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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...

*What we vividly imagine, ardently desire, enthusiastically act upon, must inevitably come to pass.—Colin P. Sisson*

**K**now your intentions. They direct your life whether you are aware of them or not. They give life meaning and purpose, energize your existence and call you to develop inherent capacities. Without conscious intentions we are left to the mercy of chance and our own hidden motives. Outside forces bounce us along, like a tumble weed in the wind, with no initiative of our own to set a specific course. Muddled internal forces lead us astray. We are left to drift along and become reactive rather than creative.

In work if we don't plan, we wander from one job to another, never developing our potential or worse yet, settle into an energy depleting career. When we do find a job we like, we have to be purposeful. It is not enough just to show up at work. We have to do something, act on our intentions. Skills must be developed, focus sustained, and effectiveness monitored. We delay gratification at times, hold our goals before us, and adjust our course as needed. We learn to be attentive and directed. When we oversee our career consciously we are successful.

In intimate relationships, it is tempting to imagine that chemistry is enough, that happiness just comes along, and if it doesn't, it means we are not meant for each other. However, successful relationships don't just happen. They are directed and purposeful. We rarely invest thought in our relationships the same way we do with our work. Yet when we know what we want, we can direct our energy so our relationships thrive. Answering these questions gives clarity. "To have a loving relationship, what must I do? How do I create and sustain trust and intimacy? What actions generate excitement and growth? How do I know if my actions further my intentions?"

We must connect with our deeper essence to know the source of our intentions. Our deeper essence, our heart, is the place of compassion, understanding, union, and wisdom. When we live from the heart, life is rich and fulfilling. We connect with essence when our heart is open. Opportunities for our heart to be touched are always present. Simply notice and feel...when a loved one dies, when a deep wound is acknowledged, when a tender truth is told, and when tears fall.

Be guided by your essence. Let your heart inform your decisions and your mind develop the awareness and ability to fulfill your innermost dreams.

Welcome to Lotus.



Mary NurrieStearns  
Editor

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# Letters



Following are letters from our readers. We encourage readers to share stories of growth as they inspire others. Your feedback and input are important and welcome.

## MAKING CHANGES

My colleague keeps *Lotus* in our office reception area. She's told me about your magazine but I was never inspired to pick it up. My life was going along well. I was happy and proud of how I was handling myself in my new love relationship. I felt like I was finally getting it right. At least I was not repeating my old patterns. And then he dumped me. I was stunned. Here I was, making all these changes. This relationship was supposed to lead to happy endings and instead I am starting all over again. I picked up *Lotus*, heading out the office door one Friday evening as I faced an empty weekend. A personal growth magazine seemed more appealing than unpacking boxes. I expected to be distracted but not helped.

I am writing because I was helped and I am grateful. Your magazine validated my efforts and the changes I have made. Joan Borysenko's interview, *The Heart of Optimism*, was especially helpful. I have a hopeful perspective about my "dark night of the soul" as I grieve and learn the lessons from my recent relationship. My sense of failure has lessened.

I also liked the article on *Competition* and again felt validated as the author's philosophy reflects my own.

I've shared copies of these articles with friends and look forward to the next issue.—*Darlene Smith, Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

## DEEPLY TOUCHING

I would like you to know each issue of *Lotus* is most welcomed. The sensitivity, depth, and wisdom of the experiences and topics are deeply touching for me. I look forward to letting go of held in feelings and tears and finding the courage to move into the light. Keep up your magic; it is working!—*Jo Evelyn Kellen, Leicester, North Carolina.*

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2/3 page ad  
*Living Lake Books*

**Letters**

*Continued from page 6*

**A P P R E C I A T E**

My sincere appreciation to you and your associates for making *Lotus* possible. I very much appreciate the constructive and inspiring concepts you provide your readers.—*Carle A. Christensen, Ojai, California.*

**E X C I T I N G F I N D**

I recently discovered *Lotus*, and was so excited by the new ground you cover and the high quality of writing found in your magazine.

Thanks and congratulations on putting out such a first-rate journal.—*Elaine Robbins, New York, New York.*

**S O C A N I**

My therapist keeps *Lotus* in her waiting room and I've become a fan. Sometimes I don't understand the articles because the ideas are new to me. But I am desperate. I have got to pull my life together so I keep reading. What I really like are your success stories. I figure if other people can make sense of their lives and finally feel like they are whole, so can I. I could relate so well to Shelly Griffin and admire her willingness to tell her story. Please continue with the success stories. They make the other articles more meaningful.

Personal growth is hard. Thanks for the support.—*J. Akers, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

**C O M P E T I T I O N**

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on *Competition* in the last issue of *Lotus*. What would you say, however, about competition with oneself?

To mind comes the individual sports, where one (if one is not an Olympic hopeful ice skater)

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# Nataraj Pubs

## 1/2p V

# Holistic Health ASAT

### Letters

*Continued from page 8*

competes mainly with one's past record and one's growing skills. Swimming for fun, ice skating, skate board riding, water skiing, snow skiing, running, dancing immediately come to mind. Well, fine and good—the healthiest form of exercise, mentally and physically.

But, haven't you noticed that you—and I—are wont to cast an eye at the participant exercising along side us and to think that we do it just a little bit better?—*Joy Evens, Phoenix, Arizona.*

#### *T H E B E S T*

The best magazine I've ever held to my heart.—*Joey Garcia, Sacramento, California*

#### *N E E D E D A N D A P P R E C I A T E D*

I am writing to thank you very much for your Vol. 3, No. 2 issue which I received in late December. It came at a time when I was very ill and being alone, needed the support and positive thoughts and feelings which I received from the very outstanding articles in this issue. I always look forward to receiving each edition and it was particularly helpful at this time.—*Sura Halote, Palos Verdes, California.*

#### *I N T O U C H*

I love your magazine. It keeps me in touch with a lot of spiritual happenings.—*Marnie Cussen, Glendale, Arizona.*

#### *E X C E L L E N T*

Thank you for the excellent magazine. It allows some hope in a more highly stressful and demanding world. Your articles have touched me. I hope they have improved other lives as well.—*R. H. Hartman, Orlando, Indiana.* •



# TALKING SILENCE

D I A N E   D U N E T

**W**e didn't plan to remain silent for three weeks. Alan stopped talking and walked away when we became tangled in a trivial argument. I walked the other way quietly. We knew we could easily end up saying things we'd regret later, the kind of things we would try to take back. And so, spontaneously, began three weeks of silence that not only avoided an immediate argument but deepened into an experience that changed our relationship and each of us over the longer term.

Even in this modern, nuclear age, the vow of silence is practiced by some religious orders. I have always wondered how it would be possible to remain silent for years at a time. Keeping quiet for more than five minutes is a major effort for me. Voluntary silence struck me as inefficient and dull, if not impossible in contemporary, secular life.

Communication, on the other hand, is an art and a worthy goal. Workshops and self-help books help us learn how to talk to each other and even how to talk to ourselves. To live well, one needs to speak well, I thought.

There are constructive uses for silence, of course: time-outs for children, meditation practices, even counting to ten before speaking when angry. Silence can be the best choice sometimes.

But at other times, it can be the harshest choice. The proverbial "silent treatment" between couples can be a power device that undermines a relationship.

In our Silence Experiment, however, there were no ulterior



*Diane Dunet, Atlanta, Georgia.*

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# Save the Children Ad

from page 14 winter 93

Life Action Press  
from winter 93 page 14

## *Success Story*

*Continued from page 12*

motives. Neither of us was trying to hurt or control the other. We just stopped talking for a while and I began to observe what happened. Our mutual silence simply afforded us time for reflection and contemplation without verbal exchange. In the same way meditation brings insight without words, our not talking gave me insight into the nature of our relationship and how we communicate.

The first few hours of silence felt like a calming salve. Both Alan and I had previously used exercise, a warm bath, even sleep as a way to remove ourselves from situations tinged with disharmony. Usually, a few hours of individual quiet time would soothe us and restore our perspective.

It is a mystery to me why our silence on this occasion grew beyond the typical couple of hours. I simply found myself comfortable and increasingly calm. So I didn't speak. And neither did Alan.

How many times had we sat together, making conversation for each other over dinner? In our society, if people aren't talking over their pasta, it is assumed something is definitely wrong. Conversation seems to be a requirement for romance. And yet loving partners are hardly dependent on complete sentences. Some of my most intimate and physically passionate experiences have transcended words allowing communication on a purely sensual level. This silence was unique; it derived not from hostility, obligation, or passion.

I think we both made a tacit, personal decision to continue the silence for the first few days, to experiment with the quiet. And the weekend passed with a kind of gentle, sensuous wordlessness.

On Monday, it was time to return to work, where I could hardly expect to continue to remain completely silent. I spoke there, of course, but very little, and softly. I found myself enjoying my inner quiet, carrying a quasi-meditative mood with me through my daily tasks. I smiled at people rather than greeting them with the usual "How are you?"



No one seemed to notice a change in my behavior; no one seemed to miss me from the office chatter.

Perhaps acknowledgment is what we want from each other, not more words, I speculated. Would we listen to each other more if we said less? Should I be talking?

I became increasingly intrigued with the experience of living without talking. As in meditation, it took some practice for me to remain focused on the aspect of being silent rather than using the experience to gain some other insight. This became a new lesson in passive concentration. Finally, I detached from my intellectualizing enough to become curious about where the experience would lead rather than stopping every few minutes to evaluate where I was. "Simply practice not talking," I reminded myself.

As of the next weekend, Alan and I were still floating in our mutual silence. I imagined us in a kind of co-meditation—somehow communicating without sounds or effort. Housework and shopping were accomplished without the usual discussion. Touch, facial expression, and body movement became our language. This was a new kind of validation and intimacy, a gift of The Silence.

During the second week, my thoughts stabbed my stillness and the whole experience became newly threatening, frightening. Once again I was a child with a disapproving silent parent. Enough of this stupid silence, I thought. We should be acting like normal people and talking to each other. What is Alan's real agenda here?

I retreated to my journal. I needed WORDS. I was a starving, dying person; a desperate junkie; a sex maniac; a radical terrorist—what strong comparisons I made in my writing! How essential words seemed to me. But Alan wasn't going to get me to back down on this one, I wrote. Suddenly this

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## Crossroad ad



# WAKE UP CALL

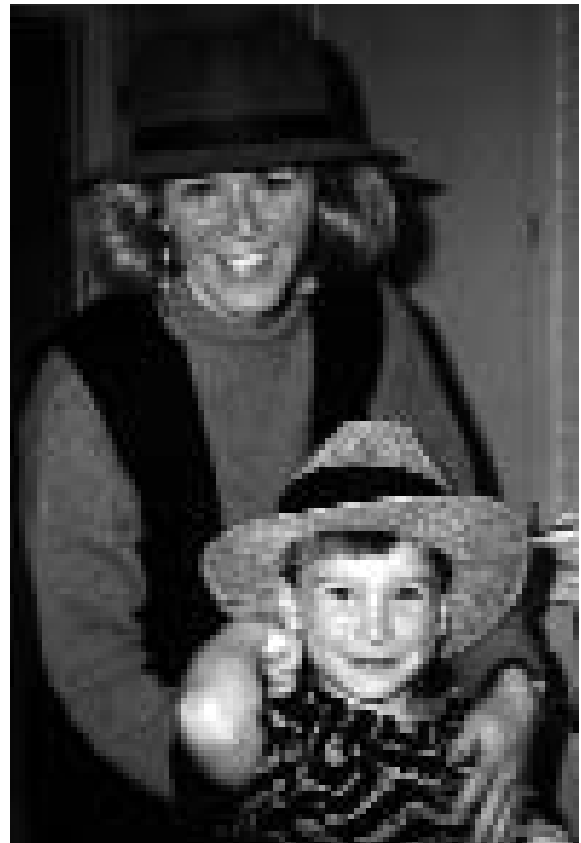
M A R Y   S H A N N O N

**T**wo years ago I got a call from an old lover I hadn't seen for fifteen years who wanted to meet for lunch. I talked to my husband about it and he encouraged me to go. So on a Saturday afternoon I kissed my three-year old son good-bye, waved to John, and drove off for a visit with the past. Little did I know that I had started the long descent into the dark night of the soul, the place where death occurs so that new life can emerge.

Don was already at the restaurant when I arrived. He looked a lot thinner, but still had his great smiling eyes and sense of humor. We talked and laughed as if a fifteen year absence had never occurred. When he left he gave me a tight hug and I tried to return to my roles of wife, mother, unemployed social worker and fledgling artist. I slowly and painfully learned that I couldn't return. From that point on, everything in my life felt stark, cold, and empty. I began to see that my roles were only roles; there was no substance left, only hollow shells of characters performing on cue. The only way I could feel warmth was to remember the laughter I'd shared with Don.

