. Fortunately, however, families and patients are increasingly moving toward the “meaning and quality” standard of judgment for discontinuing treatment. They seem to understand that life is more than breathing, living is more than subsisting, and presence with us means more than physically being there.

4 “*Money should not be a consideration.*” This myth is supported by those who believe it is crass and insensitive to give the cost of treatment any weight in medical decision making. In our “bottom line” oriented culture we see the consideration of money to somehow diminish the image of the person. We rightly reject placing a monetary value on a person’s life. We emotionally recoil at the prospect of finances determining treatment, preferring to spend “whatever is necessary” to save the life of our loved one.

But what of the young couple whose baby is dying yet can be kept alive a few more hours or days in our technologically equipped Intensive Care Nurseries? Or the elderly woman maintained by a respirator in ICU whose husband is barely subsisting on Social

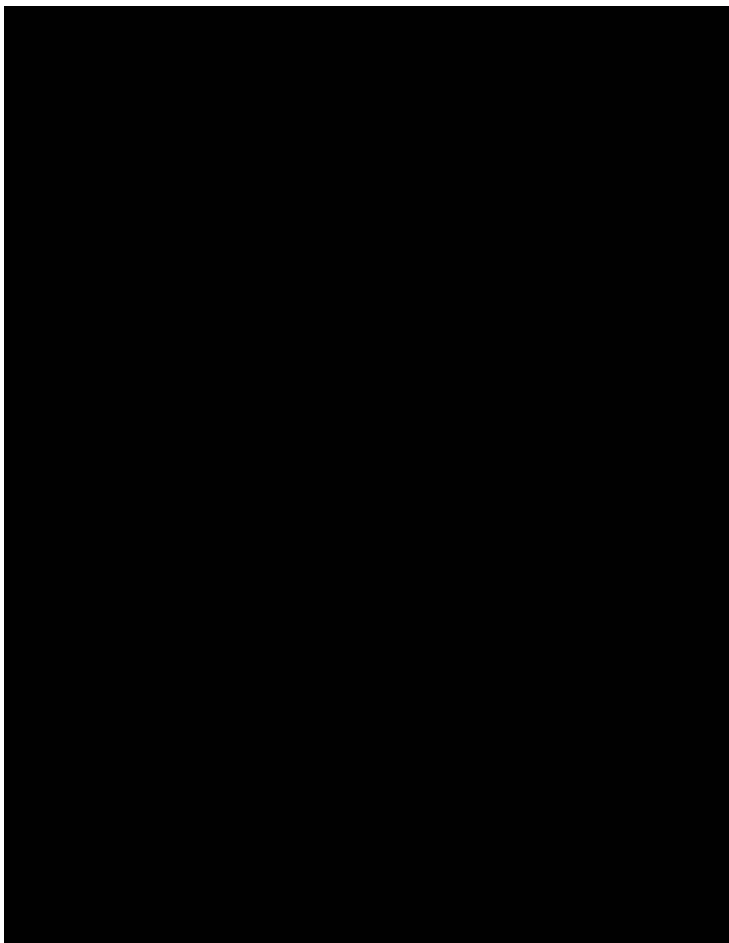


PHOTO BY O'BRIEN & MAYOR



Security? And what of the use of resources devoted to these dying patients (not just for comfort but for continuing active treatment that is much more than palliative) that could be used for taking care of other, curable patients, for research, or for reducing hospital costs for everyone?

The honest, if uncomfortable, truth is that money is *already* a consideration in medical decision making and it will continue to play an even greater role as healthcare rationing becomes a reality in the United States. Given a limited amount of resources and a virtually unlimited demand, it is reasonable to conclude that financial concerns are and will be a part of the process of deciding to withhold or withdraw treatment.

As many European countries have done, the United States has begun to experiment with healthcare rationing. In Great Britain, if a person over the age of 55 comes to a hospital with cardiac arrest, she or he can be treated and kept comfortable, but open heart surgery will not be done; neither will renal dialysis. In Sweden the age cut off is 50.

Similarly, as mentioned earlier, if patients are on Medicare (where hospital bills are reimbursed at 80 percent of reasonable cost) and have less than six months to live, they can switch into the Medicare/ Hospice track. Bills will then be reimbursed at 100 percent of reasonable cost, but the patient agrees to go ahead and die.

And it is not unreasonable, in the case of dying patients, to suggest that the focus of care switch from curative (an unrealistic goal) to palliative. Concentrating on pain control, dignity, safety, comfort, and quality of remaining life, the patient will usually no longer receive further chemotherapy, blood transfusions, CAT scans, or antibiotics for infections. Pain is palliated, patient comfort is the highest goal, and costs of expensive and extraordinary technology and treatments are dramatically reduced.

As our entire healthcare system undergoes more changes in the coming years, more areas of rationing will inevitably appear. In the meantime, it can be argued that, sensitively done, consideration of the

family's or patient's financial situation is a *very* caring gesture, as is weighing the effect of treatment on the cost of healthcare to the entire community, indeed to the nation. As the percent of GNP spent on healthcare jumps from the current 12 percent to as much as 15 percent by 1995 (approaching 20 by the year 2000), financial considerations will become even more important as patients weigh their treatment options.

5 "Death is evil. Death means failure." While the church is largely responsible for promoting the first of these, the medical/ healthcare profession is responsible for the persistence of the second.

Many people, desperately attempting to make some kind of logical sense out of their illness, have been told by their religious community that good is always rewarded and evil is always punished. They then extrapolate that good is always a reward and evil is always a punishment. They are sick or dying, therefore they must have done something bad and incurred the punishment of a wrathful God.

In fact death is not evil; neither is it intrinsically good. Sickness and death are *amoral* occurrences. They have nothing to do with good/bad, right/wrong, punishment/reward. We get sick. We die. As one doctor said: Welcome to Earth; the death rate here is 100%. One out of one dies."

The only thing "good" or "bad" about death is the manner in which one responds to it.

Death, like any other *amoral* occurrence (birth, accident, marriage, divorce, trauma) is merely an occasion for good or evil to become manifest. That manifestation is shown in our response to the event, not in the event itself. Likewise death has nothing to do with failure. Assuming one has done everything necessary (not possible, but necessary) and the patient's condition is said to be "incompatible with life," it is understandable that the person dies. The death has nothing to do with the ability of the physician or nursing staff. "Success" and "failure" are value judgments that reveal the bias of the training of healthcare staff (using military terminology—triage, fight, battle, win/ lose,

**Death might more easily be tolerated by all of us if we saw it as a form of healing. Death as healing transposes its symbolic meaning from that of evil enemy to that of an acceptable and at times even welcomed alternative.**

bravery).

Such judgments have no meaning when applied to the event of the death, which is *amoral*. In fact, it seems the height of arrogance to assume that we (patient, family, or physician) have “failed” when a natural process (death) has followed its normal route. To support this myth is the same as saying hurricane or earthquake victims “failed” to stop the hurricane or earthquake. All this is not to imply that death is not often sad, angering, relieving, unfair, or crushing. It is all this and more in feeling terms. The problem arises in treating death as though it should not happen, denying it as a logical, acceptable, and sometimes desirable possibility for the outcome of the patient’s illness.

Death might more easily be tolerated by all of us if we saw it as a form of *healing*. Death as healing transposes its symbolic meaning from that of evil enemy to that of an acceptable and at times even welcomed alternative.

6 “Where there’s life there’s hope.”

This myth, though frequently cited when making treatment decisions, is patently untrue. Where there’s life there is quite often the opposite of hope. There is agony, fear, excruciating pain, anger, frustration, loneliness, and despair. The sentiment really expressed here is that where there is biological activity (whether mechanically assisted or otherwise), there is reason for optimism that the person may recover, even against all odds.

The questions to be asked of this myth are, “What is life?” and “What is hope?” Is life merely the activity of air being forced into stiffening lungs or blood being pumped inside a human cavity? Is it biological activity mechanically produced or substantially supported? Again the quality of life standard (as judged by the patient if competent or by the patient’s significant others if incompetent) comes into consideration. Increasing numbers of people believe that life is not life if there is no quality of relating, quality of experiencing and enjoying, quality of being. Life for them means much more than the rather shallow definition of longevity.

“Hope” also is quite different from “optimism.” Optimism demands the patient get well (not just better) and return to the former state of health. Nothing less is desirable or acceptable. The meaning of hope, on the other hand, was expressed by a cancer patient who commented, “It’s okay with me if I live and it’s okay with me if I die. Because either place I’m loved.” Hope implies that death is as acceptable an outcome to one’s condition as life. Hope embraces and affirms both life and death as parts of a greater whole of existence. Hope sees life not as a problem to be solved but as a mystery to be lived, and death as a part of that mystery.

**Hope embraces and affirms both life and death as parts of a greater whole of existence. Hope sees life not as a problem to be solved but as a mystery to be lived, and death as a part of that mystery.**

7 “Suffering is redemptive.”

Believe it or not, some people (patients, families, physicians and nurses), will refuse pain medication, withhold palliative measures to increase comfort, or deny the obvious existence of pain because they see the suffering as cleansing, deserved, or redemptive. Followers of this myth, based on a conservative theological or philosophical tradition, conquer their own helplessness in the face of illness and death by assuming that dis-

comfort and pain are spiritually or psychologically helpful to the patient.

Of course it is sometimes true that suffering can be an occasion for redemption, for the healing of memories, relationships, hurts, fears, or guilts. Pain and illness often are the precipitators of change in behavior or perspective on the person’s lifestyle. But suffering is also quite often the occasion for unquenchable bitterness, debilitating despair, collapse of faith, and disintegration of personhood.

Once again, in our attempts to make sense of an illness we want to believe there is some purpose, some plan, some reason for the horrible suffering we or our loved ones are enduring. Once again, the truth is that suffering is as amoral as the virus, bacteria, or systemic condition that is its cause.

But redemption or collapse are *responses* to the pain and discomfort. These individual and varied responses depend largely on the personality and belief system of the patient, and the quality of interactions between

the patient and loved ones, not on the condition or amount of suffering the patient experiences.

8 *“Once you start something, you can’t stop it.”* Physicians, nurses, and technicians are the most common purveyors of this myth. It is also reflected in the common knowledge bank of misinformation about healthcare on the part of families and patients. Usually stated in relation to respirators, artificial hydration and nutrition, or heart pumps, it represents the reluctance to withdraw treatment, based on the premise that it is morally better (and easier) not to start a procedure than it is to withdraw or discontinue one. By not starting a treatment, death is seen to be passively allowed; when treatment is stopped, death is thought to be “caused” by the deletion of “life sustaining” interventions. The truth is that any treatment may be withdrawn at any time if and when that treatment is futile or harmful. There will be some instances when it will be apparent that such treatments are futile and should not be begun. In other cases, there will be a modicum of doubt and treatment will be started to see if in fact it is futile, in which case it should—as with any other futile or inappropriate or harmful treatment—be stopped.

9 *“Pulling the plug is suicide or murder.”* Many people refuse to make a decision to withdraw hydration, nutrition, or respiratory maintenance because they believe such an act constitutes murder. Likewise, to

designate a personal directive such as a Living Will may seem tantamount to suicide. The underlying presupposition is that it is improper to take any control over one’s own death. To do so is seen to usurp the power and prerogative of an all-controlling God. In fact, not to decide is to decide. Not to make a Living Will, designate a surrogate decision maker, or withdraw artificial intervention systems is to decide to abdicate responsibility. It is to relegate the burden of decision making to someone (physician, hospital, committee, court) far less qualified to make it and refuse to accept our ability and responsibility as “co-creators with God” to share in the rational determination of our destiny.

One could just as easily argue that not to pull the plug or make a Living Will designation is to stand in the way of Nature, God, and the normal procession of life to death.

A major theological task for the church is to re-examine its beliefs regarding suicide, assisted suicide, active and passive euthanasia, to adjust to modern technological developments, and to enable individuals to exercise options that heretofore were unacceptable.

10 *“To die of dehydration or starvation in a healthcare setting is inhumane, cruel, and immoral.”* When many people think of food and drink, they imagine sitting down at a table with steaming dishes and good friends. But that image of wholesome food staring

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# *Living Your Vision*

**E** merson said that what we think is what we create; he called this principle the “law of laws.”  
Job stated, “Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee.” James Allen  
said, “The outer conditions of a person’s life will always be found to reflect inner beliefs.”