I soon realized that Don's visit had awakened me from a long-term denial of my unhappiness within my marriage, my career, and my Self. What was I to do? I put myself into therapy, went to a woman's support group, took a printmaking class, and listened to everyone tell me how crazy I was even to think about confronting my marriage. When I looked at it practically, I was crazy. I had no family, no job, no support

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*Mary Shannon, Sacramento, California.*

## *Success Story*

*Continued from page 16*

network, no savings, and no idea of what I wanted to do with my life. The things that were suppose to help—therapy, the group, advice, and the class—only served to judge me, leaving me confused and bereft. So I quit them all and stood alone in the fire of my wrenching soul.

My life hadn't agreed with me for a long time, so I took a risk and separated from my husband of ten years. I still remember sitting on the cold kitchen floor in the dead of winter with my son, Ben, and crying together. I often felt like I'd taken on more than I could bear. I was isolated at home, a single mother with no friends or family to help me. The days and nights seemed to last forever as I teetered on the edge of fear with torment and terror always at my side. Whenever I reminded myself that I'd created my situation, the question of my sanity would loom over me with ferocious, unrelenting vigor. My guilt over breaking up our small family was overwhelming. I'd grown up without a father. My son had a good father, and his mother had asked him to leave! What kind of crazy woman was I?

My few female acquaintances were also unhappy in their marriages but they all bluntly told me that surviving economically and emotionally as a single mother was not what they wanted. They praised my "courage" to do what I was doing and reminded me how much they "admired" me but their phone calls and visits got shorter and further apart. As if what I'd done was catching, their admiration quickly petered out to no more contact at all. So I binged on self-help books, tapes, more therapists, more groups, psychics, body work, hypnotherapy, and acupuncture. You name it, I probably tried it. They served as diversions and were somewhat helpful but did not offer any sustenance.

I found true sustenance in my

## More than Sex Ad Atrium pubs

## The Alchemists Ad from pag 13 winter 93

## Reiki Plus Ad

## Steven Nash Pubs

from page 10 winter 93

### *Success Story*

*Continued from page 17*

art. My unconscious could let go on the paper, and my conscious mind was relieved to get lost for a while in color, form, and texture. Printmaking allowed me to be spontaneous, to let my feelings flow. Whenever I tried to write out my feelings in poetry or journal form, I felt embroiled and stifled. It was too concrete for me. A lot of my feelings were too intense and unbridled for the constraints of language.

My other form of sustenance came from jogging. Exercise is a natural antidepressant, and I always felt much better after a run, physically and mentally. Without even wanting to, I found myself running longer and longer distances. The steady rhythm of my feet against the ground helped to center me like an active form of meditation. And the metaphor of running was good for me, too, because I did want to run away from all the pain. Since I couldn't, jogging let me at least run off its symptoms of anxiety, depression, and fear so I could deal more effectively with my pain.

My lack of a job or fulfilling career also haunted me, adding to my feelings of depression and isolation. I went through training to become a certified hypnotherapist but didn't have the desire to go through the marketing necessary to develop a private practice. Then I job hunted, to no avail. I considered going back to school for my Ph.D. in psychology but ran into old negative belief roadblocks about my being dumb and never amounting to anything. The idea of starting back to school in a five-year doctoral program at forty years of age also held me back. (I believe this is called self-imposed age-discrimination.) Then I job hunted again, faced rejection again and thought about school again. I see-sawed back and forth, just like

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# HIGHER UNDERSTANDING

JENNIFER HARDING

As a child I never sat and wondered about my past. I enjoyed the basics of childhood such as playing in the snow and laughing with my friends. It never occurred to me that a piece of my past was cloudy and unknown.

I was told that I was different, that I had a special quality that many other children did not have. I was adopted. My adoptive parents read me books on adoption and explained that it was nothing to be ashamed of. I shared this trait of mine with friends, and they teased me saying, "You don't have a real mom and dad because you didn't come out of your adoptive mother's stomach." I cried many days, trying to figure out why my friends were becoming distant because I was adopted. I remember my adoptive mother talking to my "so-called" friends' mothers about this matter. However, kids will be kids and the teasing didn't stop. Days lingered and I was alone. Finally, my friends started to call again for me to come out with them. The years came and went and I didn't think about it again throughout elementary school.

Then I started Junior High School. They were rough years. I consider those four years my inner-growth period. I decided that I did not have to introduce myself as "Jennifer-the adopted one." I attracted many friends, and some close ones whom I truly trusted. Even if people knew I was adopted, they liked me for me. In fact, many kids found it interesting. They began asking questions, such as, "Do I know who the lady who gave birth to you was?" and "Do I have any blood brothers or sisters?" I didn't mind the questions; I only minded that I didn't have the answers.



*Jennifer Harding, Bethpage, New York.*

One night I sat down with my adoptive parents and asked them questions. The why's, how's, where's and who's. They always feared that moment. They didn't keep it from me that I was adopted but had hoped I would never become curious about my past. They answered only general questions. I learned nothing specific to calm my curiosity that night.

The years passed and it was the summer before high school. I was growing up and learning about societal issues and most importantly, more about myself. I tried not to think about the whole adoption matter. I was happy with the people I called mom and dad, and tried to forget the curiosity about my past. I was an only child and spoiled. I got practically everything I wanted. What more could I ask?

Then it was the second semester of High School and my English teacher assigned a project which included biological data. Looking over the list of facts to be included in the paper, I realized I didn't know much. I did not know if I had blood relatives with diseases or extreme illnesses. I didn't know if anyone of my own blood was an exciting person in history or had an exciting story from his childhood. I completed the assignment using information gathered from my adoptive family—my adoptive parents, their parents, and so forth. Still, it made me wonder more.

I would look in the mirror and wonder where I got my blue eyes, my hair, and my traits. If I saw someone who looked like me walking down the street, I would wonder if she was my biological mother or sister. The questions became more in depth. Finally, I decided to search for the piece of my past that was missing.

After my first year of high school I started reading articles

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## Harper San Francisco

## SYNCHRONICITY

C I I S A D

F R O M P A G E  
2 4 W I N T E R  
9 3

### *Success Story*

*Continued from page 21*

and books on adoption. I called the adoption home from which I was adopted and asked if they could give me any information. They told me I had to be twenty-one years old and then if the records weren't sealed, they could give me medical and general information. That was the first block I came up against.

One day I was home alone and decided to look for files, clues, or anything that would have importance in my search. I found a brown folder, hidden in my parents' hope chest, which held my adoption papers and various medical information but I couldn't read them. The names of the biological mother and father were whited-out. I could barely see any pen markings. I took a pen cap and scratched off as much as I could of the white-out, being careful not to rip the paper and held it up to the light. It read "Loretta." I cried. Though it was only a first name, it was a start. I must have spent hours that afternoon looking through and reading all the information in that brown folder. When my parents came home that evening, I showed them the adoptive papers and told them I wanted to search for my biological family. I remember it like it was yesterday. My mother's tears were endless. My father was speechless. Once again, I felt guilty for wanting to know about my past.

Although my parents were upset, they knew it wasn't right to stop me. They were concerned about what I might find and how it would affect my well-being. They agreed to assist me in whatever way they could. I had been determined to locate my birth mother by my sixteenth birthday. It was a week away and although my search was going well, I was missing key elements and factual clues.

My sixteenth birthday came and went. I was distraught for the whole month of September. I was feeling more insecure and was losing faith.

Without the law releasing information to me, it seemed that I had come upon a brick wall which would never fall.

I asked my father to take me into New York City to look in the Archives at City Hall. My mother, father, and I made a day of it. We looked through everything. My father was going through the birth records and noticed there was a case number on each birth record. He took out my birth certificate and searched for the number in the book that matched the certificate number. Then I felt my heart go to the pit of my stomach. There was my name and the name I had seen once before in that brown folder. There was an address and minor information on the background of my birth mother. I had to sit down to catch my breath. I hadn't had much hope up at that point and was excited and nervous at the same time. I cried. The whole ride home I was silent; everyone was. I kept thinking about where to go from there. Nothing else seemed important.

It wasn't over. The wall that was in my way was gone, but I still had many thoughts to consider. For the next week, I pondered my next step. I had my birth mother's address and her telephone number. What if she was dead or had moved away? What if my showing up in her life would bring back a past she wanted to leave behind? Suppose she was married to a different man and had a whole new life? What if she rejected me and denied she knew me? Would I be able to face the feeling of abandonment and rejection once again? I had to consider all the outcomes. It was frustrating. I had waited for so long and now was making a decision which could involve ruining many lives. I discussed thoughts with my family and friends but it came down to one fact: I would have to make the decision.

Feelings I kept inside were grow-



ing. Questions that only one lady could answer were haunting me. I finally decided to write a letter, hoping she was still at the residence listed. I sent the letter...and waited and waited. Every day I looked in the mail for a letter of rejection or joy. What if she threw it out and ignored it? I was going crazy. I became distant from my friends. I couldn't eat or sleep. I didn't want to be around anyone.

Then the moment of mystery came. The letter addressed to me from Loretta arrived. I cried before I even read it. All my fears were put to rest; she shared her feelings and told me that she married the man who is considered my biological father. She explained that at the time I was born she had certain circumstances which made it hard to keep me. I called her that evening. We spoke for three hours. We agreed to meet—me, my parents, Loretta, my biological father, and my half-brother and half-sister. Fortunately my search had a happy ending and started a fulfilling friendship.

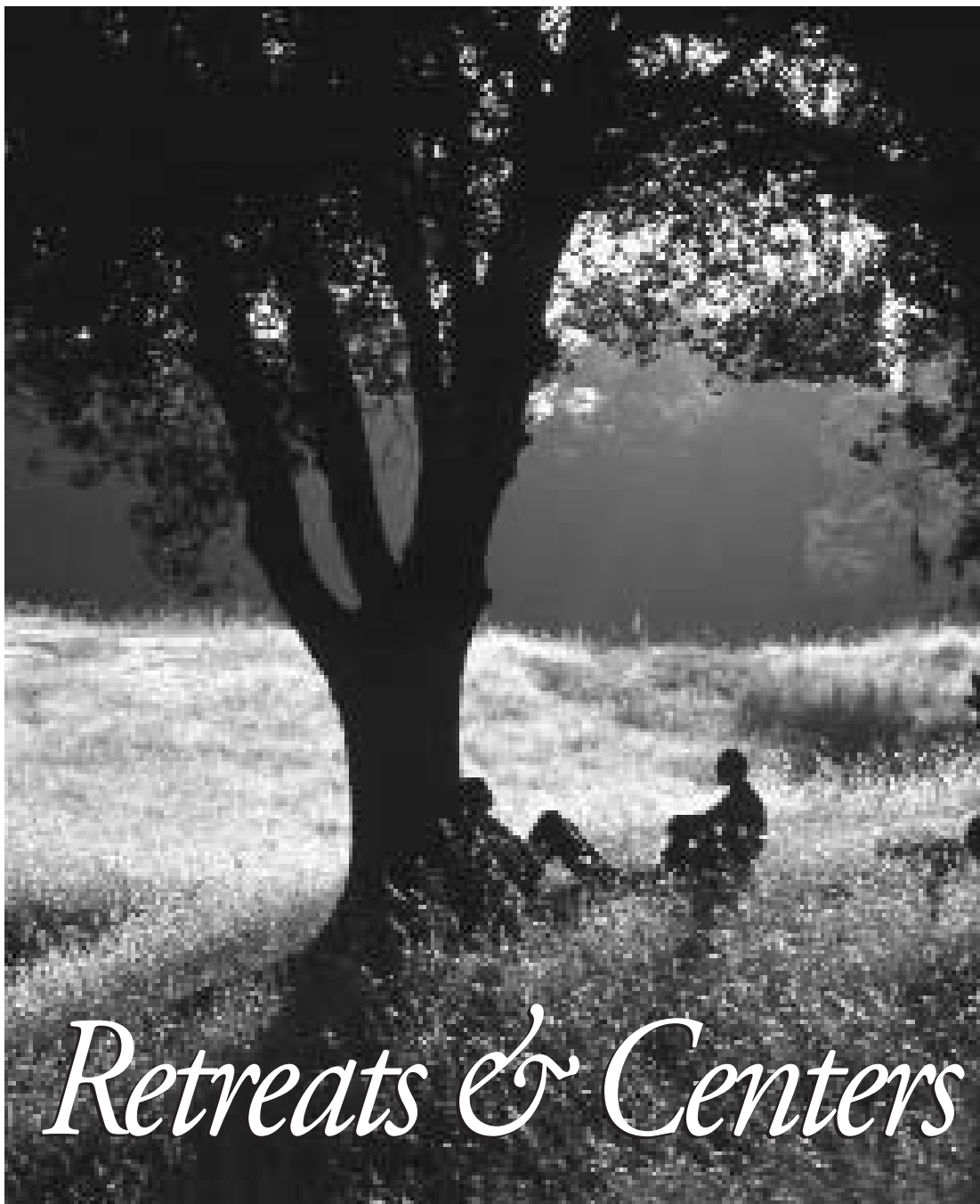
I feel more complete in my life. I feel more stable in relationships and more secure in meeting people. I am grateful for the life God chose to give me and I dearly love my parents, who will always be my parents because they raised me and gave me love and happiness. As I look back on my decisions, I don't regret any I have made. If my story had had a bad ending, I might regret following my heart. However, I feel I made good choices. I needed to find out about my true heritage, my medical background, and any particulars I may need to know later on in my life. I needed to look for my past because I needed to learn more about myself.

The experience gave me inner-strength and taught me not to lose faith when all seems dim. I am a much stronger and wiser person than I was. As an adopted child, I must state that we are special people. We were chosen to be loved, just as all of us were chosen by God to be loved. •

## Embodying Spirit ad

Clayton School  
from page 85 winter 93





# Retreats & Centers

M A R Y   A N N   V A V A L E T T E

*Spring is a time when all of nature blooms and is an excellent time to take advantage of one of the many retreat centers, conferences, or workshops being offered. Taking time from busy schedules, noise and stress and joining with others on a quest for knowledge, inner peace, and a deeper understanding supports our self-discovery. The following is a listing of Retreat and Centers specializing in a variety of programs.*

PHOTO PROVIDED BY POCKET RANCH/TERRY HUSEBYE.



S A C R E D  
C I R C L E

A D

F R O M P A G E  
3 1 W I N T E R  
9 3

- ASSOCIATION OF HOLISTIC HEALING CENTERS was organized to provide opportunities for those in the healing arts to work together, seeking an integrated health care methodology that bridges current, traditional, and complementary practices. AHHC offers conferences and workshops with the ultimate goal to empower self-healing, create and maintain a healthy physical body and a strong, clear mind and spirit that emanates light and joy. For information on membership and workshops, contact AHHC, 109 Holly Crescent, Suite 201, Virginia Beach VA 23451. (804-422-9033).

- AVEDA SPA RETREAT is a learning and wellness center where one can learn to relax deeply and become in touch with one's nature and relationship with the earth. Aveda conducts seminars on health and stress management and is suitable for those seeking solitude and quiet activities. Providing walking trails in summer and cross-country skiing and snow shoeing in winter, the retreat is located on 80 acres of the St. Croix River Valley. For information contact Aveda at 1015

Cascade Street  
North, Osceola, Wisconsin 54020  
or call 800-283-3224.

- BARBARA BRENNAN SCHOOL OF HEALING offers introductory lectures and workshops and a four-year professional training program in Healing Science, healing through the human energy field. Established in 1982, the school currently teaches students of all professions worldwide. Within a loving, encouraging environment, participants learn to perceive, balance, and heal the aura. For more information, contact PO Box 2005, East Hampton, NY 11937. (516-329-0951).

- DANCE OF THE DEER FOUNDATION, founded in 1979, supports the Huichol Indians in keeping their shamanic traditions alive and utilizing its power and joy in modern lives. The Foundation, located in the Santa Cruz Mountains and in Southern France, sponsors seminars, pilgrimages, and ongoing study groups throughout the world; on the West Coast of America: Mt. Shasta, Mt. Rainier, the Rocky Mountains and Alaska; on the East Coast: the Blue Ridge

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE EXPANDING LIGHT



Mountains and the Catskill Mountains. International seminars include France, Italy, Greece, and Mexico. Seminars are directed by Brant Secunda, a shaman and ceremonial leader in the Huichol tradition. For information contact: Dance of the Deer Foundation, PO Box 699, Soquel, CA. 95073. (408-475-9560).

• EUPSYCHIA, founded by Jacquelyn Small in 1983, offers training and healing programs for health professionals and others seeking knowledge and experience of personal transformation. Eupsychia retreats and conferences are committed to the process of self-discovery and integrated ways of living, finding one's true purpose and authentic life's work. For schedules and more information, contact Greg Zelonka, Eupsychia

Inc., PO Box 3090, Austin Texas 78764. (512-327-2795).

• EXPANDING LIGHT RETREAT is located in California's Gold Rush country in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. Open year-round, it offers unstructured personal retreats as well as a variety of programs focused on specific topics of spiritual living. Typical activities include morning and evening guided sessions of meditation and yoga, music, optional counseling, and nature outings. Vegetarian cuisine. Founded in 1968 by Kriyananda, a disciple of Paramhansa Yoganada, the Village has 350 residents, five branch communities in the US and one in Italy. For information contact the Expanding Light at Ananda, 14618 Tyler Foote Road, Nevada City CA 95959. (800-346-5350).

• A GATHERING on the weekend of May 20-22 offers the expertise of 16 outstanding facilitators. Spend time with Native American leaders, who carry medicine and sacred mythology, and participate in ancient ceremonies. Located on 315 acres of natural beauty, A Gathering has cabin accommodations in the woods and delicious food. You may choose from the many and varied activities and workshops. For a weekend of relaxation and new experiences, contact A Gathering, PO 4685, Maineville, OH 45039. (513-677-1710).

• INSIGHT MEDITATION, dedicated to the practice and teaching of vipassana, a 2500-year old form of meditation originating with Buddha, is situated on 80 wooded acres in Barre, Massachusetts. It operates as a year-round interna-

## Journey into Wholeness ad

tional retreat, providing housing, vegetarian meals, hospitality, and instruction. IMS is best known for teaching, practice, and continuation of insight meditation with eminent guests from other Buddhist traditions, such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh. It fosters an open community of spiritual participation for both beginning and experienced mediators. Contact Insight Meditation Society, 1230 Pleasant Street, Barre, Massachusetts 01005. (508-355-4378).

- INTERFACE is an education center founded in 1975 to explore trends in health, personal growth, science, and religion which excite and encourage new ways of living and expanding personal horizons. Focusing on health for the whole body, mind, and spirit, activities consist of lectures, courses, workshops, and conferences by an international faculty. Alternate healing methods, Spiritual Inquiry and Practice, Psychology, and Creative Arts are among the many programs presented. For more information and scheduling contact Interface at 55 Wheller Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. (617-876-5661).

- JOURNEY INTO WHOLENESS seeks to provide a bridge between Christian spirituality and the psychology of Carl Jung, offering an opportunity to explore these concepts and the effect they have on our spiritual journey. Journey into Wholeness is led by Jim and Annette Cullipher. Conference programs consist of three elements: lectures, workshops, and special events. The workshops are experiential and participatory in format. Special events include group dances, theater, films, and art. Contact Journey Into Wholeness, PO Box 169, Balsam Grove, NC 28708. (704-877-4809).

## *1/6 H Ad Feldenkrais Ad*

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## Oasis Center

• KIRKRIDGE RETREAT AND STUDY CENTER, since 1942, has welcomed pilgrims seeking solitude and community, rest and discernment, personal growth and social transformation. Housed in an 1815 farmhouse and set in 270 acres of mountainside pasture land crossed by the Appalachian Trail, the retreat provides a natural setting for healing and grounding. Small and large groups welcome. For brochures and more information, contact KirkrIDGE, Bangor Pennsylvania 18013. (610-588-1793).

• KUSHI INSTITUTE is located in Becket, Massachusetts, in the heart of the beautiful Berkshire Mountains. This residential learn-

ing center that teaches the healthful effects of a natural foods diet and macrobiotic lifestyle on the body, mind and spirit is an ideal place to study, relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. Seminars range from four days to one month. An annual week-long Summer Conference, offering over 150 classes with an international faculty, will be held in August in Poultney, Vermont. For program brochures and more information, contact the Institute at PO Box 7, Becket, MA 01223. (413-623-5741).

• MOUNT MADONNA CENTER, located on 355 mountain top acres of forest and meadow land overlooking Monterey Bay, offers

## Omega Ad

## Kirkridge Ad

## Pendle Ad

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## Pocket Ranch ad

a supportive community atmosphere for relaxation, reflection, and a wide variety of learning experiences. The Center is inspired by Baba Hari Dass and managed by students of Yoga. Its facilities may be used for meetings or workshops by groups with spiritual, educational, and personal growth orientations. Vegetarian meals, lodging, and workshop space are provided. For details, contact Mount Madonna Center, 445 Summit Road, Watsonville, CA 95076. (408-847-0406).

- OASIS CENTER is the second oldest personal growth center in the country. From 1968 it has presented some of the best known persons in their respective fields, including Joseph Campbell, Frederick Perls, Moshe Feldenkrais. Among the upcoming events planned are a Women's Solstice Celebration and New Mind/New Consciousness. For more information on the Center or the programs, contact 7463 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626. (312-274-6777).

- OMEGA INSTITUTE FOR HOLISTIC STUDIES is a holistic education center at the forefront of personal and professional development in subject areas ranging from health and psychology to multicultural arts and spirituality. Located in the rolling woodlands of the historic Hudson Valley, Omega is one of the largest learning and vacation centers in the US. Weekend and five-day workshops include mostly vegetarian meals, optional classes in yoga, dance and meditation, swimming, hiking, and tennis. Contact Sarah Priestman, Omega Institute, 260 Lake Drive, Rhinebeck, NY 12572. (914-266-4444).

- PLUM VILLAGE is a Buddhist community located in southwestern France, which offers retreats for families and individuals.



Author and Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh resides at Plum Village and gives talks on how to apply Buddhism to daily life. He also teaches meditation and leads mindfulness walks.

The best time to visit is during the summer from July 15 to August 15, but any time of the year is possible. Please write or call for information: Plum Village, Meyrac, 47120 Loubes-Bernac, France.

- **POCKET RANCH** Institute provides a safe and nurturing environment for engaging in personal growth. It is a healing center for those in psychological and spiritual crisis, and offers growth-oriented workshops and spiritual retreats. This extraordinary environmental setting, situated on 2,600 acres in the Mayacamas Mountains north of San Francisco, includes hiking trails, a large swimming pool, spa, and meditation center. For a brochure, schedule and video, contact Pocket Ranch, PO Box 516, Geyserville, CA 95441. (707-857-3359).

- **SACRED CIRCLE** with Dr. Susan Rangitsch offers residential programs in which the essence of each season is the point of reflection. The setting of these programs is chosen to attune to the season and to expose participants in either a personal or collective context to a fuller realization of their place in the larger world. For more information on these and other programs, many of which are held in the Montana wilderness, contact the Circle at 400 Cote Lane, Missoula, Montana 59802 or Dr. Susan Rangitsch at (406-542-2383).

- **SAINTE BENEDECT'S MONASTERY**, Snowmass, Colorado. This Trappist monastery is located in a valley more than eight thousand feet above sea level, seven miles from the nearest town. This

monastery is the home of Father Thomas Keating, the noted writer and proponent of centering prayer - a form of contemplative prayer similar to some types of Eastern meditation. Visitors stay in guest houses located a good walking distance from the chapel. The four thousand acres of monastery property offer plenty of space for hiking. Although most retreatants come on their own to stay for a few days and set their own schedules, the monastery does offer one ten-day intensive centering-prayer retreat each month, often run by Father Keating. For further information contact Saint Benedict's Monastery, 1012 Monastery Rd., Snowmass, CO., 81654: (303) 927-3311.

- **UPAYA HOUSE** is directed by Buddhist teacher and cultural ecologist Joan Halifax, is a beautiful old adobe on the Santa Fe River. Retreats involve daily meditation practice, mountain walking, and cleansing diet, as well as retreats in other locations, which include exploring Mayan cosmology, culture and ecology, camping deep in the Lancandon rainforest, mindful walking in the high mountains of Southern Colorado, fasting alone in the wilderness, writing practice, storytelling, poetry, and history of the Southwest. For schedules and more information contact Upaya at 1401 Cerro Gordo Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501. (505-986 8518).•



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# THE ACT OF

ERNEST KURTZ & KATHERINE KETCHAM

*Many readers will be familiar with a marginally humorous story of antique vintage.*

*Clifford was leaning against the fence, enjoying a beautiful view from the top of the Grand Canyon when the wooden posts suddenly ripped from their cement moorings. Seconds later, Clifford was plunging down into the abyss. Halfway to the bottom his desperate arm-waving helped Clifford catch and clutch the branch of a scrubby tree that grew from the canyon wall. Grasping, gasping, he looked both up and down. No way could he climb that sheer cliff, even if he could swing his body toward the wall. But below yawned the chasm, unbroken by any other tree or holding place. To fall would be to die, horribly crushed on the rocks below. No one had seen him fall and he hung there out of sight, knowing that the wind would scatter his weak voice no matter how loudly he shouted.*

*Desperate, Clifford cried out to the heavens, "God help me!" Hearing his own trembling voice, he wailed again, "Please, God, help me."*

*To Clifford's amazement, he heard an immediate answer. "All right," came the voice. The initial warmth Clifford felt turned to a chill wind gripping his body as the voice continued, "Let go."*

*Looking down, Clifford saw the huge boulders waiting below and he knew again that if he let go he would surely die. Let go? he thought. "But God, you don't understand!" he yelled up. "I'm too far up, I'll..."*

*"Let go," the voice repeated.*

*Silence filled the canyon. Then, in a weak, terrified voice Clifford called out, "Is there anyone else up there?"*



# LETTING GO



Ernest Kurtz is the author of "Not God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous." He is currently affiliated with the Center for Self-Help Research at the University of Michigan. Katherine Ketcham is the co-author of "Under the Influence: A Guide to the Myths and Realities of Alcoholism" and "Witness for the Defense."