Seth said, “What exists physically exists first in thought and feeling. There is no other rule.” & These are just a few of the many significant thinkers who pondered the nature of reality and came to understand the same principle: Our thoughts and beliefs create everything that happens in our life. What manifests in our life is a direct result of the thoughts that we are affirming.

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What this means in practical terms is that the conditions and circumstances of our life at this very moment in time are directly a result of what we presently believe. If we want to change any part of our present life, we must first change those beliefs that created it. If we want to create anything new in our life, we must first mentally create the new belief. Nothing happens in our life without a pre-existing belief that brings that thing to pass.

This sounds so simple at first. Why can't we all just affirm good things in our life and see them come to pass? If only the human condition were so simple! What makes the process complex is that *we are generally not aware of what we believe*. The vast majority of the beliefs that we are manifesting are unconscious, and unfortunately many of them are self-limiting.

We indiscriminately accept many limiting beliefs and never realize how much of an effect they are having on our lives. Thoughts like "I'm not good enough" or "I don't have what it takes to have a loving relationship, prosperity, the work I want, peace of mind, etc." profoundly influence the shape of our individual worlds. Most of our pain, fear, and suffering is caused by these unconscious, unexamined, self-limiting beliefs.

To change these beliefs requires commitment, concentration, and courage to examine thoughtfully and alter the ways you view your-

**An empowered person is one who has gone through the effort to find his or her vision and is consistently over time living his or her life based on this truth.**

self and the world. The process of examining and transforming these limiting beliefs is what we call *mental clearing*.

#### **THE PRINCIPLE OF MENTAL CLEARING**

To be able to create the new we must first clear out the old. We can't effectively manifest a new belief if we are simultaneously holding on to an old, entrenched belief that opposes this new idea.

One of the major mistakes made by people working with the manifestation principles is to think that all that is required of them is to affirm what they want and it will happen. They don't realize they must first clear from their mind the self-limiting beliefs. *What manifests is what we*

*really believe, not what we would like to believe*. Until our self-limiting beliefs are made conscious and transformed, they will continue to get in the way and inhibit our ability to create what we want.

Before we can create a belief that we have more financial abundance in our life, we must release our belief that there's not enough to go around. Before we can manifest a more loving attitude toward ourselves, we must first clear away any self-negating beliefs that say we're not good enough. Before we can learn any new spiritual ideas we must be willing to let go of our old ideas.

A story that illustrates this principle tells of a haughty Zen Buddhist scholar who goes to visit a Zen meditation master to learn how to meditate. The master invites the scholar in for tea, and immediately the scholar launches into a monologue on Zen philosophy.

The meditation master listens patiently for some time and then asks the scholar if he would like to have some tea. The scholar agrees and the meditation master begins to pour the tea into the scholar's cup. The cup fills up, yet the master continues to pour, and tea spills all over the table and the scholar. The scholar angrily asks what the teacher is doing. The master quietly replies that his cup was so full there was no room for the tea.

The master made the point that the scholar was so full of his own knowledge that there was no room for new learning. We must create space in order for the new to come in. Yet it is difficult to let go of the familiar. Even when parts of our present life are causing us pain and suffering, we often still won't let go. Our present discomfort is familiar and safe. It may represent our whole identity. So how do we let go?



## THE PRINCIPLE OF VISION

We are most willing to release old beliefs, emotional pain, and other baggage when we have a clear vision of what we will replace it with. The clearer the vision, the more we will be attracted to it, and the less we will need to hold on to self-limiting beliefs.

It's hard to get motivated to clear out the rocks, weeds, and stumps that presently exist on our plot of land without a vision of a garden. We need to see the new trapeze before we are willing to let go of the old one. We need to have a vision of the joy we will experience by loving before we will release the fear we have of being hurt. The principle of vision is: *In order to create anything you must have a vision of what it is you want to manifest. The more definite and clear the vision, the more definite and clear the manifestation.*

You are a sculptor molding an extraordinary, flexible, creative substance—thought. Your creation, which happens to be your life, will exactly embody the ideas and pictures you hold in your mind.

You may not know how you will get from here to there. In fact, you certainly won't know all the steps in between. But until you can envision the possibility, you will not begin to move toward it. Becoming clear about what you want your life to look like is not necessarily easy. Creating a vision for your life requires a willingness to explore and *discover what's important to you*, not somebody else. You need to ask yourself questions like: What do I value? What are my priorities? Where does my passion lie? What gives me meaning? What is my purpose in life? What is possible for me? This process has to be one of the most creative, dynamic, and demanding under-

takings in which you will ever engage.

To the degree that you have a lucid personal vision in your mind, your life will begin to change in response to it.

What is personal power? It is the ability to find your own individual truth and then create your life around this truth. It is finding the essence of yourself, validating it fully, and welcoming it into full expression. *An empowered person is one who has gone through the effort to find his or her truth and create a life vision around it and who is living this vision consistently over time.*

It takes time and effort to look at the limiting beliefs you have formed over a lifetime. These are the things that restrict personal power, that impede your fulfillment, that *disempower* you. And it takes personal power to transform those beliefs and create an evolving life vision that you sustain over a lifetime.

## COMMITMENT

Imagine that you have just made a breakthrough in the empowerment process. You have gained a wonderful insight into yourself and the changes you want to bring about. You've cleared away the mental weeds. You've created an affirmation and visualization that's right on your growing edge. You have a good understanding of how to nourish this affirmation on a daily basis.

What's needed now is the willingness to stay with your affirmation and visualization until it's manifested. The quality of personal power that enables this to happen is commitment.

*Commitment is the willingness to stick with your vision throughout the inevitable ups and downs that occur.* It is the active engagement of your full will and whole heart to carry your original intention through to fruition. It is the willingness to

keep peeling back the layers of unconscious beliefs that come up in the form of your resistances.

Commitment requires much and gives back even more.

It gives us pride, the pride that comes from making good on our inner promises to ourselves.

It gives us confidence, the confidence that comes from seeing that we have what it takes to embody a vision.

It gives us satisfaction, the satisfaction that comes from stretching beyond ourselves and becoming more than we were before.

What is the key to developing commitment? It is having a compelling vision that attracts you irresistibly. You need a vision strong enough to sustain you when your energy and spirits flag. There is where the self-awareness you have embodied in your affirmations and visualizations is so valuable. It enables you to create a vision that you can believe in, a vision that is on your growing edge, a vision that so motivates and excites you that you're willing to stick with it through all the bumps on the ride.

## DISCIPLINE

What happens after we commit to affirming and visualizing the vision we want to bring into our life? What can we do on a daily basis? We practice discipline.

We set up a time and a place to do our mental practice each morning or evening. In between these times, during the day, we stay aware. When old self-negating thoughts come into our mind, we do not allow them to hang around. We deliberately replace them with self-affirming thoughts.

*Discipline is the hands-on aspect of commitment. It's the daily dedication to our vision.* Discipline is very straightforward. It is rhythm with a clear purpose.

Discipline fails when we



attempt to apply it without a compelling vision. Discipline for discipline's sake is pure drudgery. It is not sustainable over time. Athletic coaches, teachers, parents, and others have misunderstood this very important source of power. "Discipline" employed to build character, toughen, or punish is motivation through the negative. It will quite often, in the long run, produce the opposite of what is intended. Negating what you don't want energizes and manifests it. What we think about we create. A compelling vision naturally brings about commitment. Commitment naturally brings about discipline. When our discipline starts to waver (as it will over time) we need to recommit to our vision. This brings life energy to our daily practice. *We need to keep remembering why we're doing what we're doing. This is the secret of true discipline.*

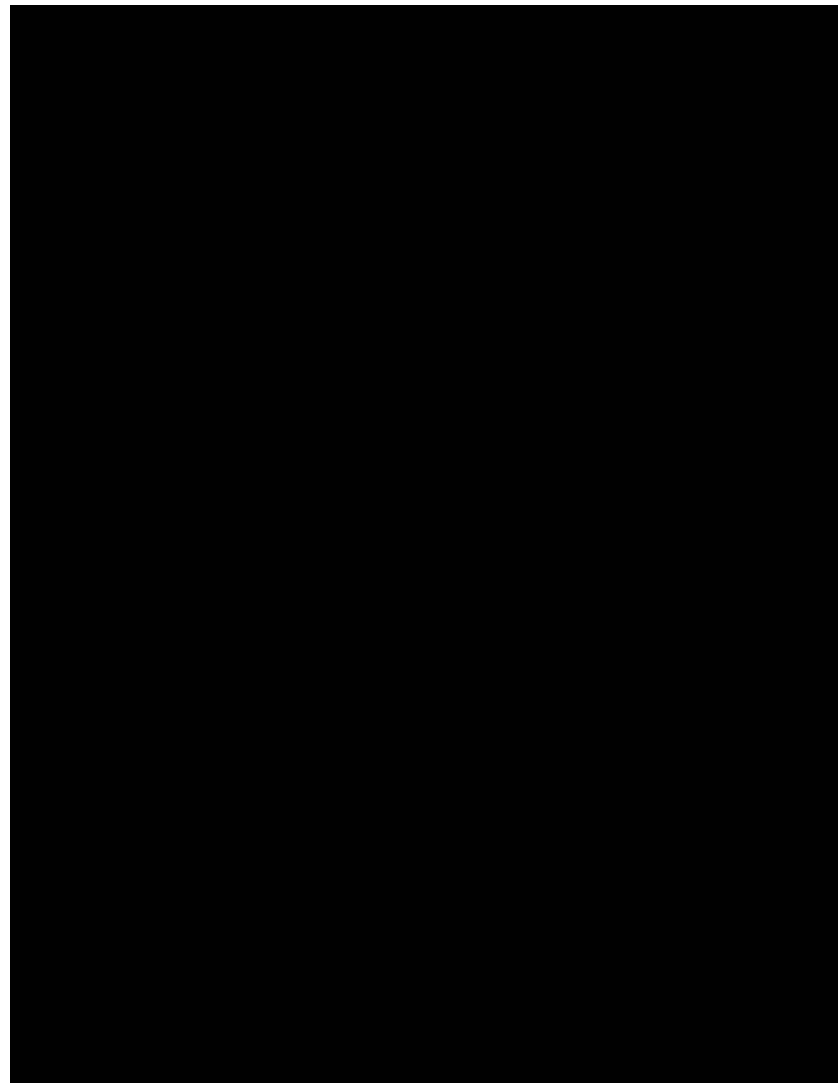
#### SUPPORT SYSTEM

We may have an excellent sense of commitment and discipline, yet still find ourselves slacking off. To keep up our motivation we need something else. That something else is a personal growth support system.

*A support system is comprised of friendships and relationships dedicated to helping us grow.* A support system is a network of people whose priority is to both acknowledge our growth through love and affirmation and to give us honest feedback when we need a push.

A support system can include professionals (like a therapist or mentor) and close friends. It can include a women's group, a men's group, a couple's group, a twelve-step group, a therapy group, a spiritual organization, or something similar.

The critical factor in a support system is that the stated objective of the relationships involved is



EWING GALLOWAY

*Living our vision of life may be as simple as making and keeping commitments for family support.*

personal growth. There are many friendships and intimate relationships that are not explicitly intended to help us grow. These are fine. But we should not misunderstand the nature of such relationships.

You also need to recognize that some relationships actually hold back your growth. These people may be afraid of self-discovery, and this may prevent them from supporting your growth. Or their approach to growing may be dogmatic—they attempt to force their path on you. They may be self-destructive, and their negativity may close you down. If you

have these kinds of influences in your environment, it's all the more important that you seek out a personal growth support system. It's also important that the non-supportive person be directly addressed and the situation changed.

It requires effort and a clear intention to seek out and build a support system. It often takes several attempts before you get what you want. Once you have a support system in place it requires a commitment to keep it alive and vital. It's so very easy to get caught up in the endless busyness of life and neglect your support

system. Of course there may be a time when it's appropriate to let go of some aspect of your support system if it's no longer serving you and you've grown beyond it. You know whether or not you've outgrown it by asking yourself one simple question: Am I growing as a result of being in this group?