The story is corny, except that it is true; true of every one of us in the sense that it conveys a powerful spiritual truth: *So long as we cling, we are bound.* The alcoholic knows that truth as well as anyone on this earth, for it is the very essence of addiction to cling to some fixed, repetitive, once-meaningful but now self-destructive pattern. Yet the alcoholic—and the rest of us in one way or another—hang on. "Let go," the voice calls out. "Let go of the bottle (or the pills, the possessions, the power, the pride) and you shall be free." But the insistent whine refuses. "Please, anything but that ... take anything but that."

We crave release, but we refuse to release—and *so long as we cling, we are bound.*

Spirituality is experienced, *first*, as Release. But Release, although it involves a true *free-ing*, is not the same as "freedom." Freedom cannot be given; it must be won. Release, on the contrary, is experienced rather than "gotten," received rather than attained. And so it does not work to tell one's story in order to "attain" Release; yet Release does emerge from the practice of telling one's story. "When we let the truth about ourselves be revealed, we experience

a kind of release," wrote Michael Zimmerman in his study of Martin Heidegger. Note the wording—we "let" the truth "be revealed"—implying an openness rather than some kind of exhibitionism, conveying a sense of wonder rather than of triumph.

The experience of Release has been described as "the chains falling away," "a light going on," "a weight lifted," "something giving way." The very language attests that the experience is not one of triumph ("I



did it!") but one of awe and wonder ("I somehow see what I never saw before!"). The awareness that we do not earn this experience, but are given it, reveals life itself and the experiences within it as gift.

In the experience of Release, as just about everywhere else in the realm of spirituality, the fundamental truth of mutuality holds.

We are able to "get" only what we are willing to give. Thus, it is that we can experience *release* only if we have released—only if we have *let go*. We do not find Release *by* letting go, for that would still involve the manipulative attempt to control. When we truly release, when we really *let go*, we abdicate control, and it is this surrender of control that is so terrifying. What gets in the way here is the old danger of taking ourselves too seriously, of feeling that we have "got it," and therefore have to "hold it." The reasoning seems sound. Why take a chance and let go of something valuable when it might not come back?

"Pious pigheadedness" were the words used by the seventeenth century spiritual teacher Jean-Pierre Caussade to describe this circular and self-destructive reasoning. His admonitions not to "fuss too much about yourself" were rooted in his conviction that we take ourselves too seriously, clinging to our own self-interest and selfish needs, when our real need is the giving of self that he termed *abandonment*. "I wish I could cry out everywhere, 'Abandonment! Abandonment!' And then what? 'Abandonment again, abandonment without limit and without reserve.'"

The need to let go—even to let go totally and completely of our most prized "spiritual" possessions—is found in all ages and all spiritual traditions.

To listen to members of Alcoholics Anonymous telling their stories is to hear described—but more importantly to witness and even perhaps to experience—three levels of the experience of release. First and most obviously comes release from the addiction itself,

MYKLEEN FERGUSON/PHOTO EDIT

from the obsession with the chemical and its effects. Lives centered on a chemical—how to find, get, and keep it (and its effects)—begin to focus on other realities. Second comes release from what Alcoholics Anonymous refers to as *the root of our troubles*: self-centeredness. Lives centered wholly on the self begin to shift perspective and look outward, reaching out to other people with genuine generosity. And third comes release from *denial*, from the fear and dishonesty of self-deception, from the dire realization that one does not even know who one is. Lives dominated by self-deception begin to discover the reality of a *self* that is real but limited, limited but real.

Alcoholics and addicts are not the only people who experience release, nor are they the only ones who need this experience. “Just plain human beings” are as susceptible to obsessions, self-centeredness, and self-deception. When we open ourselves to *release*, we, too, can experience similar moments of freeing. A child tugging at our sleeve, begging for attention while we sit with eyes glued on the television, can reveal in a twinkling the hollowness of our habits. A spouse’s gentle touch can scatter the gloom of self-pity. A character in a short story can penetrate that part of self we had been hiding, even from self. Saying “I’m sorry” and having the apology immediately accepted; listening to another speak of pain and seeing your own pain for the first time; hearing the words, “I love you” when you have just done something unforgivable—these are universal experiences. As so often in the

realm of spirituality and its antithesis, addiction, “alcoholic” means simply *human being* writ large.

Release begins to happen when we lay aside the idea that we can *plan* spirituality—for ourselves or for anyone else.

Alcoholism and addiction, characterized as they are by the rigid clinging of obsession and compulsion, help us to understand the experience of release. Perhaps the greatest paradox in the story of spir-



ituality is the mystical insight that we are able to experience release only if we ourselves *let go*. This is the paradox of *surrender*. Surrender begins with the acceptance that we are not in control of the matter at hand—in fact, we are not in absolute control of anything. Thus, the experience of surrender involves the “letting in” of reality that

becomes possible when we are ready to let go of our illusions and pretensions (our “unreality”).

If *surrender* is the act of “letting go,” the experience of *conversion* can be understood as the hinge on which that act swings—it is the turning point, the turning from “denial” as a way of seeing things to acceptance of the reality revealed in surrender. The self-centeredness that undermines spirituality is rooted in a self-deception that reflects a false relationship with reality, and that false relationship begins with distorted seeing, with some kind of false understanding about the nature of reality and our relationship with it. Breaking through that *denial* and confronting reality is what members of Alcoholics Anonymous mean by “hitting bottom.”

The experiencing of *release* most frequently comes at the point of exhaustion, at the moment when we “give up” our efforts and thus permit ourselves to just *be*. William James memorably described the importance of Release in his study of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

*...the way to success, as vouched by innumerable authentic personal narrations, is ...by ... “surrender.” ... Passivity, not activity; relaxation, not intentness, should be now the rule. Give up the feeling of responsibility, let go your hold, resign the care of your destiny to higher powers, be genuinely indifferent as to what becomes of it all, and you will find not only that*

*you gain a perfect inward relief, but often also, in addition, the particular goods you sincerely thought you were renouncing... Something must give way, a native hardness must break down and liquefy; and this event ... is frequently sudden and automatic, and leaves on the Subject an impression that he has been wrought on by an external power.*

*...A form of regeneration by relaxing, by letting go... is but giving your little private convulsive self a rest and finding that a greater Self is there.*

What blocks *Release* more than anything else is the refusal to “let go” that comes from the demand for security, for certainty, for assured results. Release, like spirituality itself, requires risk.

A very learned man—one of those who boasted of being enlightened—who had heard of the rabbi of Berdichev—looked him up in order to debate with him as he was in the habit of doing with others, refuting his old-fashioned proofs for the truth of his faith. When he entered the zaddik’s room, he saw him walking up and down, immersed in ecstatic thought. The rabbi took no notice of his visitor. After a time, however, he stopped, gave him a brief glance and said, “But perhaps it is true after all!”

In vain did the learned man try to rally his self-confidence. His knees shook, for the zaddik was terrible to behold and his simple words were terrible to hear. But now Rabbi Levi Yitzhak turned to him and calmly addressed him, “My son, the great Torah scholars with whom you have debated, wasted their words



on you. When you left them you only laughed at what they had said. They could not set God and his kingdom on the table before you, and I cannot do this either. But, my son, only think! Perhaps it is true. Perhaps it is true after all!” The enlightened man made the utmost effort to reply, but the terrible “perhaps” beat on his ears again and again and broke down his resistance.

“Letting go” involves a breaking down of resistance to reality, a surrender of the demand for certitude; it can be pictured as a letting fall of fetters, a shucking of bonds of fear and possessiveness now experienced as no longer binding. We “wake up” to discover that the locks on our chains have been removed and realizing this, we lift our arms and let the chains just drop away. But—the chains cannot drop if we have become so *attached to them* that we fear being without them. While the

chains may no longer be attached to us, we may still be attached to them. The deeper *release* then is of *our* attachment to the chains that bind us.

The trap of attachment and the need for detachment form a consistent theme in the history of spirituality. “Attachment” is usually depicted as a clinging to material objects, but in the more profound spiritual traditions, material reality serves mainly as metaphor. Francis of Assisi, for example, focused on spiritual rather than material poverty: his poverty, his “detachment” involved the giving up of claims to “rights” and of his own will more than the surrender of material possessions. In “surrendering” property and possessions, Francis also “surrendered” his right to insist on his own will and thus was able to become, in James’s words, “genuinely indifferent as to what becomes of it all.”

Such detachment forms the heart and soul of Buddhist insight.

The great Buddhist saint Nagarjuna moved around naked except for a loincloth and incongruously a golden begging bowl gifted to him by the King who was his disciple.

One night he was about to lie down to sleep among the ruins of an ancient monastery when he noticed a thief lurking behind one of the columns. "Here, take this," said Nagarjuna, holding out the golden begging bowl. "That way you won't disturb me once I have fallen asleep."

The thief eagerly grabbed the bowl and made off—only to return next morning with the bowl and a request. He said, "When you gave away this bowl so freely last night, you made me feel very poor. Teach me how to acquire the riches that make this kind of lighthearted detachment possible."

All spiritual traditions emphasize *detachment*, but that emphasis does not imply that material reality should be held in contempt. The object itself is not the problem—the golden begging bowl is not bad in and of itself. Difficulties arise not because we have things, but when our relationship with our possessions becomes "attachment"—when we make them into more than "objects" by interpreting them as in some way an essential part of our very *self*.

Ibrahim Adham, a great spiritual leader of the Sufis, was wont to live in much pomp and splendor, surrounded by a large number of servants. Even his tents were pitched with golden pegs.

A wandering dervish once happened to pass by his tents and was enormously surprised

at this display of wealth by a Sufi. So he went, begging-cup in hand, to Ibrahim and questioned him thus, "It is strange that you call yourself a Sufi and yet you are surrounded by luxury and material wealth of a kind, that even your tents are fixed with golden pegs."

*Release flows from  
the understanding  
that all absolute  
attempts to control  
our own destiny—  
like all attempts to  
do anything  
"absolutely"—are  
ultimately doomed,  
for inevitably we  
will come up  
against something  
that we cannot  
control.*

Ibrahim welcomed him and bade him to rest awhile and asked his servants to feed him well. After some time he asked the dervish if he would like to go along with him to Mecca, and the dervish readily agreed. They both set out on their pilgrimage, the princely Sufi leaving all his wealth and luxury behind

him without a thought. They had not walked far when the dervish suddenly remembered that he had left his wooden cup in Ibrahim's tent and wanted to go back to fetch it. Ibrahim smiled and said, "My friend, I left all my wealth behind without the least worry. Yet you are so much attached to a cup of practically no value that you cannot proceed to Mecca without it. The golden pegs which so much surprised you were driven into the earth, not into my heart."

Nor does spirituality's wariness of "attachment" imply rejection of human relationships. Part of our human being involves a profound need for other human beings; thus, spiritual teachers have always been alert to questions concerning the nature of "community" and our attachment to others. Their consistent message has been that here, as elsewhere, there is both a "right" and a "wrong" *way of joining oneself to what is*. The fourth-century Eastern father, Gregory of Nyssa, for example, distinguished between "the participation proper to virtue and the attachment proper to vice." Modern vocabulary differs, but Gregory's point remains valid. Any human relationship requires alertness to the difference between the *attachment* that becomes the claim to *possession* and the *detachment* sufficient to allow true *participation*. The first and essential "detachment" must be from the attempt and the claim to control others.

In his description of the "triple abyss" into which human nature is prone to fall, the seventeenth-century mathematician and mystic Blaise Pascal offered another perspective on the theme of "attachment" and "detachment." Each "abyss" involves a different kind of

TURN TO PAGE 94



# Affirming Your Child

DOUGLAS BLOCH

*In the classic children's book, *The Little Engine That Could*, a blue train engine was asked to transport a stranded trainload of toys to children on the other side of a high mountain. Although the engine was small and had never climbed a mountain before, it continually repeated the affirmation, "I think I can; I think I can; I think I can." Fueled by this positive thought, the engine made it over the top.*



Douglas Bloch is a writer, teacher, and workshop leader. The following is an excerpt from his latest book "Positive Self Talk for Children," to be published later this year by Bantam Books. He lives in Portland Oregon.



A child is like that little engine; what he thinks and dreams about creates his future. If his private self-talk says, "I think I can" (or "I think I can't"), that is the reality he will face down the road. This is because each word or phrase that a child says to himself carries with it an underlying message about the child and his relationship to the world. Once the child internalizes this message, it becomes a "belief" that governs his future experience.

Those people in the recovery or self-awareness movements know that the spoken word has tremendous power, that "what you say is what you get." For many years, people have used affirmations to reparent the injured inner child that lives within us. In a similar manner, affirmations can be used to heal the wounds of children while they are still children! When this occurs, the dysfunctional patterns of behavior will not be carried over into later life.

#### THE POWER OF SELF-TALK

Every child (and adult) participates in a silent, internal conversation known as *Self-Talk*. This self-talk consists of two inner voices that engage in an ongoing dialogue. The first of these voices, known as the "yes" voice, represents the part of the psyche that engages in positive, supportive self-talk. The "yes" voice is a source of peacefulness and strength. It taps into the natural curiosity, wonder, vitality, spontaneity, creativity, and joy that all children possess.

The second opposing voice is called the "no" voice. This is the part of the psyche that engages in negative, fearful self-talk. It is the voice of doubt, worry, anxiety, limitation, shame, and self-hate.

Here are some examples of what these two voices say to ten-year-old Jesse.

| Jesse's "YES" Voice:                       | Jesse's "NO" Voice:                         |
|--|---|
| <i>I can.</i>                              | <i>I can't.</i>                             |
| <i>I choose to; I want to.</i>             | <i>I have to.</i>                           |
| <i>I can try.</i>                          | <i>I'm afraid to do it.</i>                 |
| <i>I am me, and I am enough.</i>           | <i>I'm no good.</i>                         |
| <i>I can handle it.</i>                    | <i>I can't do it.</i>                       |
| <i>I am special.</i>                       | <i>I'm a loser.</i>                         |
| <i>I will get through this hard time.</i>  | <i>I will never be happy again.</i>         |
| <i>I am afraid, but I will act anyway.</i> | <i>I can't act because I am too afraid.</i> |
| <i>I can make a difference.</i>            | <i>I am powerless.</i>                      |
| <i>I am smart.</i>                         | <i>I'm a dumbbell.</i>                      |
| <i>I am good looking.</i>                  | <i>I am ugly.</i>                           |

Sooner or later, a child's self-talk becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. What he thinks of himself is what he becomes. If his "yes" voice tells him (in words and/or pictures) that he is a success, it is only a matter of time before he will demonstrate that success in the outer world. On the other hand, if the "no" voice takes over and complains, "What's the use! I can't do it," the child will act, or fail to act, in accordance with that belief. This is precisely the despair that many children from deprived and dysfunctional backgrounds experience.

#### SUPPORTING THE "YES" VOICE THROUGH AFFIRMATIONS

The affirmation is a simple tool for empowering and reinforcing a child's "yes" voice. An affirmation can be defined as a positive thought or idea that one consciously focuses on in order to produce a desired result. The result may be a specific goal or outcome (doing well in school, making new friends, improving one's health) or an improved attitude or state of mind (experiencing self-love, overcoming fear). A child can create an affirmation for

*Every child (and adult) participates in a silent, internal conversation known as Self-Talk. This self-talk consists of two inner voices that engage in an ongoing dialogue. The first of these voices, known as the "yes" voice, represents the part of the psyche that engages in positive, supportive self-talk. The "yes" voice is a source of peacefulness and strength.*

virtually any need, goal, or challenge in his life.

Whether you are a parent, relative, teacher, counselor, or friend, you can play a major role in introducing affirmative thinking and speaking into the lives of the children you love. Let's explore two basic ways in which this can be accomplished:



### SAY THE AFFIRMATIONS DIRECTLY TO CHILDREN

A child's inner self-talk does not create itself—it is born of what he hears from those around him. Long before a child consciously learns to affirm himself, he is being affirmed or negated by the words, attitudes, and actions of his primary caregivers. If a child hears words of praise and encouragement, he learns to love and to praise himself. If, on the other hand, he hears words of criticism and blame, he learns to feel ashamed and worthless.

### WHAT TO AFFIRM IN YOUR CHILD

The dictionary defines the word affirm as "to make secure, make firm, validate." Here are some qualities and attributes to affirm in your child.

Affirm the child's basic "beingness." Every child needs to know that he is loved and accepted for the person that he is. Unconditional love is the greatest gift we can give our children. Affirmations for unconditional love go right to the child's core and say to him or her, "You're Okay!" Such affirmations include, "I'm glad you are my child," "You are lovable and huggable," and "I love and accept you just the way you are."

Affirm the helpful things children do. We can also affirm children by acknowledging the things they do. Children blossom when they are praised and appreciated. Pick out something the child did well during the day and compliment it; e.g., "When we went to the grocery today, I really appreciated your putting food into the shopping cart," or "Thanks for helping clean up the playroom."

Affirm the child's gifts and talents. Another set of important affirmations are those that support the child's gifts and talents. Sample statements include, "What a

smart girl you are," "You have a lovely voice," and "What a fast runner you are."

Affirm the child's physical attributes. Children are terribly vulnerable to being wounded or shamed about their bodies. Affirmations can help children to feel proud of their physical appearance. Thus, while helping to dress a child you can say, "You have wonderful skin," "Your hair looks so nice," or "I really like

your beautiful smile."

Affirm the child nonverbally. Children need to be affirmed nonverbally as well as verbally. Positive messages can be conveyed by a hug, a loving look, or simply by spending time with the child. As important as words are, they need to be matched by an underlying attitude of love and respect for the child on the part of the adult. Without a congruence between words, feelings, and actions, our affirmations will ring hollow and untrue.

As you affirm your child on a regular basis, he will automatically internalize the words you say and affirm himself. The underlying word behind every affirmation is the YES! and the underlying emotion is love. Saying affirmations to your children will make your relationship with them more loving and respectful as well as create a happier and more productive life for your child.

### TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO CREATE THEIR OWN AFFIRMATIONS

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*

—Japanese proverb

A second way to enhance the quality of children's self-talk is to teach them how to create their own affirmations so that they may become the source of their own positive messages and self-esteem. Children who use affirmations on a regular basis:

- are more independent, autonomous, and self-responsible.
- enjoy greater self-confidence and self-esteem.
- are better able to set and achieve personal goals.

MYRELEN FERGUSON/PHOTO EDIT



- experience improved health and body image.

- are more likely to resist unhealthy peer pressure.

- develop a greater optimism about the future.

Here is a simple three-step process that you can use to introduce affirmations to children.

1. *Ask the child to identify some personal goal or challenge in his life.* For example, twelve-year old Phineas had just moved to a new city and a new school system. In speaking with the school counselor, he expressed his concern that the school was too big and that he would never make any friends.

2. *Reflect and mirror the child's feelings and/or aspirations back to him.* Before we can give a child an affirmation, it is important that we acknowledge and validate his feelings. Thus, after hearing Phineas' concerns his counselor said, "Sounds like you are feeling nervous and afraid that you might spend the school year alone." Phineas nodded his head.

3. *Help the child to formulate an empowering affirmation (a positive self-statement written in the first person) that the child can say to himself.* Phineas' counselor accomplished this by saying, "I hear that you are concerned that you won't make any friends. What are some things you can say to yourself that will help you feel more confident about your ability to connect with your classmates?"

With the help his counselor, Phineas created the following affirmations.

*I am a likable person.*

*It is easy to meet new people.*

*I make new friends easily.*

*I like myself, and so others like me, too.*



As Phineas repeated these words to himself, his attitude began to shift. The knot in his solar plexus untied and his body felt less tense. Whenever his fears returned, he simply recited the affirmation. A few weeks after school began, Phineas had achieved the outcome he wanted—new friendships with his classmates.

Here's another example. Sarah has been rehearsing for her part in a sixth grade school play. Because this is her first important role, she is feeling nervous and anxious. After school, she and her director decide to create some affirmations.

1. With the director's assistance, Sarah describes her goal in concrete detail—remembering her lines and feeling relaxed and confident on stage.

2. She describes how she will feel once the goal is accomplished: excited, happy, and proud to have accomplished her goal. Sarah also visualizes herself being on stage and reciting her lines flawlessly.

3. Now she is ready to create her affirmations for playing her part well. Here are a few she wrote down.

*I am well prepared for my play.*

*I am confident that I will do well.*

*I am calm and relaxed.*

*I remember my lines easily.*

Aside from having a few jitters on opening night, Sarah was able to release her anxiety and successfully remember her lines. •

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*People in the  
recovery or  
self-awareness  
movements know  
that the spoken  
word has tremendous  
power, that  
"what you say is  
what you get."*

# REDISCOVER



*Early in life human beings develop a split between thinking and feeling. Messages from our body (such as what we're feeling and what we want) become ignored or denied by the mind. But denying these messages doesn't make them go away; rather they are expressed by too tightly held body parts or through pain... and more commonly through dream, fantasy, and communication patterns.*

*We've worked with many people who have been told by their parents, "Don't speak to your mother that way." "You don't have anything to be angry about." "I'll give you something to cry about." So we learn very early to control our feelings and actually deny the experience of the body. We learn to live as a mind and keep those feelings at bay that have got us into trouble. In a short time, we become masters at using our minds to control our feelings or to tune them out, rather than being responsive to them.*



*Kathlyn Hendricks is the director of the Hendricks Institute. She has been a practicing dance movement therapist since 1971 and is a member of the Academy of Dance Therapists. She is the co-author of "Conscious Loving," "The Moving Center," "Centering and the Art of Intimacy," and its accompanying handbook. Gay Hendricks is Professor of Counseling at the University of Colorado, where he began teaching in 1974 shortly after receiving his doctorate from Stanford University. He is the author of fourteen books in his field, including "Conscious Loving," "The Centering Book," and "Learning to Love Yourself." Their most recent book, "At the Speed of Life," published in 1993 by Bantam, was the basis for this interview.*



# YOUR ESSENCE

## *An Interview with Kathlyn & Gay Hendricks*

*Interviewed by Mary  
NurrieStearns, Editor of Lotus*

*Lotus: Your recent book, "At the Speed of Life," teaches us how to experience Essence.*

**KATHLYN:** Yes, we want people to experience Essence personally and to relate to other people from who they truly are.

*Please define Essence.*

**GAY:** Essence is the part of us that is connected to ourselves, other people, and the Divine—all at the same time. It is pure consciousness.

**KATHLYN:** Everybody experiences Essence. Our work uncovers what has gotten in the way of experiencing Essence, such as powerful experiences and roles that people have taken on to protect themselves. At the bottom of those feelings and roles is Essence.

**GAY:** Body centered therapy allows people to feel Essence in themselves and see it in other people.

*What happens that we lose connection with Essence?*

**GAY:** Two things happen. One we call rapid learning and the other slow learning. Let me give you an example of each. Rapid learning occurs with trauma or sharp experience. Let's say that you are experiencing Essence at age four, when suddenly your mother and father have a terrible argument and split up. That happened to one of our clients. He remembers *that* as the

day he lost contact with himself, his inner-child, and with Essence.

**KATHLYN:** Slow learning is often expressed as, "That is the way things were when I was growing up. We never talked about it, but I knew that if I had feelings of anger, I would have to take them to my room." Many people experience slow learning at school or with peers during early adolescence when peer feedback becomes very important. Everybody wears his shoes unlaced, for example, because that is what he sees around him.

Slow learning is

decision that takes a person away from Essence is, "I can't be myself here; I have to be some other way in order to survive and adapt."

*Do some of us grow up without separating from Essence?*

**GAY:** I believe so. I have seen people who seem never to have lost their connection with Essence. That is beautiful but they are the rare minority.

**KATHLYN:** People who haven't lost connection with Essence have a wonderful sparkle in their eyes, a great sense of humor and see things from lots of perspec-



what people experience most of the time. That is how people take on roles to adapt to the situation they find themselves in. Rapid learning is almost always accompanied by pain and an altered stated of consciousness. You make decisions very rapidly in that kind of state. The

tives without losing sense of who they are. There is a visible center in them. Meeting these people is rare. Most of us have to journey back through past experiences to rediscover Essence.

*We develop a persona and play*

*out certain roles to deal with overwhelming feelings. Is it natural to develop persona as children and then part of maturation is to journey back and reclaim Essence?*

GAY: It is natural to develop personas because of two factors. If you have been involved in trauma, you need to deal with overwhelming feelings and may develop a role to do so. There is also a more benign reason for developing personas. Certain things work better in your family or class room. You feel drawn to using a particular persona. For example, in one family a nice guy or a nice girl persona works. In another family, a rebel, stoic, or martyr persona works. It depends on the conditioning circumstances in your family or class room. In that sense, it is a benign process. Eventually, often at mid-life, you find that the personas you developed are no longer satisfying. You begin the process of recovering Essence so that you *have* personas but they don't have you.

KATHLYN: It takes physical energy to maintain a persona because it is separate from the impulses and actions of Essence. You could use the energy of maintaining a persona to be creative or loving. It takes so much energy to maintain a persona that by mid-life, relationships or the body starts to break down. Tension patterns and physical problems are signals that it is time to return to Essence, to organize life from more of an essential level.