Another important kind of support is our physical environment. Our environments at home and at work are constantly affecting us. The colors, the type of art, the sense of order, the noises, and so forth are all influencing our internal state. We can create an environment that offers us calm, joy, inspiration, fun, or any other quality we feel will enhance our growth. However, to create our environment as a conscious part of our support system requires a clear

intention.

Many people create a physical environment when they first move into a space—and never change it. The environment that they are interacting with, day after day, reflects who they were as a person many years ago. They have been growing but their environment has remained static.

With high-quality people and a physical support system, our growth can flourish.

### INNER GUIDANCE

How do we get answers to questions like, "Is this support group helping me grow?" "What's my growing edge?" "What fears or limiting beliefs are blocking me?"

We get those answers from our inner guidance. Inner guidance has many names, depending on how it's being used. Some of these names include "intuition," "a hunch," "the still, small voice within," "our higher self," and "the wisdom within."

To become more aware of oneself, it is essential to draw answers from within. The more facile we are with this process, the easier our growth becomes. And it is easy—it's just a matter of doing it.

There are four steps that we have found helpful in accessing inner guidance.

1. *Get still.* We first need to turn off the mind chatter. This mental chatter is like the static on a radio—it disturbs our ability to hear anything significant. A few deep breaths can usually quiet the mind. If the issue on which you are attempting to receive inner guidance is of a deeper nature, several minutes of meditation on a calming image, such as a peaceful lake, will help.

2. *Ask.* If we want information, we need to ask for it; it doesn't just come. We need to turn on the radio if we want to hear music.

The more clearly we ask the question, the clearer the answer we receive.

3. *Trust.* Many times people get very clear inner guidance but they discount it. They don't trust their own internal knowing. They don't believe in their intuition. They are totally bound in the rational mode of knowing. To prove its validity we must trust the inner guidance we get.

4. *Act.* When you receive inner guidance you must act on it. It doesn't do you any good to know something and not act on it. After you've followed your inner guidance, make a mental note of what happened. How did it turn out? As you experience concrete results from acting on your inner guidance, you begin to use it more. The more you use it, the more refined it gets and the better the results you achieve.

Inner guidance, a receptive source of personal power, is an important complement to the more active powers of commitment and discipline. It is like the fine focus on a binocular. A small correction is often the difference between seeing and not seeing or between a vision manifesting or languishing. Inner guidance provides the fine focus in our lives.

### LIGHTNESS

Unless we approach our growth with a light spirit, we can easily lose perspective. Although we need to be serious about our growth if we want to change, we can't take ourselves too seriously. We need to walk our growth path with a light heart. The very center of the word *enlightenment* is the word *lighten*. As we grow we literally lighten. We shed the heaviness of limiting beliefs and emotional baggage that have weighed us down.

We all have different ways to create more lightness in our lives.

**To become more aware of oneself, it is essential to draw answers from within. The more skilled we are with this process, the easier our growth becomes.**

Some people like to go dancing, others sing; some like to get together with the kinds of people with whom they have a good time. We have several couples we get together with for the sole purpose of having fun. We call our group the Space Rangers and our motto is "The Space Rangers—dedicated to high adventure, play, and flights of magic." For each meeting we learn new jokes, create silly skits, or find new boogie music to dance to. Almost every time we get together our sides ache from laughing so hard at ourselves.

If we can keep our spirits light as we grow, it makes the whole process of growth a great deal easier. When was the last time you had a good belly laugh? Make sure you have a way to keep yourself light.

#### L O V E

To love ourselves, to love another, and to be loved by another all stimulate us to expand and open. It is in this state of loving openness that we are most capable of profound growth. For when we are in such a state our whole being is charged with love, and love is the most powerful motivating force in the universe. We are not approaching our growth out of "shoulds," or fear, or pain, or suffering. We are approaching it out of love.

The more we approach our growth as an act of self-love, the easier it becomes. It is fine for the impetus to grow to emerge out of loving and being loved by another, but we need to be careful not to set up a dependency on external love to motivate us. *The primary love relationship needs to be with the self.* We need genuinely to accept, validate, and nurture our selves each step along the way. It is vital that we regularly take time to appreciate and value ourselves for who we are now and who we're

becoming. We need wholeheartedly to love ourselves.

The way to cultivate this love is to do just what you're doing—committing to self-discovery. As you open to deeper parts of yourself, the more in touch with your true nature you get and the more you discover its essence—love. It is this love that melts resistances, fears, and self-negation. It is this love that has compassion and patience for the human condition. It is this love that makes being human the special privilege and wonder that it is.

#### F I N D I N G   Y O U R O W N   T R U T H

This source of personal power is without doubt the most central to our definition of empowerment. *An empowered person has gone through the effort to find his or her own truth and is consistently over time living his or her life based on this truth.*

It is so easy to let someone else set up camp in our minds, to accept another's beliefs, to run our lives by another's values. Emerson, in his famous essay on self-reliance, says it well: "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind... When private men shall act with original views, the luster will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of the individual." Every one of us is a unique being with particular gifts, strengths, needs, lessons to learn, challenges to overcome, and contributions to make to the world. Our primary aspiration should be the discovery and creation of a life based on this composite of our uniqueness.

Yet it isn't easy to break out of the strong enculturation of expecting someone out there—the expert—to figure out the truth for us. We expect the doctor, the attorney, the newscaster, the politician, the priest, the guru, the

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therapist to give us the answer. In our fast-food culture, we aren't encouraged to take the time to know who we are and what's important to us. We have become estranged from ourselves and one of our greatest sources of personal power—our unique inner truth.

Finding our own truth allows us to have a strong foundation upon which to build. It gives us core values and beliefs that we can use to evaluate our decisions. It gives us a solid identity from which we can develop a point of view. It gives us criteria for how we want to grow...and much more.

Your own truth must be the guiding force for creating your life as you want it. And no one but you can create that truth. •

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Creating Your Life as You Want."  
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# Soul Making

**T***he Irish have an ancient tradition they call "soul-making," reviewing the direction of one's life and eventually attempting to make peace with the physical and the spiritual worlds, so closely connected, and our place within them. This reconciliation process necessarily involves self-confrontation and the courage to change and as such can be especially disturbing and anxiety-provoking. It can induce and often does bring out a great deal of grief, anger, and rage. Yet in the long run, soul-making is most rewarding, for it can teach us wisdom, compassion, and when we have gotten some distance from the pain, gratitude for all that has been a part of that reconciliation process—even the depths of our despair.*

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Soul-making is the crucial task when we reach midlife. Although similar to all of life's major transitions, that rite of passage especially is a time of struggle, of deep and aching pain, of the unmasking of illusions. It is definitely a journey into the unknown. It is as if we awake one day and find ourselves in a strange land, a foreign territory, a twilight zone where traditional roles, old perceptions, and comfortable habits no longer seem to fit. Like Alice in Wonderland or the children of Narnia, what we find through the looking glass or behind the wardrobe door can fill us initially with wonder and amazement. These early responses, however, soon give way to confusion over the strange beasts encountered in those mysterious lands as well as the terror of our own powerlessness.

We discover the need to acknowledge, accept, and integrate inner polarities we didn't know existed. We find that forgotten wounds from early childhood *and* fears of growing old can no longer be repressed. We become excited about new ideas and dreams yet to be fulfilled, *and* we feel guilty for destructive behaviors inflicted often upon those we love the most as we search for new expressions of our creativity. We want to belong *and* we yearn for solitude. We are pulled between qualities and states-of-being that in the past were associated exclusively with the "masculine" or the "feminine" but by midlife can no longer be so easily dichotomized. We come to see that we must be both assertive

*and* gentle, just *and* compassionate, nurturing *and* challenging of those people and institutions we love. Most of all, in our search for wisdom we find, as did the French writer Pascal, that truth is discerned "not only through our reason but also through our heart."

Whatever the length or duration of the journey into midlife, it necessarily involves the painful process of conversion in which one becomes less concerned with recognition, success, and power and more with the values of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, integrity, generativity. It is a process that can lead to forgiveness and reconciliation, often with one's parents, siblings, spouse,

children, friends and enemies alike—but only, it seems, if one begins with oneself. For those who survive, this journey, accompanied as it is by much agony, can also result in the joy associated with giving birth. It can become a pilgrimage toward greater freedom and wholeness when we are given the courage to face the terror of the unknown and to persist, despite all those parts of ourselves and all those relationships and institutions that seem to want us to stay the way we were. Perhaps most importantly, the journey into midlife, like so many of our crises and transitions, can become a form of pilgrimage when we invite God to join us as our com-

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panion, even though that God may seem at the time more antagonist than friend. (In retrospect, we may discover, as Jacob did in his struggle with the angel, that these two forms of relating are not necessarily exclusive roles.)

This process of soul-making, since it must begin with ourselves, is intimately related to the development of our own spirituality, based not so much upon exterior dogmas and formal doctrines as it is on a personal commitment to the search for wisdom and the holy life. Ultimately, it may result in the important ministry of mentoring, for developmental psychologists as well as our Judeo-Christian spiritual traditions believe that, although we can serve various mentoring roles and functions earlier in life, we become mentors in the fuller sense only after reaching our forties or fifties. While we may become better mentors, friends, and spiritual guides at midlife, it is also the

experience of many that as we move into midlife help is often found in unexpected people and places along the way.

These benevolent helpers have been identified in various ways by different peoples. The Greeks and Romans believed that every person had a genius, daemon, guardian spirit, or "heavenly twin" which, linked with one's personality and soul through friendship, provided personal care, protection, and guidance. Certain Native American shamans and those of pre-literate peoples identified their spiritual power and vocation of service to the tribe with at least one guardian or tutelary spirit, often acquired in a vision quest in the wilderness. This helpful spirit, frequently identified with some animal, became an alter ego or another self and was called simply a friend or companion. The Desert Christians of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine looked to each other, as

well as to angelic powers, for spiritual guidance and healing—always, of course, placing their ultimate trust in the Holy Spirit.

Eastern Orthodox Christians have the tradition of the *staretz*, the wise person, ordained or lay, who acts as a confessor and spiritual director, and whose guidance, frequently in the form of dreams, can continue after his or her death. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung experienced in his personal and professional life the help of what he called "living" and "ghostly gurus," including at least one significant inner guide, Philemon, who appeared in his dreams.

The ancient Celtic Christians had their own tradition of guidance and a word associated with it: *anamchara*, Gaelic for "friend of the soul"; and they believed, as the Early Christian saint and shaman Brigit said, that "anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head."

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PHOTO BY DEBORAH THARP



# *Creativity and Aging*

**I**n “The Courage to Create,” I tried to make the point that all of us have the potential to be creative. I think the later years ought to be the time when we enjoy the creativity that we have. I’ve always felt that asking people if they are creative or not is a foolish question. The question really ought to be put this way: What is it that you make? What is it that you do? When we think in those terms, then all of us are creative—we all do things, make things. ✂ The problem isn’t that all of us aren’t creative but that some of us are using our creativity more than others. Some of us have developed the courage to use what we have, while others have not. And the stumbling block is fear, simply fear. Let’s face it, creative tasks are scary. It takes a throwing of one’s self into it. When you throw yourself into something completely, you run the risk of failure. You are alone in the process, and this requires solitude and courage.

*Rollo May, a therapist, is a humanist by temperament. He is committed to the basic principles that we are responsible for the lives we lead and that we make choices in all things and must accept the consequences. The more we know about ourselves, the more fulfilling these choices can be. His books include "The Courage to Create," "Love and Will," "Man's Search for Himself," "The Meaning of Anxiety," and "Freedom and Destiny." Writing, thinking, and theorizing continue to dominate Rollo May's later years. He is eighty-two.*



One of the problems of living creatively in late life is that it gets harder as you grow old. Thomas Mann once said that writing is something that becomes more difficult the more you do it. This is because one's idea of what's acceptable and what's not becomes more rarefied when one gets older. You have higher standards, you might say. So you have to work harder and harder the older you get, which is the exact opposite of what we've planned for.

But I feel very strongly that creativity keeps us fresh, even though it requires great discipline and struggle. Fresh is the word I use, not young. I don't see becoming young as desirable at all, because young people often don't have the creativity that we have as we grow older. Creativity keeps us fresh; it keeps us alive, keeps us moving forward. You are never fully satisfied; you are always working and reworking your art, your book, your garden, whatever. I don't buy this stuff at all about youth being the happy time. My youth was not, and I don't think other people's youths were so great either. I think the older we get, the fresher we ought to get. We face our fears. We tackle them head on. We have the courage to

create.

People in their eighties I've talked with, like B. F. Skinner or Hannah Tillich, have told me that they have only two hours a day in which they can work creatively. The rest of the day they devote to busy work. So you have to plan your days properly and guard your working time—your prime time—very carefully. I stay in my studio each day for four hours, but the last hour and a half isn't worth very much. It was hard for me to accept but what can I do? All I can do is make the most of the creative time I've got. So for two and a half hours I'm moving marvelously; the rest of the time I'm simply fiddling around. But I find joy in fiddling too. I have to accept the fact that I'm not a god. I have to accept my destiny. I have to accept the fact that I can only do creative work for a few hours a day, but that doesn't diminish one iota the joy I get from those two hours. I don't believe in happiness,

but I do believe in joy.

I don't seek happiness particularly, but I do seek joy. Joy is the feeling of exhilaration, the buoyancy that comes from creating something you are pleased with. When you are in a state of joy, you don't feel like eating and you don't feel like sex—all of these are put aside and you are in a state of complete excitement. Joy is not limited to the young; it is there for all of us.

As I have said many times over the years, all of us have to take responsibility for our lives. If we want to live joyful lives, we've got to work at it. When I contracted tuberculosis as a young man, I gave myself over to the physicians, did everything they told me to, but I wasn't getting any better. The X rays each month looked worse and worse. Then I realized that I've got to take responsibility for my recovery, that I'm the one who can tell whether I'm getting better or not, whether I'm ener-

THOMAS CRAIG

getic or whether I need to rest. I began to listen to my body and slowly I got better. I was very poor then; we had three children, and my wife and I had no money. I borrowed whatever I could from my friends, and it was such that I never got out of debt until I was fifty years old. But I still think that period of tuberculosis was the single most important experience in my life. I learned then that not only was I responsible for the disease, but I could stand up, I could fight back, I could creatively tackle my problem.

To this day I believe strongly that overcoming disease is a creative process. One of my lungs from the tuberculosis never came back fully but I now ride my bike twenty-four miles a week, I swim, and I climb trees. I had to learn that health is not something that is given to you; it is something you have to achieve, which is why I see it as a creative process. You

must learn to be sensitive to your strength, about when you need rest, what you can do, what you can't do, how you must exercise. All of these things are creative processes. Now I watch my health very closely. For one thing, I meditate. I eat with care. I watch my cholesterol. I make sure that I sleep at least seven and half hours a night, and I always take a half hour nap after every lunch. If I stopped these things I would, in two or three months, be a wreck. Those things are necessary for the life I love.

I believe that one lives as long as one has something to contribute. All the creative people that I've known have died once

they stopped being creative. Now, I may have the cart before the horse there—they may have stopped their creativity because they sensed that something was being blocked—but I have this prejudice that we live so long as we have something important to say. Once we've said it, we die. Kierkegaard died in his middle forties, but he said what he needed to say. Pascal died in his late fifties, but he said what he needed to say. So I don't know that time is so crucial in this matter of death. Does it make a difference whether you die in your thirties or in your eighties? It seems to me there is an element of eternity and

you ought to judge these things not by the number of years somebody lived but by the concept of eternity. One can live an eternal life at thirty or one can live such a

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DAVID L. DEVRIES

# Understanding Shame

M I C H A E L N I C H O L S

**Shame is a  
painful  
discrepancy  
between our  
image of who  
we'd like to be  
and our  
perception of an  
ugly reality.**

Michael P. Nichols, Professor of Psychiatry at Albany Medical College, is the author of "The Power of the Family" and "Turning Forty in the Eighties." He is on the editorial board of *Family Process* and *The Family Therapy Networker*.



The first stab of shame comes from sudden and unexpected exposure to the critical eyes of another person. We stand revealed, painfully diminished. The genesis of this emotion is a process that moves from the outside in. Shame has to be taught. We learn to be ashamed of, and even disown, those parts of ourselves that are rejected, ridiculed, or humiliated by our parents. Conflicts that originate interpersonally with anxiety or shame generated between parent and child then become internalized and eventually unconscious. The result of this process of internalization is a selective disowning, which alienates us from shamed parts of the self, and a gradual lowering of self-esteem, which alienates us from other people.

One of the problems with discussing shame is that, because it is so painful, it's buried—not dead, just buried. Most people have very little idea of the role shame plays in their lives; it's buried too deep. The way to achieve self-respect is not to deny shameful feelings of inadequacy but to face them. Let's begin by examining the experience of shame.

#### SHAME AS AN EFFECT

The immediate shock of shame is sudden exposure. It has the quality of an unexpected, caught-in-the-act feeling, like dropping through a trap door. Shameful exposure can come about when someone penetrates our privacy or when we lose control. The prototype of shameful loss of control is when a child wets the bed and is then scolded and punished for it. One of the most important lessons of childhood is that our bodies, "temples of the soul," are filled with disgusting discharges that must be hidden, put in special places,

and gotten rid of as quickly and noiselessly as possible. "Full of shit" did not start out as a metaphor.

As children we learned the imperative to gain and maintain control over strong desires and weak emotions: "Don't touch yourself *there!*" "Don't you speak to me that way, young lady!" "Big boys don't cry." "That isn't very ladylike!" So much to learn, so much to hide.

By the time we reach adulthood, we've been inculcated against "losing control." We've learned that for adults it's shameful to give way to lust or violence, cry more than a little, get mad and start yelling, look where we're not supposed to, be seen when we're not supposed to be—give up, give in, let go, fall down, or reveal what should be concealed. Much depends on the setting. Imagine an exquisitely gowned, superbly coiffed, subtly scented, beautiful woman who suddenly belches.

We have rituals for relaxing control—"Loosen up, have a drink"; "It's a party, enjoy yourself"—and taboos against overdoing it—"Get a hold of yourself"; "Don't be a baby"; "What do you think you're doing?" and, of course, "You should be ashamed!"

The experience of shame is bipolar. At the subject pole is the actor; at the object pole, a witness. The critical aspect of the subjective experience is what one is ashamed of, originally something specific, eventually the whole person. Shame is an affect with an inverse relationship to self-respect and integrity.

The more shame we feel, the less we respect ourselves. It is a self-related, narcissistically oriented feeling. Beneath pretense and self-doubt, we are objects of our own affection. Shame is a piercing awareness of ourselves as somehow fundamentally deficient—instant self-hatred.

#### SHAME AS AN ATTITUDE

We think of humiliating experiences as causing shame. Consider: At the moment of passionate embrace a man's erection wilts and the woman he's with gives him a scornful, disgusted look. After a

*We feel shame, not when something happens to make us ashamed but when something happens to expose the shame that's already inside us.*

woman delivers a very important presentation, she discovers that her dress is spotted with menstrual fluid. You can imagine how these two burned with shame, and you'd be inclined to say that these terrible incidents "made them ashamed." But that's not quite right. The humiliations of adulthood don't *cause* shame, they expose it. Pay attention, this is important: *The shame is already there.* We don't normally notice because it's repressed but deep in our hearts, most of us have a vast reservoir of self-loathing. That self-loathing is unbearable, so we stuff it down and lock it away. Repression seals it in. We feel shame, not when something happens to *make* us ashamed but when something happens to *expose* the shame that's already inside us.

Shame is a painful discrepancy between our image of who we'd like to be and our perception of an ugly reality. The experience implies being caught, being observed by an outside witness who condemns. The original witness to our shame is, of course, a scolding parent; later, the superego will do. Yet shame is doubled when it's exposed to the eyes of others.

Repeated re-exposure to shame in adulthood recapitulates the process by which a shameful image of the self was laid down in the first place. Isolated experiences of shame are like cold drops of water. When there are enough of them, the drops run together into one big icy puddle. The result is an abiding sense of not being good enough as a person—defective. In this way, shame becomes part of one's identity. "I *feel* ashamed" becomes "I am shameful." The conscious experience of internalized shame may be feelings of inadequacy, rejection, or self-doubt; feeling guilt-ridden or unlovable; and permanent loneliness—but the underlying problem is shame.

#### S H A M E   A S   A N   A N X I E T Y

Shame is also a form of signal anxiety, evoked by the imminent danger of exposure to humiliation. Anxiety is a primitive physiological reflex pattern;

*The shame of dirtiness applies literally to uncleanliness and figuratively to moral corruption. "Dirty" is the word we use for unchecked human appetites. Giving way to any of the seven deadly sins—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, or sloth—makes us vile, foul, and filthy—but, after all, human.*

shame is this biological response plus the idea that the upset is due to one being despicable and worthless. What is feared is contemptuous rejection. This anxiety can be acute when, for example, we're called on to perform or speak in public. The wish is to parade one's self with pride, to feel the opposite of shame—honor, dignity, respect; the fear is that you'll fall flat on your face.

This shame-anxiety can lead to a general attitude of bashfulness and the avoidance of situations and actions that might bring about humiliation. The many forms that insecurity takes are, in fact, shame-anxiety expanded and generalized. Embarrassment, shyness, social phobia, inferiority feelings, and low self-esteem—all of these radiate from shame-anxiety. Anything that can radiate that far must be highly charged indeed. Shame is hot. It burns. On some people it even shows. One thing you can't hide is blushing. Here, for example, is Tennessee Williams's account of how shame anxiety becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I remember the occasion on which this constant blushing had its beginning. I believe it was in a class in plane geometry. I happened to look across the aisle and a dark and attractive girl was looking directly into my eyes and at once I felt my face burning. It burned more and more intensely after I had to face front again. My God, I thought, I'm blushing because she looked into my eyes or I into hers and suppose this happens whenever my eyes look into the eyes of another?

As soon as I had entertained that nightmarish speculation, it was immediately turned into reality.

Literally, from that incident on, and almost without remission for the next four or five years, I would blush whenever a pair of human eyes, male or female, would meet mine.

We blush, we burn, our hearts pound from fear of shame. What is it we're so ashamed of?



### “WHAT’S WRONG WITH ME?”

We may speak, incorrectly, of being ashamed of certain actions, but shame is about who we are, not what we do. We feel guilty about breaking the rules, ashamed of ourselves for doing so. Shame is closer to identity than action; no single act is seen as wrong and therefore reparable.

If you lie to a friend and feel guilty, you can confess and apologize. If you lie to a friend and get caught before you can confess, you may feel so ashamed that you can’t even face that friend. In shame, it is the self that feels worthless. If you are bad, you can make amends. If you are worthless, *there’s nothing you can do about it.*

What is it about the self that is so unacceptable? What is the basic content of shame? According to Leon Wurmser, one of the most astute psychoanalytic students of shame, human beings are ashamed of three things above all else: weakness, dirtiness, and defec-tiveness.

### W E A K N E S S

Children, in their naive cruelty, mock each other with these shameful traits. What do they call weak-lings? “Sissy,” “wimp,” “namby-pamby,” “fraidy-cat,” “big baby,” “chicken,” “momma’s boy,” “teacher’s pet.” Most of these names are so overworked that they lose their sting—unless *you* are the kid they call “chicken” *and* you’re afraid it’s true.

We may outgrow the name-calling, but we don’t outgrow the fear of weakness. As we grow older, phys-ical weakness becomes more acceptable but not

incompetence, stupidity, or moral cowardice. The worst weakness is where we’re supposed to be strong: impotence, literally or figuratively, for men; selfish-ness for women. A person who prides himself or her-self on brains may even feel ashamed of not being able to remember answers to Trivial Pursuit questions. In our culture, even old is bad, shameful. When we get old, we become “feeble,” “invalid,” “incompetent,” “incontinent,” “senile,” “old fogies.” Better stay young—and strong.

### D I R T I N E S S

The shame of dirtiness applies literally to unclean-ness and figuratively to moral corruption. “Dirty” is the word we use for unchecked human appetites. Giving way to any of the seven deadly sins—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, or sloth—makes us vile, foul, and filthy—but, after all, human.