*Please define persona.*

GAY: The original Latin word, persona meant "mask" and is made up of two Latin words, "par" and "sona" which means "through sound." In the Roman definition, personalities were visible mostly through particular sounds and the tone of our voice. The persona is a mask or an act that we use that makes the audience respond to it.

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lost connection  
with Essence have a  
wonderful sparkle  
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sense of humor, and  
see things from lots  
of perspectives  
without losing sense  
of who they are.*

*Is there a body/mind split with persona?*

KATHLYN: There does become a body/mind split. If a person is who they really is, there is not a split between inner-experience and behavior and expression. A role almost always involves something unauthentic to inner-experience. We teach people to become aware of whether their facial expression and body posture are an expression of inner-self or in some way are not in harmony with their inner-experience. Through various techniques and principles, we teach people to return to an inner-harmony with self.

*To heal the split?*

KATHLYN: Our clients and students heal that inner-split by getting in touch with their direct sensory experience.

GAY: Often the body tries to heal the split right in front of us. Here is an example. We were working with a couple this week. They each had a different persona that they occupied during their strongest marital conflict. His per-

sona was spacing out and emotional distancing. Her persona was righteous anger, indignation, and attack. Before their personas emerged, each adopted body postures signaling their oncoming personas. He tapped his finger and she tensed her shoulders. Those body splits were probably developed when they adopted those personas twenty, thirty, forty years ago.

*Do we use personas to flee from experiences?*

KATHLYN: People adopt personas to escape feelings. For example, if a young child's parents separate suddenly, feelings emerge which can be overwhelming for a young person to cope with, especially if the parents do not assist him. People have the most trouble experiencing fear, anger, and sadness. We call those the "big three." Underneath personas are one or more of those feelings that haven't been experienced and expressed. People then withhold or conceal who they really are. The concealing process is how we develop persona to hide or mask who we really are and cope with situations in which feelings can't be expressed.

*How do we reclaim Essence?*

GAY: We apply nine principles and techniques of body centered therapy. One principle and technique is Presencing, which invites the person to tune in to their experience right then, whether it is anger, joy, fear, or sexual feelings. People learn to respect and to listen to and honor their moment by moment experience. Presencing is the beginning of healing because it takes people's attention from *out there* and returns it to themselves.

KATHLYN: Many spiritual traditions talk about the problem of separation from self, consciousness, or the inner-divine. Our approach teaches people to listen to their bodies, sensations, and feelings as a way of reclaiming Essence rather



than adopting personas which take us away from our body experiences. The best way to reclaim Essence is to go through one's experience moment to moment. Incredible richness and discovery happen by directing your consciousness to your experience at the moment.

*Pay attention to your experience and be present to it?*

**KATHLYN:** Being present rather than going away from your experience. People experience incredible openings and harmonizing with themselves by paying attention. People learn how to be *not present* to themselves by arguing with what they are experiencing. "I shouldn't be experiencing this right now." "It is not right for me to experience this." People try to get rid of what they experience. If someone has a headache, she tries to get rid of it rather than paying attention to what that might be telling it.

**GAY:** We invite people to pay attention to their breathing and movement to help them return to Essence. Any time there is big conflict in life, we usually hold our breath, which is a natural human response. Animals do the same but return to their normal breathing right after the negative experience. Human beings can take years and years to recover from a trauma. A lot of times we see in breathing the footprints and fingerprints of a trauma that happened thirty or forty years ago. Breath and movement help the person and are naturally occurring and free. No other intervention is required; simply apply your attention to those two things.

*Do people move into a different kind of breathing by paying attention to it?*

**GAY:** Sometimes. People notice that it shifts from chest to belly or from fight or flight breathing into relaxed breathing.



*If I am sitting in my office and feel fatigued, what can I do with my breathing to assist me?*

**GAY:** Take three deep belly breaths and change your body position. It usually takes two or three big breaths to get oxygen moving again in the body. Find the place where your body is fatigued and move it in some creative way. Play with it. Use breath and movement to help yourself out.

**KATHLYN:** During a business meeting when the boss brings up a new assignment, a person may hold his breath. He can ask, "What is going on here for me, is there something that I am feeling, or do I need to communicate about this?" Breath can be a signal from the unconscious that something is going on for you to pay attention to and talk about.

The Communication Principle means telling the truth about what I am feeling and experiencing right now. If a person is feeling stuck in a communication, a way to come back to Essence and recover vitality is to communicate to himself something in the moment that can't be argued about.

**GAY:** Something like, "My

palms are damp right now," or "My stomach is feeling tight."

*How does that help?*

**GAY:** It takes you out of the realm of conflict and puts you closer to harmony. When two people argue and take positions that the other person can argue with, they are confusing Essence with their positions. They say, "I am right and you are wrong."

**KATHLYN:** "I am absolutely right about this because if you would change the way that you are talking to me, I would feel better."

**GAY:** Underneath those positions is something unarguable. It might be that both people are afraid. One says, "Oh, my stomach is tight; I am afraid," and the other person says...

**KATHLYN:** "I just realized that I am afraid you are mad at me."

**GAY:** You realize that underneath the argument position is a harmony of something unarguable.

**KATHLYN:** Communication shifts people from the rigidity of their position into the flow of harmony that comes from Essence. Pure life Essence has an inherently creative potential. When people

shift out of the rigidity of a position by telling the truth or feeling their feelings, they reconnect with essential life energy which gives new creative possibilities for themselves and their relationships.

moment of presenting what you are actually experiencing is extraordinarily healing and gives people new ground to work from.

*What questions can we ask*



*In your book you state three rules about communication. Feel Your Feelings; Tell the Truth; and Keep Your Agreements.*

**KATHLYN:** Those are what we look at when life isn't working. We ask people if there are feelings not being experienced, truths being withheld, and agreements that have been broken.

*To communicate that honestly, we have to connect with our inner-experience.*

**GAY:** Exactly. The first thing that puts you in integrity with yourself is not lying to yourself. Often we forget how to do that very early in life.

*We pay attention to our persona or outside experience rather than to our own internal experience.*

**KATHLYN:** Paying attention to the demands of the persona or environment is one of the major causes of separation. Just one

*to help us feel our experience?*

**GAY:** One is, "How is this familiar?" When you are doing a pattern, you may not realize it. One of my big patterns was to deflect compliments. Somebody would compliment me and I would deflect it. "Oh, that is nothing." I didn't recognize it as a pattern; but, when I asked, "How is that familiar?" I traced it back to something that I saw around me all of the time. When people complimented my grandmother, she deflected it. I learned a style that kept positive energy away from me. It was somebody else's life I was living. "How is this familiar?" is a great place to start because it puts attention on your conditioning history rather than on other people.

**KATHLYN:** Another question is, "What psycho-spiritual potential did this event release in me that couldn't have been released any other way?" People learn from

experiences, even traumatic ones, by asking, "What did I learn from this that I couldn't have learned any other way?"

**GAY:** The evolutionary question is, "What can I learn from this situation?" A question that keeps us stuck is, "Who's to blame here, who's fault is this?" "It is my fault or somebody else's fault?" or "It is the world's fault?" That question doesn't provide transformation because it blames you or someone else. When you ask, "What can I learn from this?" and "What needs to be done here?" you focus on questions that have meaningful answers, that produce transformation.

**KATHLYN:** Another question is, "What feeling am I experiencing? Is there a possibility that I am angry, sad, or frightened?" Take a moment to be present to that. Use the Love Principle which means to think of someone or something that you love until you are experiencing the sensations of love. Then turn that experience of love toward any feeling or body sensation that feels unharmonious to you. Embrace those feelings with love.

*You define love as, "The action of being happy in the same space as something else." What do you mean?*

**GAY:** When I love someone, I am happy in the same space that they are in, even if they are doing something or being some way that I may not like. I might be upset with their behavior but I am happy with their basic existence, with their being. We have to learn to be happy in the same space as ourselves first of all. We look for happiness in another and try to get the other person to provide our happiness when we haven't given it to ourselves. Often the first healing moment in relationships comes when the person really loves herself thoroughly and gets happy in the

same space as herself. Then she is not looking to get that from somebody else; she is not demanding that the outside world give her that experience.

*You say that in order for us to heal or to move beyond our present experience, we have to love our current experience. For example, if we want to lose weight, we first have to love ourselves the way we are.*

**KATHLYN:** Yes, accept and love things exactly as they are rather than arguing with the way it is. It is difficult to move from Point A to Point B if you don't know where Point A is, if you are not acquainted with what is going on. We teach people to love and accept what is going on right now, exactly as it is, rather than trying to get rid of it or judge it.

*...Including scared, sad, and angry feelings?*

**GAY:** Those are often very hard to love, particularly anger. When I invite people to love their anger, they say, "That is ridiculous; I cannot do that." We have to work until they actually accept their anger. In Twelve Step groups, healing begins when a person stands in the front of the room and says, "My name is John and I am alcoholic." Healing starts with the moment of acceptance. He has to accept himself exactly as he is. The previous day he may have said, "I am not alcoholic; I can handle this problem." When you call it like it is, you begin a healing process that may have profound implications.

**KATHLYN:** It also applies to trauma. For people who have had traumatic past experiences, the first healing step is to accept what happened without making it their fault. Often when trauma such as sexual abuse has occurred, people decide whose fault it is rather than loving and accepting what happened, deciding what they want,

and moving forward, taking responsibility for their life from that point.

*Let's move on to the Manifestation Principle. What does it mean?*

**GAY:** It means asking yourself, "What do I most want?" What many of us want *is not* really what we want. We have been programmed or conditioned to want something. To figure out what I

*If an event or  
pattern happens  
three or more times  
in your life, it is  
probably not due to  
something going on  
out there but is  
something that has  
to do with you.*

want, I have to understand who I am. I have to experience Essence before I can really know what I want. For example, you ask a person what he wants and at one level he may say, "I want a chocolate bar." With more evolution he may tune in to an Essence level and say, "I want grapes," or may tune into a deeper level and find that what he really wants to take a deep breath and that he is not hungry at all. Simply ask yourself what you most want.

**KATHLYN:** That question may take some time to evolve, to go through those layers. When first asked, many people feel blank inside. There is no map inside for

determining do I want or do not want. We often invite people to do a very simple experiment when they first ask. We ask them, "Do you want a drink of water right now?" They have to tune into their inner-experience to answer that. That is the same place to go to find out whether they want anything else.

**GAY:** I was working with a couple a few days ago and asked them to tell each other what they wanted sexually. Many of us have layers of conditioning between ourselves and knowing what we want sexually. It took the better part of an hour before they could clearly state one thing they wanted from the one another.

*Do we focus not only on what do we want but also on what we don't want?*

**KATHLYN:** Many people start there. They start with, "No, I don't want this; I don't want to fight with you all of the time; but I don't really know what I do want." A lot of people find that to be a transformative question. We ask couples, "If you were not engaged in this power struggle or conflict with each other, what might you be doing with that creative potential with each other, what might you be creating together?" Many couples have never considered what they want in a positive sense.

**GAY:** The way to Essence is to pause and love yourself thoroughly for being exactly where you are, which gives you access to the experience of Essence in your body.

*And, access to knowing what you want?*

**GAY:** Yes, from that place of Essence, knowing what you really want.

**KATHLYN:** After people ask, "What do I want," we ask them to notice what their responses are. What goes on in their minds and bodies gives information. "Am I

feeling my persona right now or am I feeling harmony with myself?" For example, we asked a woman in a new marriage with stepchildren what she really wanted. Her first response was, "I would like these children to be out of here, to all disappear." That was certainly an expression of her feeling in the moment. When she was asked that question again, she realized that she really wanted to feel a sense of harmony with her husband in relationship to the children. She wanted unity and communication in dealing with their separate and combined children. Often the question, "What do I really want?" begins a process. It is another way of moving from persona to Essence.

*Let's move on to the Responsibility Principle.*

**KATHLYN:** Many people do not really understand what it is to take healthy responsibility for their lives.

*How do we take healthy responsibility?*

**GAY:** First, it is important to get a clear definition of responsibility. Many of us think responsibility means *blame*. I remember hearing in my childhood, "Okay, who is responsible for this mess on the living room floor?" It was used as a synonym for blame. "Whose fault is this?" Our definition comes from asking, "How am I able to respond here to this situation?" Taking responsibility is also making the connection between certain events in our lives.

**KATHLYN:** If I stub my toe a couple of times, I think, "Recently I had an angry thought and stubbed my toe. I was just walking up the steps and I stubbed my toe again. I wonder if I also had an angry thought?" I ask, "Was there a connection between my angry thought and stubbing my toe?" If I am in a relationship in which there is conflict, have asked my partner to

dump the trash several times, and he says, "Yeah, yeah, I'll do that," and it hasn't happened, I wonder if there is a connection between his not dumping the trash and something that I am experiencing or am

*Integrity of feeling  
is to honor all of  
your feelings.*

*Integrity of  
agreement is to  
honor all of your  
agreements.*

*Integrity of truth is  
to honor the  
wholeness of truth  
and to speak the  
wholeness of truth.*

not expressing. I ask, "Is there a connection here?"