If you have any doubt about how anxious people are to avoid the shame of being exposed as dirty, take note of the number of advertisements for personal hygiene products—not to make us beautiful, just to hide our dirty smells. It’s not enough to take a shower and brush our teeth. We have to scrub, scour, disin-fect, deodorize, scent, spray, powder, and perfume ourselves. We disinfect our homes and then cloud the rooms with scents of pine and flowers. We deodorize our kitchens and bathrooms and rugs and cars and the cat’s litter box. We can even buy deodorizing bone-shaped biscuits for Bowser, in case he has doggie bad breath. Much worse, of course, is the dread prospect of human bad breath. So gargle twice a day with Scope

(Listerine if you're tough), freshen your breath with Clorets, and spray it with Binaca if someone attractive approaches. To protect ourselves from an outbreak of BO, we can choose "long-lasting protection," "longer-lasting protection," or "super-long-lasting protection"—depending, I suppose, more on how anxious we are than on how bad we smell. Some deodorants are "manly," others are "strong enough for a man but made for a woman." Ladies are also advised to...well, you know...use Summer's Eve. And don't forget Odor Eaters for your shoes. God forbid you should smell like a human being.

In the same way, extreme politeness which most of us admire may be a negative achievement, driven more by shame about what is natural and spontaneously human than by consideration for other people's feelings.

#### DEFECTIVENESS

The third of the three shameful qualities is defectiveness. We are ashamed of physical or mental shortcomings. The content of this shame, what anyone considers defects in the self, varies greatly. Some people are ashamed of anything that makes them conspicuous—their height, weight, hair color, facial

features—especially if it runs counter to sex-role stereotypes. A young man may be proud of being tall, a young woman may be ashamed of it. Culture shapes shame, and every now and then we have public campaigns to rescue certain groups from shameful regard. It's now officially okay to be black, female, crippled, homosexual, or old. But how real is our acceptance when we sugarcoat reality by relabeling these variations on the human condition? So far, women are still women, but homosexuals are "gays," crippled people are "handicapped," elderly people are "senior citizens" or—yeuch!—"golden agers," and as of this writing there is a campaign to substitute "African-American" for those we used to call blacks and before that Negroes.

#### HIDING FROM OTHERS BECOMES ALIENATION FROM THE SELF

Just as exposure is the immediate cause of shame, the immediate response is to hide. In fact, the linguistic root of the word "shame" is to hide or cover up. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "shame" is derived from a Teutonic root *skam/skem*, meaning "sense of shame." Earlier still, it can be

PHOTO BY DEBORAH THARP

traced back to the Indo-European root *kam/kem*, meaning “to cover, to veil, to hide.” The prefixed *s* (*skam*) adds the reflexive meaning, “to cover oneself.” The wish to hide is inherent in and inseparable from shame.

Imagine for a moment the soul-chilling humiliation Hester Prynne had to endure when not only was her adultery exposed, but she was forced to submit to the scornful eyes of the community, shackled to the stock, and branded with the scarlet letter *A*.

There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature... no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame... under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes... Hester Prynne meanwhile kept her place upon the pedestal of shame, with glazed eyes and an air of weary indifference... her spirit could only shelter itself beneath a stony crust of insensibility.

Small children hide their faces or run to their rooms when they are shamed. The adult version of this wish to disappear is withdrawal. When we're shamed, we want to be alone, to regain equanimity, and avoid further humiliation. In time, shame leads to a pattern of withdrawal and avoidance. Shame casts a large shadow over relationships, eclipsing the pleasure of companionship with fear of further exposure and with it rejection.

You don't have to move your feet to hide. Psychological retreat is every bit as isolating as physical seclusion.

Perhaps more so. Even when the habit of avoidance becomes stamped in character, it is still a defense aimed at external danger: the danger of exposure, shame, and rejection. What happens when the enemy is within, when shame is internalized? Defenses must now be aimed at one's self. Avoidance is transferred to the inner life, where it is installed as selective disowning of potentially shameful parts of the self.

How can we live with ourselves if the self is shame-

fully flawed? We do to ourselves as was done unto us. We disown those parts of the self that were rejected when we felt helpless in a hostile world.

One of my patients was the youngest of four children in a highly competitive Boston Brahmin family. The children anxiously paraded their achievements for their parents' approval and just as anxiously belittled each other's accomplishments. Mockery flowed downhill. The fact that the mockery her three older brothers dished out was a projection of their own anxiety did not lessen its mortifying impact. When they allowed her to play with them at all, they

relegated her to subhuman roles. If the boys were cowboys, she was a dog. Not wanting to be left out, she complied. Later, when prizes were won in school, the boys scoffed at any accomplishments their little sister might dare to share with them. So she first learned not to share and then, to make her defense complete, she learned not to succeed, not even to compete. Today, the brothers are successful attorneys like their father. Their sister, with her 140 IQ, works as a secretary for some man with half her talent.

We know so little about ourselves, least of all the nature of painful feelings against which we protect ourselves by forcing them out of consciousness. This is perhaps more true of shame than of any other unhappy emotion. We underestimate the importance of shame in our lives because it's too painful to bear. So we keep it locked away where we don't have to face it.

Another painful emotion with which we are more familiar is guilt,

which is often confused with shame.

#### S H A M E V S . G U I L T

The primary distinction between guilt and shame is the difference between the evil of being too power-

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*The primary distinction between guilt and shame is the difference between the evil of being too powerful and the disgrace of being too weak... Guilt is bad, shame is worse.*

A N T H O N Y   D E M E L L O

# *Happiness Happens*

**C**ome home to yourself. Observe yourself. Self-observation is such a delightful and extraordinary thing. After a while you don't have to make any effort because as illusions begin to crumble; you begin to know things that cannot be described. It's called happiness. Everything changes and you become addicted to awareness.

*Anthony De Mello was known throughout the world for his writings and spiritual conferences. He died suddenly in 1987. Among his many books are "Sadhana" and "The Song of the Bird."*



There's the story of the disciple who went to the master and said, "Could you give me a word of wisdom? Could you tell me something that would guide me through my days?" It was the master's day of silence, so he picked up a pad. It said, "Awareness." When the disciple saw it, he said, "This is too brief. Can you expand on it a bit?" So the master took back the pad and wrote, "Awareness, awareness, awareness." The disciple said, "Yes, but what does it mean?" The master took back the pad and wrote, "Awareness, awareness, awareness means—awareness."

That's what it is to watch yourself. No one can show you how to do it, because he would be giving you a technique; he would be programming you. But watch yourself. When you talk to someone, are you aware of it or are you simply identifying with it? When you got angry with somebody, were you aware that you were angry or were you simply identifying with your anger? Later when you had the time, did you study your experience and attempt to understand it? Where did it come from? What brought it on? I don't know of any other way to awareness. You only change what you understand. What you do not understand and are not aware of, you repress. You don't change. But when you understand it, it changes.

I am sometimes asked, "Is this growing in awareness a gradual thing, or is it a 'whammo' kind of thing?" There are some lucky people who see this in a flash. They

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including the  
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admitting that you  
are wrong."**

just become aware. There are others who keep growing into it, slowly, gradually, increasingly. They begin to see things. Illusions drop away, fantasies are peeled away, and they start to get in touch with facts. There's no general rule. There's a famous story about the lion who came upon a flock of sheep and to his amazement found a lion among the

sheep. It was a lion who had been brought up by the sheep ever since he was a cub. It would bleat like a sheep and run around like a sheep. The lion went straight for him and when the sheep-lion stood in front of the real one, he trembled in every limb. And the lion said to him, "What are you doing among these sheep?" And the sheep-lion said, "I am a sheep." And the lion said, "Oh no you're not. You're coming with me." So he took the sheep-lion to a pool and said, "Look!" And when the sheep-lion looked at his reflection in the water, he let out a mighty roar and in that moment he was transformed. He was never the same again.

If you're lucky and the gods are gracious or if you are gifted with divine grace (use any theological expression you want), you might suddenly understand who "I" is and you'll never be the same again, never. Nothing will ever be able to touch you again and no one will ever be able to hurt you again.

You will fear no one and you will fear nothing. Isn't that extraordinary? You'll live like a king, like a queen. This is what it means to live like royalty. Not rubbish like getting your picture in the newspapers or having a lot of money. That's a lot of rot. You fear no one because you're perfectly content to be nobody. You don't give a damn about success or failure. They mean nothing. Honor, disgrace, they mean nothing! If you make a fool of yourself, that means nothing either. Isn't that a wonderful state to be in! Some people arrive at this goal painstakingly, step by step, through months and weeks of self-awareness. But I'll promise you this: I have not known a single person who gave time to being aware who didn't see a difference in a matter of weeks. The quality

of their lives change, so they don't have to take it on faith anymore. They see it; they're different. They react differently. In fact, they react less and act more. You see things you've never seen before.

You're much more energetic, much more alive. People think that if they had no cravings, they'd be like deadwood. But in fact they'd lose their tension. Get rid of your fear of failure, your tensions about succeeding, you will be yourself. Relaxed. You wouldn't be driving with your brakes on. That's what would happen.

There's a lovely saying of Tranxu, a great Chinese sage, that I took the trouble to learn by heart. It goes: "When the archer shoots for no particular prize, he has all his skills; when he shoots to win a brass buckle, he is already nervous; when he shoots for a gold prize, he goes blind, sees two targets, and is out of his mind. His skill has not changed, but the prize divides him. He cares! He thinks more of winning than of shooting and the need to win drains him of power." Isn't that an image of what most people are? When you're living for nothing, you've got all your skills, you've got all your energy, you're relaxed, you don't care, it doesn't matter whether you win or lose.

Now there's *human* living for you. That's what life is all about. That can only come from awareness. And in awareness you will understand that honor doesn't mean a thing. It's a social convention, that's all. That's why the mystics and the prophets didn't bother one bit about it. Honor or disgrace meant nothing to them. They were living in another world, in the world of the awakened. Success or failure meant nothing to them. They had the attitude, "I'm an ass, you're an ass, so where's the problem?"

**We were told that  
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isn't these things.**

Someone once said, "The three most difficult things for a human being are not physical feats or intellectual achievements. They are, first, returning love for hate; second, including the excluded; third, admitting that you are wrong." But these are the easiest things in the world if you haven't identified with the "me." You can say things like, "I'm wrong! If you knew me better, you'd see how often I'm wrong. What would you expect from an ass?" But if I haven't identified with these aspects of "me," you can't hurt me. Initially, the old conditioning will kick in and you'll be depressed and anxious. You'll grieve, cry, and so on. "Before enlightenment, I used to be depressed; after enlightenment, I continue to be depressed." But there's a difference: I don't identify with it anymore. Do you know what a big difference that is?

You step outside of yourself and look at that depression, and don't identify with it. You don't

do a thing to make it go away; you are perfectly willing to go on with your life while it passes through you and disappears. If you don't know what that means, you really have something to look forward to. And anxiety? There it comes and you're not troubled. How strange! You're anxious but you're not troubled.

Isn't that a paradox? And you're willing to let this cloud come in because the more you fight it, the more power you give it. You're willing to observe it as it passes by. You can be happy in your anxiety. Isn't that crazy? You can be happy in your depression. But you can't have the wrong notion of happiness. Did you think happiness was excitement or thrills? That's what causes the depression. Didn't anyone tell you that? You're thrilled, all right, but you're just preparing the way for your next depression. You're thrilled but you pick up the anxiety behind that: How can I make it last? That's not happiness, that's addiction.

I wonder how many non-addicts there are reading this. If you're anything like the average person, there are few, very few. Don't look down your nose at the alcoholics and the drug addicts; maybe you're just as addicted as they are. The first time I got a glimpse of this new world, it was terrifying. I understood what it meant to be alone, with nowhere to rest your head, to leave everyone free and be free yourself, to be special to no one and love everyone—because love does that. It shines on good and bad alike; it makes rain fall on saints and sinners alike.

Is it possible for the rose to say, "I will give my fragrance to the good people who smell me but I will withhold it from the bad?" Or is it possible for the lamp to say, "I will give my light to the



good people in this room but I will withhold it from the evil people?" Or can a tree say, "I'll give my shade to the good people who rest under me but I will withhold it from the bad?" These are images of what love is about.

It's been there all along, staring us in the face in the scriptures, though we never cared to see it because we were so drowned in what our culture calls love with its love songs and poems—that isn't love at all, that's the opposite of love. That's desire and control and possessiveness. That's manipulation and fear and anxiety—that's not love. We were told that happiness is a smooth complexion, a holiday resort. It isn't these things but we have subtle ways of making our happiness depend on other things, both within ourselves and outside ourselves. We say, "I refuse to be happy until my neurosis goes." I have good news for you; You can be happy right now, *with* the neurosis, You want even better news? There's only one reason why you're not experiencing what in India we call *anand*—bliss, bliss. There's only one reason why you're not experiencing bliss at this present moment, and it's because you're thinking or focusing on what you don't have. Otherwise you would be experiencing bliss. You're focusing on what you don't have. But, right now you have everything you need to be in bliss.

Jesus was talking horse sense to lay people, to starving people, to poor people. He was telling them good news. It's yours for the taking, But who listens? No one's interested; they'd rather be asleep. •

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## Death Myths

*Continued from page 57*

invitingly at us (and we, hungrily, back at it) is vastly different from the reality of the dying patient, or even the vegetative non-dying patient, who is maintained by artificial nutrition and artificial hydration. Instead, picture blue humming boxes sucking high calorie pastel liquid from bags and bottles and forcing it through clear plastic tubing into the patient's nose or directly into the stomach or intestine. This artificial intervention is ethically and legally parallel to the use of a respirator that artificially pumps air in and out of failing lungs. In addition, it is important to realize that the natural process of death is totally subverted by our demand that loved ones die in the midst of high-tech drama. In fact, before the technological armamentarium included such things as respirators, i.v. pumps, or the Thumper (mechanically-conducted CPR) patients usually went home to die, assisted only by drugs to relieve the pain. Anorexia (lack or loss of appetite) first set in, followed closely by dehydration and malnutrition.

Dehydration and malnutrition cause azotemia, (a condition in which) the body's waste nitrogen products become elevated in the blood, and these products, acting as a natural sedative, diminish a patient's awareness and elevate the pain threshold. Appetite decreases, alertness diminishes, and the obtunded patient (one whose senses are dulled) dies; the stuporous state suffices to free the patient of pain.

The technological imperative to have patients die in electrolyte balance and well-hydrated is a grave disservice. It serves only to ward

off the sedative effect of the azotemia. The result not only increases pain perception, but also adds to the mental agony of the patient who is kept alert enough to appreciate his or her situation.

For increasing numbers of people, to die of dehydration or starvation while being kept comfortable with the large array of palliative drugs available is preferable and much more humane than the prolonged dying by incessant medical intervention that is demanded of patients by misinformed relatives and practitioners, acting on outdated and ineffectual death myths.

It is clear that these death myths at one time served a proper and meaningful role in medical decision making. It is equally clear that they can no longer serve that same role. As a part of the standard cultural presuppositions about life, death, and medicine, these myths stood to call all the available medical resources to the service of life at any cost. But current technology has changed the perspective about and meaning of the concepts of life, death, and medicine. As these concepts are revised in light of even newer treatment options, we will need to develop a different, more flexible set of "death myths" to guide our treatment decisions. It is important to examine and acknowledge how much we rely on these outdated presuppositions. Only then will they not become impediments to caring, meaningful decision making regarding the treatment and life support choices offered to our loved ones and to ourselves. •

*From "Surviving Death: A Practical Guide to Caring for the Dying and Bereaved." Copyright 1991 by Charles Meyer (144pp, \$9.95). Printed with permission from the publisher, Twenty-Third Publications, POB 180 Mystic, CT 06355. (800)321-0411*

# Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

## *Passion for Life: Psychology and the Human Spirit*

By John James and Muriel James

New York: Dutton, 1991

\$19.95 Cloth

A mother and son—both psychotherapists, educators, and much more—offer a theory on Passion for Life that required twenty years of scrupulous study, research, and observation.

John and Muriel James have placed the “human spirit” or “spiritual self” back into psychology, hence going beyond the mere study of human behavior to include our innermost yearnings, “the hunger of the soul searching for ‘something more’.”

This is more than a psychospiritual textbook, though. The book is a mirror of the authors’ own passion for life, reflecting in diverse ways what they call the seven “basic, universal urges” of humankind—to live, to be free, to understand, to enjoy, to create, to connect, and to transcend. Throughout the book they echo their agreement with Viktor Frankl that human existence is “spiritual existence.”

The Jameses offer a theory of the human spirit that could have easily lapsed into abstraction. It doesn’t, though, because they have discovered through research many historical and contemporary examples of behaviors that flesh out the theory and demonstrate in very personal terms “the deeper aspects of human motivation.”

Many of these examples are inspiring and memorable. Each one is like a template of an urge that characterizes the human spirit. You will read about Mitsu Fujisawa, who enrolled in Japan’s Open University at the age of 112 (urge to understand). Or about Jacob Timerman, who suffered tortures in a Buenos Aires

prison that would have broken the spirits of most humans, all because he advocated human rights. Now exiled, he still champions freedom of speech, freedom from torture, and a right to a fair trial (urge to be free).

“Passion for life,” the authors write, “is the intense desire, interest, and willingness to release the inner urges of the soul.” A psychological urge without passion leads to passivity, but if we travel on what they call a “path with heart” and cultivate personal expressions during our search, the spiritual dimension of our lives will shine forth in meaningful ways.

This book can certainly heighten our awareness of these universal urges, but more importantly, it can serve as a catalyst to balance and develop them as fully as possible in the service of humanity. John and Muriel James are obviously inviting us to see that the Big Picture will never come into clear focus without a better understanding of our spiritual nature. Psychology without spirituality is empty.

Of course the authors draw from psychological sources, especially transactional analysis, which provides a commonsensical framework about the warring egos called Child, Parent, and Adult. In their discussions about humans searching for meaning, they have consulted Viktor Frankl, founder of logotherapy. A major philosophical influence was Martin Buber, who wrote inspiringly about humans relating to God or the “Eternal Thou.”

Weaving together many conceptual strands, the authors have designed a theory about passion and spirituality that is most importantly recognized as, to use physicist David Bohm’s phrase, “a form of insight.” Such theory stirs up more academic appreciation; it impels us to act upon our understanding.

Indeed the authors are always intent in *Passion for Life* to consider the many ways that humans can act

upon their inner urges by “releasing the passions of the soul to search for goals with personal meaning.”

This praiseworthy book can be an aid in that search.

*The Inner Lover:*

*Using Passion As a Way to Self—Empowerment*

By Valerie Harms

Boston: Shambhala, 1992

\$10.00 Paperback

“Love is an adventure of the self, destination unknown.”

These words, which Valerie Harms wrote, are indicative of the kind of book *The Inner Lover* is. Her autobiographical approach to how we can unite with our Inner Lover is unflinching in its honesty, unsparing in its directness, and teeming with a passion that one rarely encounters in psychological literature. Because Harms has frequently surrendered to, as she puts it, “being refined” by love’s fire, she has learned to balance Psyche and Eros and has accepted the “major gift” of the Inner Lover, which is “being at home with oneself.”

But it has not always been that way. Until her late thirties, Harms tolerated a marriage in which neither partner found fulfillment. She tells the story of that marriage and of long-term or short-term relationships and of very close same-sex friendships that suffused her psyche with Eros and eventually taught her—when listening to and accepting messages from her unconscious—that conscious suffering can be transformative. Echoing Jung, she learned experientially that the individuation path can be difficult but ultimately uplifting.

What is the Inner Lover? It is that unconscious potential within you that harbors your strongest passions and what Harms calls your “soul’s desires.” Integral to releasing its messages, which often come in the form of dreams and fantasies, is a deep understanding of what, among psychologists, is known as projection, especially its dual nature. First, she explains, projecting is to “see in another attitudes or qualities that originate in ourselves,” hence we might make impossible demands on a partner we love instead of accepting the individuality of that person as it presents itself. As to the dual nature of projection, that means “to involve us with another person as well as bring us messages from the unconscious about potentials for life.”

An important psychological growth process, she writes, is “owning the projection,” meaning that we

must see in ourselves those very qualities we see so clearly in others. Otherwise, we continue to suffer the consequences of “unaware projections.” Example: “. . . when a man tries to unite with an ideal goddess figure by having sex with a woman and ignoring her individuality.” When this happens, she reasons, “the man is suffering from an undeveloped relation to the feminine within him.”

Besides discerning the meanings of our dreams and fantasies, Harms recommends that we, to some extent, research mythology to understand better the archetypal figures that emerge from our unconscious (e.g., reading the Greek myth about Psyche and Eros, which she thinks is the ideal model for the Inner Lover dynamic). She offers what has proven to be an invaluable aid to people on paths of learning and development—the Intensive Journal. From her point of view this is an optimal tool, for she recommends without equivocation that one “let the fantasies roll.”

Recording and noting fantasies are important, but she also shares several passages of “internal dialoguing,” which might involve communicating with a person, a relationship, or with an “Inner Wisdom Figure” (e.g., mythical beings).

Harms divulges some of her deepest suffering in *Inner Lover*. Although she has endured setbacks and has often experienced “love, beauty, and joy,” she wants you to know that love’s “most vehement flame” needs to be understood, too. She writes, “The fire that burns and tortures us is a very creative and transformative fire. It burns parts of us to a crisp and leaves our egos in a desert of white ash so that one surrenders and is open to deep joy.”

And what this means for us is “that we are wedded to our inner source of passion and know how to connect with it.”

*Healing Energy: The Power of Recovery*

By Ruth Fishel, M.Ed., C.A.C.

Deerfield Beach, Florida, 1991

\$9.95 Paperback

Ruth Fishel is one of many recovering alcoholics who has experienced a painful past, learned from it, and grown as a person. A firm believer that a changed person can change others, she is now applying her considerable studies of the psychology of addictions, spiritual traditions, and neurosciences to a recovery agenda that includes seven steps: meditation, awareness and insight, finding peace in our inner sanctuary,

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## Creativity and Aging

*Continued from page 69*

life and die at ninety. I hope, incidentally, that I don't get too old. I hope I will die with a heart attack, say, in my late eighties. I'd like to just faint and go out. I don't dread it at all. What there is, if anything, after death I don't know.

One of the saddest things about growing old in America is that we don't honor the old at all. We don't revere older people nearly as much in this society as Indians, Native Americans, other societies have done. Greek society, for example, revered the old. Now, I think this is a sign of the decadence of our age, that we no longer value, no longer see the contribution of, older people. We worship youth, and I think that is the craziest thing I ever heard of. I never want to live my youth over again, and I never met anyone who really did. It's just a figment of one's imagination. But I think that our civilization is now going through a radical decadence and the real question will be, will there be a renaissance or will we blow ourselves up?

I really think creativity is the answer to aging, and by creativity I mean listening to one's own inner voice, to one's own ideas, to one's own aspirations. It may be social work. It may be gardening. It may be building. But it must be something fresh, something new, some idea that takes fire—this is what I'd like to see among older people. When Matisse was in bed and couldn't get up the last year of his life, he found something creative to do. He got himself a pair of scissors and made all these cutouts in paper, and they are fantastically beautiful. I love them very much. I have a reproduction of one in my

office, leaning up against one of the walls to remind me of what old people can do in their last years.

When I die, I will surely be unhappy that I haven't done as much reading of Greek mythology as I would have liked. I get so involved when I'm reading Greek myths that I move very, very slowly. I don't turn many pages, but it's a wonderful joy to me. Now, that is what age ought to do for us. Sure, you don't remember names so well, you can't run this or that marathon, your joints are stiffer ... all this is certainly true. But at the same time, you have a lot of experience you can call upon, you have a kind of wisdom that leaves out the details and simply goes straight for the important things. This is the meaning of the wisdom of the ages. •

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## Standing Up

*Continued from page 46*

we take risks. Polly wondered about being made to feel guilty by Al-Anon friends, rejected by some neighborhood friends, and called an "uppity feminist" when she wanted something for herself.

When we face our challenges and set limits, we risk. We often go through an internal dialogue, reviewing all aspects of the situation. We may call a friend and ask him or her to listen while we think out loud. When we are motivated by our morality, our ethic of care, we consider others as well as ourselves.

## GIVING UP CONTROL

Polly knew there was little she could accurately predict. When we express our personal power, we have to recognize that we are unable to control outcomes. She realized she could not control what others would think of her; she knew some would disagree and caution her to change her mind. Some would say, "You're really risking!" But others would say, "Of course you must; I respect you."