**GAY:** Responsibility proceeds through three levels of learning. Entry level responsibility is taking responsibility for something where in the past you operated from the victim position. For example, if you have felt yourself the victim of your headaches...

**KATHLYN:** "I just get these headaches, these headaches just come on..."

**GAY:** A healing moment is to ask, "What are these headaches doing in my life? What is their function? Is there a relationship between my anger and my

headaches?" If you think the headache is caused by something out there and you are not taking responsibility for it, you have a problem. Entry level responsibility is stepping out of the victim position and taking responsibility for something.

**KATHLYN:** Responsibility is saying, "I am responsible for my life. I am creating my life as it is occurring."

**GAY:** "I am responding to life with a headache," might be a way to think about it. That is just the first level of responsibility. The second level is when life becomes fun.

**KATHLYN:** Mid-level responsibility is reliably taking responsibility, even when you are between a rock and a hard place. That means responding, not getting paralyzed by not expressing or experiencing feelings or the truth but responding to life as it is happening and saying, "I am creating my life; I am somehow creating what is going on here." You continue to be in touch with yourself and with what is going on around you in a flexible responsive way.

**GAY:** The third level, senior level responsibility, is when you are skilled enough at taking responsibility that you become a space wherein other people are inspired to take responsibility. You become an inspirer of responsibility rather than being pulled into it by someone else.

**KATHLYN:** Responsibility begins when you take it. Responsibility begins when you decide to be responsible for your life. You are going to remain ineffective at events, occurrences, and with people until you decide, "I am going to look at the connection between things and take responsibility for what occurs in my life, what I feel, how I communicate, and the actions that I take regard-

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# BEFORE WE CAN FORGIVE

*Before we eat, we want to know what we are eating. Before we sign on the bottom line, we want to know what we are signing. Before we forgive, we need to take a closer look at what we are forgiving. This is the “doing our homework” part of forgiveness. ✂ The only way around is through. There is no way to investigate the choice and process of forgiveness without first getting in touch with the uncomfortable feelings that caused us to refuse to forgive or that made us incapable of forgiving in the first place. ✂ Forgiveness is not amnesia. It is not a drug we take to forget the pain. Forgiveness is not a bitter pill we swallow in hopes it will cure our relationships. Forgiveness is not a convenient escape route from the pain, anger, and sadness trapped within us—or the work required to understand and release those feelings.*

Dwight Lee Wolter is the author of the "Forgiving Our Parents" and "My Child, My Teacher, My Friend."



If you have difficulty with forgiveness, you are not alone. Few doubt that forgiveness is basically good. Then why is there so little evidence of it? Where is the evidence that we live in a forgiving world? Why in my local bookstore, did I find forty books on anger and three on forgiveness?

Forgiveness is not an act so much as a way of life. Forgiveness is a constant and spontaneous process of letting go.

#### A WORD ABOUT REASONS NOT TO FORGIVE

There is a lot of pressure placed on us to forgive. Some comes from people who don't know how to do it any better than we do. Many of these are uninformed, not only about how to forgive, but why or why not to forgive.

We have the right to question. Anything—like forgiveness—that is so much talked about and so little practiced deserves to be discussed openly.

I encourage you to trust your thoughts, feelings, insights, and intuitions. I am on your side. I believe you if you say you have good reasons why you can't or won't forgive. Forgiveness is a choice. Only you can decide if and when to embark upon the process of forgiving.

No matter what your stance may be on forgiveness issues in your life, awareness will always be the first step of change. Just as it benefits you to know exactly what you are trying to forgive before you can experience any success with it, you may want to know why you can't or won't forgive, so that you can be more at peace with your decision.

*Cliches like "Forgive and forget," "Let bygones be bygones," and "To err is human, to forgive divine" reinforce the acceptance of certain "nice" feelings. These cliches allow people to sweep difficult issues under the carpet in the name of forgiveness.*

#### A PARTIAL LIST OF REASONS NOT TO FORGIVE

- I have the right not to forgive.
- I am not ready to forgive.
- Forgiveness seems like too much work.
- Withholding forgiveness is a good way to punish the person I'm mad at.
- Forgiveness gets in the way of my denial of what my relationship is really like. In order to forgive, I have to admit to the problems.
- I am afraid of letting those old resentments come up again.
- I am afraid the person might continue to hurt me, whether I forgive you or not. So why bother?
- I seem to need the highly charged emotional drama that forgiveness might interfere with.
- While I'm struggling to forgive others, they might see how vulnerable I am, and then they can

find new ways to hurt me when my guard is down.

- By not forgiving, I can continue to feel superiority over and contempt for the person who abused me. I like being righteous and "one up."

- When I think about forgiving, I feel like a quitter and a loser. I feel as if I've been defeated in my attempt to prove the other person wrong. Forgiveness is a wimpy thing to think about, let alone do.

- When I forgive someone, I feel that I am condoning the behavior. In a way, I am saying that what that person did to me was okay.

- Forgiving feels as though I'm letting the person off the hook, and I don't want to do that. I want that person to hang there awhile and suffer.

- Not forgiving is my way of setting limits about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

- I equate forgiving with forgetting, and I will never forget what was done to me.

- I will not forgive someone who will not accept responsibility for the wrongdoing by admitting it to me.

- I will not forgive because the person I am trying to forgive doesn't want to be forgiven.

- I will not forgive because my family is united by anger, not forgiveness, and I don't want my family to feel that I am getting healthier and leaving them behind.

- I will not forgive because we might have to start talking to each other, and I have mixed feelings about that. Silence is painful but golden.

- Forgiveness messes with my favorite alibis, such as "I would have been a success if I had come from a healthy home where I received the love and nurturing I needed to achieve success."

- If I don't forgive my parents, then I won't be called on to provide primary emotional or financial care

for them when they become old or ill.

- I won't forgive because that will destroy my definition of myself as a victim. I will have to begin to look at the ways I victimize myself by not assuming responsibility for my own life, despite who harmed me and what I have been through.

- I am reluctant to forgive because that feels like finally leaving home and I am not sure I want to disengage that much from my family.

- I don't want to forgive because I am afraid of moving on to whatever lies beyond the anger and blame.

Not everyone will be willing to admit to the above items. A lot of them may not seem "nice." But an open, honest inventory of your own resistance to forgiving will help you, whether you decide to forgive or not.

### O B S T A C L E S T O F O R G I V E N E S S

Many churches in the Judeo-Christian tradition ask us to forgive, even though God does not always seem to be particularly forgiving. If God is all-wise and forgiving, then why did Jesus have to plead with God from the cross to forgive the people who were crucifying him? One assumption is that God was ready to pounce on the sinners until Jesus interceded on their behalf.

Forgiveness is sometimes presented as a mandated Christian principle by some theologians who do not seem particularly capable of, or committed to, forgiveness. That apparent contradiction, coupled with the fact that forgiveness is

mandated in the first place, can be a huge obstacle to persuading people to forgive. People often rebel against what they are told to do, especially when double messages are involved. For instance, a missionary church orders a tribe of



native peoples "to forgive those who trespass against us" as it trespasses on the tribe's "pagan" religion.

Forgiveness is often presented by the church as an "act" that has an immediate and specific "result." You "do" forgiveness. But when people attempt to forgive persons who have wronged them and a while later discover that those persons wrong them again, they feel that either forgiveness doesn't work or that somehow they don't know how to "do" it "right."

A church cannot help but function, on some level, as a supreme

parental authority figure. Even the most liberal church (or "parent") is subject to receiving potshots while parishioners (or "children") are developing spiritual awareness, coming to terms with who they are and where they came from, and sorting out their own beliefs.

In my experience, the transference of feelings about a family structure onto a church is particularly strong in people who were subjected to domestic violence or abuse. They often believe that forgiveness is difficult enough without feeling that the church is trying to shove it down their throats.

It would be helpful if forgiveness were presented as a choice. People are troubled enough if they are struggling with issues of forgiveness without feeling pressure to "do" forgiveness "right." Presenting forgiveness as a choice takes the pressure off people who are already burdened.

It would also be helpful if our religious institutions were to view forgiveness as a process. As we rethink and rework our relationships with the people (or institutions) we are striving to forgive, we often find ourselves forgiving people we have already forgiven. As I began to forgive a painful incident that happened between my father and me, a memory of another event often would surface to take its place and demand to be looked at. It takes time to become fully aware of what and whom you are trying to forgive. It takes even more time to become ready and willing to forgive.

*Forgiveness is more a journey than a destination.*

*Forgiveness is more a way of life than a fact of life.*

Biblical questions can present obstacles to forgiveness. Christ said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Christ didn't say, "Please take a few moments to toss around the possibility of forgiving them, Lord, for they are not the

Another often-quoted scripture that can create an obstacle to forgiveness is, "Judge not that ye be not judged." The very process of forgiveness implies a judgment. You are in a position to offer forgiveness because, in your "judgment," you have been wronged. The other was wrong. You



most together people I've ever seen." The mandate is to forgive.

Many people have difficulty understanding the need to "forgive them for they know not what they do." Why should we, and how can we, forgive all those who have harmed us but were ignorant of their motives? My brother, for example, did not intend to be the favorite son. But he was. And I have difficulty forgiving him for that, even though I know it was not his fault. Whether he knew what he was doing, whether he intentionally tried to be the favorite son or not does not negate my feelings. Being aware that he was not in control of the situation—walking a mile in his moccasins—leads me to understanding, and understanding helps but understanding is not the same as forgiveness.

were right and you were hurt. Seeing yourself as a victim and someone else as the victimizer is a necessary judgment in the process of righting a wrong.

Wouldn't it be better to tell people that they have the right to judge the behavior and attitudes of others? Judging behavior and attitudes is not the same as judging on the basis of their inherent worth as human beings. For example, people have to be able to judge when someone has gone too far and crossed a physical or emotional boundary.

The same is true of self-judgment. I need to be able to accept that "I made a mistake" without believing that "I am a mistake." When we talk about forgiving, the presence of painful feelings is implicit. If these feelings are not encouraged to surface in an atmos-

phere of safety, then little progress will be made. People are often tempted to call themselves names like "stupid," "bad," "self-pitying," or "ungrateful" when painful or embarrassing feelings come up. This only makes a painful situation worse.

Institutions should encourage people to accept that there is no such thing as a "good" or a "bad" feeling. There are only comfortable or uncomfortable feelings. Some feelings, of course, are valued more highly than others. Love, for example, is valued more highly than hate. But does that make hate "bad"? Is jealousy "bad"? Not if it gets you out of a relationship that does not merit your trust. In this case, jealousy, if not "good," would at least be "appropriate." Placing moral labels on feelings triggers guilt and shame, which stunts the growth of forgiveness. If people judge themselves too harshly, forgiveness becomes impossible.

Cliches like "Forgive and forget," "Let bygones be bygones," and "To err is human, to forgive divine" reinforce the acceptance of certain "nice" feelings. These cliches allow people to sweep difficult issues under the carpet in the name of forgiveness. "To err is human, to forgive divine" is a great invitation to divide a world of struggling people all over again into sinners and saints. It is also a great invitation to feel lowly and out of God's grace if you are having difficulty forgiving.

In my workshops, I encourage people to rewrite any cliches and quotations that make them feel "wrong" or "bad."

Another obstacle to forgiveness is the commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother." I respond by saying that I do not consider it an act of honor to sweep my feelings about my family under the carpet in order to preserve the illusion of peace. I believe, instead, that finally getting my true feelings out

in the open, so we can talk about them, is an act of courage, love, and honor. If I did not love and honor the people who have harmed me, I would be more inclined to ignore my feelings and to bypass the difficult process of forgiveness. I honor my parents and others with my truth.

In order to give and receive forgiveness, we must learn that forgiveness is not a religious or moral issue. It is a personal issue that can have religious implications.

There is no religiously correct or universally agreed upon approach to forgiveness. Our actions, more than our words, indicate that we aren't as forgiving as we claim to be, or even want to be, let alone being as forgiving as we think we "should" be.

Some tell us to be careful about forgiving because it might be equated with forgetting, which can lead to a repeat of the offense. Others tell us there is nothing to forgive because all of life is in God's plan. Still others tell us we absolutely must forgive but they can't tell us how. We have come to the conclusion that there is no conclusion. However, I shall venture one.

*Forgiveness is helpful, but optional*

I feel a whole lot better as a result of having successfully forgiven my parents and other people in my life. But I would probably still be in pretty good shape if I had decided not to bother with forgiveness at all. I was a pretty good guy before I forgave my parents, and I am a pretty good guy now. My relationship with God was good before forgiveness, and it is still good.