On the one hand, we have control; on the other hand, we don't have control. We can do what we can; that is all. We can be responsible to ourselves and considerate of others, yet not be responsible for the feelings and actions of others. Some situations will be satisfyingly smooth; others will test our voice. The Serenity Prayer of AA helps us in our choices about where and when we express our voice: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. But we always voice personal power in relationship. •

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## Shame

*Continued from page 75*

ful and the disgrace of being too weak. We feel guilt for being bad, for transgressing against others; we feel shame for being weak and worthless. Guilt is bad, shame is worse. Guilt is about something you've done; shame is about who you are.

Guilt is the inner experience of breaking the moral code. We feel bad about what we've done—worse than that, terrible—and we imagine being punished. But it's punishment for what we did, not for who we are.

Shame, on the other hand, is the inner experience of being looked down on by others; it is a painful feeling of unworthiness. Shame involves the entire self and the self-worth of a human being. We feel shame as humiliation and embarrassment, a sense of being diminished or insufficient. A pervasive sense of shame is the deep conviction that one is fundamentally bad, unworthy, inadequate, defective, and ultimately unlovable.

Guilt restrains strength; shame hides weakness. Guilt-anxiety warns us not to cross the boundary around the rights of others, and the affect of guilt is the punishment for having done so. Shame-anxiety marks the boundary around the private self, beyond which one cannot permit others to intrude. The affect of shame is the feeling we get when the boundary around the self has been violated. Guilt limits action; shame limits exposure.

Both shame and guilt lie close to the heart of human experience, and yet we hear so much about guilt, so little about shame. Why is that?

We're more conscious of guilt than shame because we remember the lessons of morality better than

those of self-worth. Much of childhood is taken up with learning what to do and what not to do. Once we learn what's expected of us, we take it upon ourselves to restrain our actions, using guilt in the service of self-control. When loving parents teach their children right from wrong, they do so deliberately; in fact, passing on the cultural code of conduct is one of the primary functions of the family. The messages we get about our self-worth come earlier and are less intentional. Before they begin teaching us to control our motor activity, parents have already conveyed a great deal to us about our value.

Shame is more archaic, more encompassing than guilt. Guilt relates to a code of actions; shame relates to the core of the self. Guilt is the more familiar concept because it is simpler—easier to explain and easier to understand—and more immediately tied to deliberate action. (Guilt has long played a larger role than shame in psychoanalytic writings because it is so directly tied to conflict between unbridled libidinal and aggressive wishes and the mechanisms of social restraint, Freud's primary concern. As the psychology of the self begins to correct the unbalanced emphasis on the psychology of conflict, however, we will see shame becoming a topic of much greater concern.)

Although shame is at least as powerful a motivating force as guilt, guilt-induction is more deliberate and more familiar than shame-induction. Methods for dealing with guilt have been institutionalized in custom, religion, and law. For example, parole boards consider it essential that prisoners not only admit their guilt but also express remorse for what they've done. It's not enough

to feel bad. Before he is considered rehabilitated, the jailed criminal is expected to feel guilty for doing wrong, not just ashamed of getting caught.

Rituals of atonement, confession, penance, punishment, repentance, reparation, and forgiveness are universal and well known. Not so with shame. Shame cannot be forgiven, only concealed. We confess our guilt; we hide our shame—from others and from ourselves. •

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## Soul Making

*Continued from page 66*

Whatever term we prefer to use, these various spiritual traditions clearly reveal resources that can help us on our journeys, certain relationships of intimacy and depth that transcend time and space and death itself: spiritual mentors whom we perhaps have never met in this lifetime but who definitely can make a difference in the direction of our lives. Such spiritual mentors might include certain dream figures who come to us at night or in the early waking hours, "when our minds, more grim from the flesh," as Dante tells us, "are less imprisoned by the bonds of thought and in their visions have prophetic power." Whenever they appear and in whatever guise they may take or disguise they may wear, the soul makes its presence known at such critical junctures. •

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## Taking Steps

*Continued from page 24*

moments; they are gifts of grace. They happen. What you can do is put yourself into a place to be available for the gifts.

*Solitude and being with nature.*

Listening to music, praying, meditating, being by water and in the mountains, reading spiritual classics, sewing, fishing, baking, knitting, weaving, plowing, gardening. All are avenues towards that introspective still place where moments of transcendence can and do occur.

*We have integrated, reached equilibrium, and built a new life. Talk about what happens the next time we go through a major change.*

The next time you go through a major change you are not immune from all the pain, trauma, confusion, or dis-equilibrium. You have the very same responses you had before, but now you know that there are life-affirming choices and that it is a process. You have confidence in that process, and you may move through the process in less chronological time. You are not nearly so likely to get stuck.

*I don't look forward to the next time I go through traumatic loss yet I know that I will, if I live long enough. However, I don't dread it in the same way.*

The fear is gone. I feel the same way. All us with elderly parents know that there is a grief process coming. In this economy many may have to make drastic changes in our lives. Once you have engaged in the process and made the life-affirming choices you know that you don't have to be undone by these things. You won't be destroyed by them. While you don't wish them and certainly don't court them, you know that you will have the ability to live the process and that you

will receive strength to live the process.

*Maturing comes from successfully undertaking the grief process.*

That maturing can be for a fourteen year old as well as a eighty-four year old. There is a maturing in our faith, there's a maturing in our confidence, there's a maturing in how we hold life, there's a maturing in the context that we put around events and our role and our place in those events.

*Maturing is one of the gifts of mourning. Please share the gifts that you received.*

The gifts of this process to me have been increased faith, hope, love, and connection with the transcendence.

*That's a wonderful closing.*•

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## Meditation

*Continued from page 30*

Other equally powerful desires which are in opposition to it arise along the way, such as the desire for more time to relax, or to spend with the family, or for more money to maintain a certain life-style. The extra factor which is needed to realize an intention is a colorless, usually semi-conscious force called will.

It is not easy to identify will and to separate it from desire or intention. What is it, however, which takes you to your saxophone practice or to writing essays as a mature student when you are very tired from a hard day's work, it is a balmy evening, and all your family or friends are sipping drinks, relaxing, and otherwise enjoying themselves? At that time, desire it is not! Desires are always of the moment. Any apparently longer-term desire or desire so strong it overrides

opposing forces is heavily supported by will; and will is the machinery which brings it to realization. Will could be called "colorless," because it is not influenced by feelings and desire. It operates despite them.

You may begin meditation for many reasons, with many ideas of what you want out of it or none at all, but the only thing which will hold you to it over time is your will. Ideas change, the desires which initially motivate you will wane and your enthusiasm will fluctuate. Such is human nature and such things are inevitable (except perhaps for those driven by the machine-like energy of fanaticism. Meditation is not a crutch which will support you undemandingly in your problems. It will of itself create conflicts but unlike many of the areas of conflict in life, meditation sets up conditions which always by their very nature can be creative. From the continued practice of meditation your being grows.

The growth of being expands and organizes mental and emotional life. There is no doubt that the world becomes a richer place and that a level of personal stress and suffering is relinquished. The result is that calmer, profounder states of emotion are given a chance to be established. But it takes organization on the most practical level to keep to the sort of self-discipline which meditation involves. Being is not just a state of mind. It is a state of life. Being is recognizable not in what people think, or think they think, but in how they are and how they conduct their lives.•

*From "The Meditators Guidebook."*

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acceptance, emptying ourselves, visualizations, and affirmations.

Although Fishel has integrated quite a number of resources in her life, her book *Healing Energy* especially appears to credit the mind/body field called psychoneuroimmunology, Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve-Step movement and most recently, Vipassana (also called Insight or Mindfulness) meditation. In its connection to meditation, she discusses mindfulness in the following sense. "We learn that *mindfulness* is the quality of attention which notices without choosing. It is choiceless awareness that, like the sun, shines on all things equally. Mindfulness is breaking the chain of conditioning."

This book illustrates in many ways how her openness to new learning experiences has been responsible for her own successful breaking of the "chain of conditioning."

What many teachers of meditation call self-observation, Fishel refers to as "noting." Noting is the age-old practice of watching our thoughts and perceiving what feeling or action they lead to. She breaks this meditative process down into consciousness, perception, sensation, and reaction. The all-important moment, she reasons, is between sensation—"the crossroad where body and mind meet"—and reaction, the point at which "*value* is attached to incoming data." Between sensation and reaction lies volition, the "moment of choice," where will and mindfulness can be developed and addictive urges ignored.

Turning to psychoneuroimmunology (PSI), Fishel discusses this field in introductory terms that will be understandable to any inquiring reader. It is a scientific discipline that is yielding amazing findings about the human brain and its capacities for healing, stress reduction, and heightened perception of bodily needs. Not surprisingly, she joins the throngs of truth seekers, recovery experts, doctors, and scientists who are beginning to see how a deeper understanding of PSI can be linked practically and meaningfully to a spiritual framework for healing, recovery, and transformation. Neuroscience and spirituality are joining hands.

This kinship is welcome news for people enslaved to addictive rituals of the self-destructive kind; for now the meanings we have perhaps yearned for and sought all our lives are forthcoming as we learn about both our human nature through psychology and the biological sciences and our spiritual nature through traditional lore transmitted since antiquity.

Ruth Fishel conveys her enthusiasm for all this new learning as it applies to addictions and dependencies. She shares what is known to date about neuro transmitters, most notably endorphins, which act in an opium-like way to alleviate pain and, depending on the sensitivity of certain

## Reviews

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neural pathways, either enhance or suppress response to stimuli. Her study of endorphins led her to ask this question: "Is it possible that the bodies of those of us who have grown up in alcoholic or dysfunctional homes, with all their stress and pain, have closed down their ability to produce endorphins?"

Healing Energy is a useful place to start not only to find an answer to this question but to also learn how one can meditate one's way to a life affirming recovery.

### *Private Moments, Secret Selves: Enriching Our Time Alone*

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By Jeffrey Kottler, Ph.D.

New York: Ballantine Books, 1990

\$8.00 Paperback

"The ability to enjoy and utilize one's solitude is a core psychological task, an essential tool for maintaining optimal mental health."

Jeffrey Kottler, a practicing psychotherapist, makes this claim near the beginning of *Private Moments, Secret Selves*, a book he felt motivated to write because of the covert cultural sanctions that have concealed the topic of solitary behaviors from public view. So he mailed out 1500 questionnaires, received hundreds of audio tapes, and kept extensive notes on clients, students (he teaches too), and other therapists. The information that he amassed can be plotted along a continuum which unsurprisingly shows that people's experiences of aloneness range from the depths of despair to the heights of ecstasy.

The book, he writes, became "not only about what people *do* when they're alone but about the essence of *being* alone."

In our Western culture solitude is craved but paradoxically ques-

tioned. Kottler works through this paradox with sensitivity and intelligence and shares with Paul Tillich the observation that what lies between our innermost psyche and our public persona is "the battleground for creation and destruction." Doing and being are

out of balance in our private as well as our public lives.

Kottler does not question any of the behaviors his respondents shared with him except those highlighted in the chapter called "Avoiding Self-Destructive Behaviors," in which he discusses such "compulsive styles of soli-

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## Reviews

tude” as the workaholic, computer addict, exercise fanatic, eating disorders, superstitious behaviors, and the obsessive-compulsive. For people enslaved to these solitary excesses or who have gone underground with these behaviors—obsessions, compulsions, addictions, social withdrawal, shyness, loneliness—he offers a 17-step program that borrows largely from such cognitive therapists as Albert Ellis and A.T. Beck. Through such a program a balance between “excessive isolation” and “solitude deprivation” is sought—a balance, Kottler believes, that can be sustained.

Nearly the rest of the book is a systematic breakdown of respondents’ answers to questions about their most secretive solitary acts, obstacles to being alone, how they spend their time alone, how they differ as a public and solitary person, and the ways that solitude enhances their lives. Kottler adds psychological commentary, historical perspectives, and research findings that will broaden one’s understanding of this important topic. He shares the view that solitude is a biological need but he also agrees with Maslow that people who pursue peak experiences have “an intense desire for solitude.”

The marriage between biology and spirituality is perhaps best summed up in this passage, “The degree to which we can tolerate, and even revel in, our solitude is directly related to our having confronted our fears and having become comfortable with our inner self. For anyone who wants to live fully and consciously, this confrontation is an essential step on the path of personal growth.”

*Private Moments, Secret Selves* might put you in touch with

your self by reminding you that solitude need not be a shameful taboo. In a higher sense, it can remind us that we are never alone because we are all interconnected. Alan Watts, quoted by Kottler, knew this. “This feeling of being lonely and very temporary visitors in the universe is in flat contradiction to everything known about man (and all other living organisms) in the sciences. We do not ‘come into’ this world; we come out of it, as leaves from a tree.”

### *Daydreaming: Using Waking Fantasy and Imagery for Self-Knowledge and Creativity*

By Eric Klinger, Ph.D.  
Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1990  
\$12.95 Paperback

Eric Klinger, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Minnesota, has researched and studied daydreaming for well over twenty years. His research, and that of many others worldwide, is surveyed comprehensively in *Daydreaming*. Everything that is known to date about this topic from a scientific viewpoint is presented here in clear, jargon-free language.

Daydreams, Klinger writes, “are you in action within the arena of your mind.” They are also “a life within.”

You will surely learn about daydreams in considerable detail, but one caveat needs to be aired. This book is classified as psychology/self-help; a close reading will reveal it is more psychology than self-help. The subtitle—“Using Waking Fantasy and Imagery for Self-Knowledge and Creativity”—refers to just one topical consideration among many. Klinger is the rigorous

## Reviews

scientist who seldom goes beyond the information given to speculate on how daydreams truly further one's knowledge of self.

This is less a criticism than an explanation of Klinger's overall approach to daydreaming, which is to rely on scientific methods to the greatest extent possible in order to provide an anatomy of daydreams. For instance, the ten chapters of the book discuss why we daydream, their contents, frequency, styles (i.e., links to personality), storytelling modes (e.g., fantasy), emotional make-up, and so on. In addition, one gets an historical perspective on the myths and misconceptions concerning daydreams.

In other words, don't expect an in-depth exploration of how daydreams might be harnessed to further potential, except in the limited sense of making references to improved sex, physical skills, problem-solving, social relations, fantasy excursions, and self-organization. This book lacks the spiritual dimension of a book like *Lucid Dreaming* in which Stephen LaBerge, a leading dream researcher from Stanford, is equally rigorous with his scientific methods but is also drawn to a broader perspective that includes developing lucid dreams as a means towards conscious evolution.

Klinger has more modest aims in discussing daydreams. He will inform you that your daydreams "come out of the very essence of your being," but what he refers to as one's most private inner depths is, for the most part, a well-documented overview of human nature as it is, (with all its quirks and oddities and torrents of thought). In short, your daydreams are a mirror of your self in all its present, unenlight-

ened complexity. It is probably useful though to know that your daydreams more than likely don't set you apart from others. Or as Klinger puts it, and as research shows, you are not likely to daydream yourself into insanity.

Daydreaming is directly connected to those ancient parts of the brain that maintain survival instincts. Beyond that, daydreaming can of course relax and stimulate us, help us to organize our lives, assist us in honing social or physical skills, and invite us to have a good time with the "mental repertory company."

As human nature evolves, so will daydreams. In a rare passage pertaining to this evolutionary perspective, Klinger shares the following, "When you daydream, you exercise parts of your brain that are responsible for the activities you are daydreaming about. When you exercise these brain systems in such a way as to teach them something new, that learning alters them and sets them up to apply their learning to the next real-world occasion for which they are relevant. And that is what makes the mental images of daydreaming a medium for personal change and growth."

*Daydreaming* is certainly informative; Klinger covers the topic well. Turning to daydreaming as a developmental medium, though, will require further seeking.

***Touching Peace:  
Practicing the Art of Mindful  
Living***

By *Thich Nhat Hanh*  
Berkeley, California: Parallax  
Press, 1992

\$9.50 Paperback

In 1967 Martin Luther King,

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Jr. nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize, three years after he had himself received that honor. He had this to say about Hanh "I do not personally know of anyone more worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize than this gentle monk from Vietnam."

It is a quarter of a century later and having now read *Touching Peace*, I am inclined to think that Thich Nhat Hanh should still be a candidate for consideration of this prestigious prize. All that is written about him strongly supports the fact that Hanh is a living exemplar of mindful and compassionate living. His latest book illustrates once again that he has truly taken to heart the five powers taught by the Buddha—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and understanding—and applied them in everyday living.

Hanh also obviously practices the five precepts that the Buddha bestowed upon humankind (see the Winter 1992 *Lotus* for a concise adaptation of these precepts).

"Our true home is in the present moment," he writes, no matter where we live on this planet. Hanh, when not conducting mindfulness retreats around the world lives in Plum Village, a small community in France. His writing, as usual, is a bright, though not blinding, reflection of his own mindfulness. No apologies for the cliché, but he indeed practices what he preaches, "touching peace" wherever he goes.

What does touching peace mean? It means conscious breathing, looking deeply, interbeing, walking meditation, learning about "suchness," compassionate

listening, living the five precepts, interacting in a sangha (a community working towards harmony and peace), and understanding the tensions that abound because of the dynamics between store and mind consciousness. All of the above terms and phrases refer to practices that comprise the "art of mindful living." Hanh discusses them fully.

Take store and mind consciousness as an example. Hanh adapts these Buddhist psychological terms for a contemporary audience, referring to store consciousness as the ground level of the mind where seedlings of all our past and present thoughts, actions, and perceptions germinate and live or die according to the upper-level processes of the mind consciousness.

"When a seed manifests in our mind consciousness," Hanh writes, "it always returns to the storehouse stronger." The point here is simple but by no means simplistic; for if the seeds are consistently toxic our behaviors will reflect this toxicity (behaviors which Hanh comments on at length). "To practice mindfulness," he continues, "means to recognize each seed as it comes up from the storehouse and to practice watering the most wholesome seeds whenever possible." Water these seeds, he teaches, and "we can trust that our store consciousness will do the work of healing."

Believe me, Hanh doesn't represent the *Be Happy Do Nothing Forget Your Worries* school of thought. You face your pain, suffering, anxieties, doubts, fears, and all those other negativities with unflinching present attention. In turn, the seedbed of store consciousness transforms the "habit energy" of our most unregenerate

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## Reviews

thoughts and behaviors into a new-minded consciousness that will bring forth mindfulness. And mindfulness, Hanh tells us in *Touching Peace*, "is the seed of enlightenment, awareness, understanding, care, compassion, liberation, transformation, and healing."

Read the words of Thich Nhat Hanh and start a garden with this seed. Start it, then grow.

### *Living Presence: A Sufi Way to Mindfulness and the Essential Self*

By Kabir Edmund Helminski  
Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.,  
\$9.95 Paperback

Living Presence is a masterful psycho spiritual work by a Sufi Shaikh of the Mevlevi Order, which was founded by one of the great mystical poets of all time, Jelaluddin Rumi. This will be one of the most treasured books in my library.

Kabir Edmund Helminski—also a publisher and a practicing transpersonal psychotherapist—utilizes the refined spiritual vocabulary of the Sufis with remarkable clarity. Your intellect will certainly be challenged, but more importantly, the subtler faculties of your subconscious mind (what the Sufis call the "heart") will stir and powerfully attract you to an intense and loving observation of all that intersects between the world of the senses and the world of Spirit.

Reviewing this book seems superfluous. As many Sufis and masters of other spiritual traditions have done, Helminski is stretching language to the limit in jolting us again and again to remember our God-given heritage, which is to awaken to our "presence"—that is, "the quality

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of consciously being here." (italics the author's) This common theme has been of pivotal importance within many of these traditions. "It goes by many names," Helminski writes, "—awakening, recollection, mindfulness, dhyana, remembrance, zhikr, presence—and by no name at all."

A recommendation you might wish to consider before starting on the main text is to read carefully the glossary of fifty-seven words at the end of the book. This glossary is a treasure chest of words that can literally put us in mind of the very penetrating Reality of Spirit. After reading the definitions of such words as being, consciousness, faith, freedom, God, grace, heart, human being, knowledge, spirit, and will, you might get the feeling (as I did) that a spiritual

blueprint for conscious evolution is being made available.

Ponder just this one word, which so many persons have debased through constant misuse: "Love: the electromagnetic milieu in which we exist, which exerts various forces of attraction among all that it contains; the greatest transforming power; our experience of Spirit."

Or think about freedom, another word made almost meaningless by too many meanings: "Freedom: 1. the result of greater presence. 2. the state of having will. 3. psychologically, being free of negativity."

When reading the main text, you will possibly sense that Helminski is granting the receptive reader the gift of a spiritual language that reflects the wisdom of the ages. In his personal case, he gravitated towards Sufism, which he most aptly defines as follows: "Sufism is a way of life in which a deeper identity is discovered and lived." But being present is not a Sufi phenomenon alone. In fact, it has been said by other Sufis that Sufism is a name for a reality that goes beyond names. For my part, though, I confess that Sufis have been particularly adept at transmitting literary treasures that reflect human possibilities but also act as critiques of our limitations. The best Sufi literature—like the one reviewed here—are of developmental value.

Living Presence will work on your mind to work on itself. In other words, it will be difficult to read this book and stay comfortable with the negativity, delusions, and other myopic tendencies of our "false self." Helminski offers a challenge that is loving but also stern. He wants us to understand with our hearts that "Remembering God is the beginning of remembering ourselves."•

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## Transforming Our Compost



**W**hen we look deeply at a flower, we notice that the flower is on her way to becoming compost. When we look deeply into ourselves, we see both flowers and garbage. Each of us has anger, hatred, depression, racial discrimination, and many other kinds of garbage in us, but there is no need for us to be afraid. In the way that a gardener knows how to transform compost into flowers, we can learn the art of transforming anger, depression, and racial discrimination into love and understanding.

Consciousness can be described as a field, a plot of land where every kind of seed can be planted—seeds of suffering, happiness, joy, sorrow, fear, anger, and hope. Store consciousness is also described as a storehouse filled with all our seeds. When a seed manifests in our mind consciousness, it always returns to the storehouse stronger. The quality of our life depends on the quality of the seeds in our store consciousness.

We may be in the habit of manifesting seeds of anger, sorrow, and fear in our mind consciousness; seeds of joy, happiness, and peace may not sprout up much. To practice mindfulness means to recognize each seed as it comes up from the storehouse and to practice watering the most wholesome seeds whenever possible, to help them grow stronger. During each moment that we are aware of something peaceful and beautiful, we water seeds of peace and beauty in us, and beautiful flowers bloom in our consciousness. The length of time we water a seed determines the strength of that seed. For example, if we stand in front of a tree, breathe consciously, and enjoy it for five minutes, seeds of happiness will be watered in us for five minutes, and those seeds will grow stronger. During the same five minutes, other seeds like fear

and pain will not be watered. We have to practice this way every day. Any seed that manifests in our mind consciousness always returns to our store consciousness stronger.

One wonderful seed in our store consciousness—the seed of mindfulness—when manifested, has the capacity of being aware of what is happening in the present moment. If we take one peaceful, happy step and we know that we are taking a peaceful, happy step, mindfulness is present. Mindfulness is an important agent for our transformation and healing, but our seed of mindfulness has been buried under many layers of forgetfulness and pain for a long time. We are rarely aware that we have eyes that see clearly, a heart and a liver that function well, and a non-toothache. We live in forgetfulness, looking for happiness somewhere else, ignoring and crushing the precious elements of happiness that are already in us and around us. If we breathe in and out and see that the tree is there, alive and beautiful, the seed of our mindfulness will be watered, and it will grow stronger. When we first start to practice, our mindfulness will be weak, like a fifteen-watt light bulb. But as soon as we pay attention to our breathing, it begins to grow stronger, and after practicing like that for a few weeks, it becomes as bright as a one-hundred watt bulb. With the light of mindfulness shining, we touch many wonderful elements within and around us, and while doing so, we water the seeds of peace, joy, and happiness in us, and at the same time, we refrain from watering the seeds of unhappiness. • *From "Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living." Copyright 1992 by Thich Nhat Hanh. Printed with permission from Parallax Press. For information on this book see page 89.*

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