My work on forgiveness began to soar when I realized that all my previous attempts at forgiveness were focused on pleasing God or winning back the love of the person I was trying to forgive. I learned that the proper focus of forgiveness is

*Institutions should encourage people to accept that there is no such thing as a "good" or a "bad" feeling. There are only comfortable or uncomfortable feelings. Some feelings, of course, are valued more highly than others. Love, for example, is valued more highly than hate.*

the person doing the forgiving (me), more so than the person being forgiven.

*Forgiveness is freedom from bondage to the past.*

When we are encouraged to view forgiveness as a route to freedom for ourselves, more so than freedom for others, then it makes more sense for us to forgive. Then we don't feel that forgiving is letting the others off the hook so they can abuse us again. Forgiveness is an appropriately selfish thing to do.

- When we are encouraged to view forgiveness as a choice that only we can make, then we feel like we are being treated as mature, reasonable, trustworthy human beings.

- When we are encouraged to view forgiveness as a process, we are

free to grow in spiritual ways at our own pace.

- When we are encouraged to allow all our feelings to surface, even the uncomfortable or embarrassing ones, then we are able to enlist our entire being in the process of healing.

- When we are encouraged to view forgiveness as an honorable thing to do, then we are free of the shame that would otherwise limit us.

- When we are encouraged to believe that we are not being judged unfairly, then we feel free not to be so hard on ourselves.

- When we are encouraged to see that forgiveness is not a "right or wrong" issue, then we are free to approach it in spiritual ways.

#### TOOLS OF FORGIVENESS

1. Begin by letting go of our unforgiving stance.

2. Admit that the events and feelings really happened.

3. Admit that the past cannot be undone. There is no hope for a better yesterday.

4. Recognize that we need no longer be dependent upon parents or others for approval. Thus, we take back our rightful power and learn to validate ourselves or seek validation from more sympathetic parties.

5. Release expectations that others will respond to our work on forgiveness.

6. Release unrealistic expectation of ourselves.

7. Accept others for who they are rather than who we want them to be.

8. Set flexible rules of conduct for ourselves and others. For example, it is okay to say, "You may not call me after 10 P.M. because I sometimes get too wound up and can't sleep."

9. Talk about issues as they come up, and encourage our children to

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# THE KEY TO INTIMACY

DANIEL BEAVER

*Before there can be mutually pleasurable and deeply satisfying physical intimacy, there must be a groundwork of emotional intimacy. Without emotional intimacy, the quality of any sexual relationship will diminish over time. But what enables emotional intimacy to develop and flourish? ✦ Often when a couple comes to see me, they talk about the lack of good sex in their relationship. Usually this means low frequency and little pleasure. They seem like room-mates who occasionally have sex together. They have stopped being lovers outside the bedroom—and, in essence, they've stopped in the bedroom as well. There is virtually no constructive verbal expression of emotions between them.*



MICHAEL NEWMAN/PHOTO EDIT



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There is a difference between loving someone and being "in love" with someone. From what I've seen, when you are in love with a person, you are emotionally involved. There is no emotional censorship to block the communication of feelings. It is this free flow of emotional expression that keeps a couple's relationship alive and vital. The one key to maintaining a pleasurable, long-term sexual relationship is to make sure that this "emotional bloodline" is never severed.

#### BLOCKS TO EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Unfortunately, there are certain attitudes or beliefs common in our culture that tend to block emotional expression. One is the attitude that tends to invalidate a lover's emotions. It might be expressed in statements like these:

"Oh, Jane, you shouldn't get so upset over such a little thing."

"You're not being very rational or logical to feel the way you do."

"You're just being too emotional."

The person making these statements—let's call him Dick—is essentially saying that Jane shouldn't be experiencing the emotions that she is in fact experiencing. Naturally, she feels hurt and angry. If I were to ask her if she is now going to continue to express how she feels emotionally to her lover, assuming he continues to invalidate her feelings in this way, she would probably respond with a



resounding, "No!" Right at that point, Dick and Jane go from being lovers to being roommates, because Jane is removing herself emotionally from the relationship. (Of course, this can go both ways; if Jane were making similar statements to Dick, he undoubtedly would turn off to her emotionally.)

When Dick and Jane go to bed that night and Dick makes sexual advances, Jane responds by saying that she's not in the mood.

She says, "I don't feel close to you, so it's difficult to make love to you."

Dick seems confused. "Well, let's make love; then you will feel close to me."

Too late, Dick!

Another common way we block emotional flow is when we judge certain emotions, thinking that some emotions—such as anger, hurt, frustration, jealousy, and fear—are negative or bad, and are therefore ones we shouldn't express. But what is a person to do with these feelings? What we usually do is to bury or repress them in the hope that they will simply go away. But emotions do not go away just

because we want them to or because we ignore them. We may not be aware of the emotion after a while but it is still there. Don't fool yourself. The feeling is "underground" in the subconscious, being expressed in all sorts of ways through moods and behavior—in ways we may not even realize. Sometimes the repressed emotions remain subliminal for a long time until something happens to bring them to consciousness.

Often these unexpressed emotions can inhibit our sexual desire or interest. There is a common attitude that reinforces our tendency to judge emotions; I remember learning it from my grandmother who used to tell me, "Don't say anything unless you have something nice or positive to say."

If I follow my grandmother's advice, I can't tell my wife which things she does that make me angry, frustrated, or hurt; I can only tell her how I love her and feel attracted to her. This may seem like a good idea at first, but the reality is that if I can't express to her my so-called negative feelings, over a period of time I won't be able to

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express any of my feelings. The relationship will become emotionally dead, and our sex life will become mechanical and boring.

At Thanksgiving and Christmas, when family members are gathered together to celebrate, my grandmother's advice might well apply. Then we are with relatives we may only see once a year. However, if taken to heart with someone you love, the only express-positive-feelings theory can be disastrous.

By holding back or censoring emotions, we burn up a great deal of physical energy—just how much depends on how much emotion we are sitting on or holding back. When we do this, we lose our sexual energy or sexual drive. To make sure that the emotional bloodlines in your relationship keep flowing, accept that whatever your lover feels emotionally is a fact for him or her. Never invalidate those emotions, even if they make no sense to you, or you don't feel the same way. It doesn't matter—that's how they feel.

Like it or not, everyone has their own emotional reality. To accept it does not mean you agree with it; more importantly, it means that you respect that person's right to have an emotional life different from yours.

If you want your lover to stay intimately close and turned on to you sexually, you need to accept



how that person feels; otherwise, it's as if you were taking a knife and cutting the arteries of your relationship and letting it slowly bleed to death.

#### VULNERABILITY

In any relationship, the key to intimacy is vulnerability. Vulnerability is the degree to which a person shares information about him or herself that leaves open the possibility of being hurt. Vulnerability is relinquishing control. If we cannot give up control, intimacy is impossible.

Vulnerability is essential to both verbal and sexual communication. In other words, we must experience

vulnerability both inside and outside the bedroom. There must first be emotional vulnerability if there is going to be willing physical vulnerability.

Vulnerability at the verbal level involves the expression of emotions through words. Telling your lover what you are experiencing emotionally puts you in a vulnerable position; you are letting your partner know you in a way that perhaps few people do. As a result, your lover doesn't have to guess or read your body language. You are not telling your lover what you think about him or her, but instead how you feel inside. You are giving a very special gift by sharing this information (no matter what the emotions are that you are sharing) because you are opening yourself to possible judgment or rejection.

If your lover responds in the same way by sharing his or her emotions, then you have created intimacy. If this is your usual experience, yours is an intimate relationship. If your lover responds by judging your feelings or withholding her or his own, then the two of you have some work to do together, if intimacy is your goal. But if you are afraid to take the risk of expressing your emotions because you think you might get hurt, then you are not giving intimacy a chance to grow, and the relationship will probably never become intimate.

Of course, sexual satisfaction doesn't always require a high degree of vulnerability and emotional shar-

ing; there is usually little of either in the case of the one-night stand or in the beginning of a new relationship. In these situations, sexual pleasure is fueled by newness and the sense of the unknown. Once the novelty wears off, however, the couple must decide if they want to become more involved with each other by becoming vulnerable. If they don't open up to each other emotionally, yet keep seeing each other sexually, their relationship will probably lose its zest.

Over time, the more two people are able to communicate their vulnerabilities verbally, the greater their ability to be vulnerable in the physical/sexual aspect of their relationship.

#### WANTS AND NEEDS

Being vulnerable verbally requires expressing your wants and needs to your partner. When you name something you want, you are exposing yourself to possible disappointment. If I tell my wife that I want to spend Friday night with her and she says she has other plans, I'm going to feel disappointed; some people would even take this as rejection. If my wife responds positively, we'll have a good time. It's not knowing the response beforehand that puts the person making the "I want" statement into a vulnerable position.

To avoid getting into a vulnerable position, some people avoid being assertive, instead being passive and not stating their wants.



They may say, "Whatever you would like to do is fine with me," or "Whatever makes you happy," thereby passing the responsibility for decision making onto the other person. Because of their passivity and consequent lack of vulnerability, it is difficult, if not impossible, to form intimate relationships with passive people.

Sometimes people hide behind questions as a way to avoid becoming vulnerable. For example, suppose I were to ask my wife, "Do you want to go to a show tonight?" This sounds like a simple question, but it is more complex than it appears. There may be any one of the following subtexts lurking within it.

"I want to go to the show with

you because I'm tired of being in the house."

"I want to go to the show because I want to spend some time with you."

"I want to go to the show because I hear it's a great movie."

So, if I were to just ask the question, "Do you want to go to the show?" my wife might not know what I am really asking. I would be demanding a response from her without having given her all of the information she needs. I am protecting myself from possible disappointment by not stating the real reason behind the question.

When people name something they need, as opposed to something they want, they are making themselves even more vulnerable, because

now they are expressing something that isn't negotiable.

A need (in the context of relationship) is something that you must have met in order to continue in the relationship. If my wife states that she needs more time alone with me and I respond with, "I'm too busy, I'll get to you later," you can imagine how that would hurt emotionally. She has taken a great risk because the issue at stake is not one of temporary disappointment but of personal rejection.

#### CONTROL

In order to be sexually vulnerable, a person must not only open up verbally, but must also be willing

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to relinquish control— both mentally and physically.

Some people like to lose control consciously or mentally by drinking too much alcohol.

Other people like to be in mental control of themselves all of the time; these people typically do not like to become intoxicated. Ideally, we should not be out of control, mentally speaking, but neither should we hold on so tightly that we cannot yield control to someone we trust.

Most people feel extremely vulnerable when they lose physical control of what is happening to them. For example, you probably feel physically vulnerable when you are riding in the passenger seat with a person driving crazily. Sensing your vulnerability, you tighten your whole body, putting your feet to the floorboards as if you were hunting for the brakes. You are physically vulnerable because you don't have control.

Another example of losing control physically happens you are learning to ski. Because you don't know how to stop, you ski very tightly—you may go only a few yards and you are tired; you want to stop and rest. Experienced skiers are loose and fluid; they have the confidence that they can give up control because they know they can get it back by stopping.

The issues of vulnerability and loss of control are particularly relevant to the experience of orgasm. To experience orgasm fully, a person must abandon him- or herself mentally and physically for a short period of time. As Helen Singer Kaplan put it in *The New Sex Therapy*, "To function well sexually, the individual must be able to abandon himself to the erotic experience. He must be able temporarily to give up control and some degree of contact with his environment." A person cannot make an orgasm happen on

*When someone says that he or she is bored sexually, that tells us that this person is not involved in the sexual experience. One becomes involved sexually by being involved emotionally and by being vulnerable with the person with whom one is sexually involved.*

demand, at the snap of his fingers. He must let go involuntarily.

#### T R U S T

In order to experience intimacy, you need to be able to trust your partner, to give up control of your actions and feelings, and to go with what gives you pleasure without hesitation. This is what is called being uninhibited sexually. To give up control doesn't mean being out of control and going crazy; it means that you are not holding back and thinking and monitoring what is happening between you and your partner. You are like the skier who is going downhill not holding back and fighting the pull of gravity, but with a sense of abandon, knowing or trusting that he can regain control with a good parallel stop.

Where does the trust come from that enables a person to give up

control sexually? It comes from the relationship outside the bedroom. If two people can't trust one another and be emotionally vulnerable, opening up and communicating their feelings verbally, then it will be virtually impossible for them to achieve a quality sexual relationship. If they aren't able to trust each other consciously, they will have a great deal of difficulty giving up control sexually in the most intimate moments, when their overwhelming desire is to fully let go.

Trust requires emotional communication. Obviously, the more a person is vulnerable emotionally, the more he or she can be trusted because it is difficult to fake emotions. It is much easier to con someone who relies only on logic and verbal persuasion.

To summarize: If people block their emotions in the non-sexual aspects of their relationship, then when they become sexually involved their emotions will stay blocked.

You can't be mere roommates in one part of the house and assume that by changing rooms you will suddenly become lovers.

The greater their degree of emotional vulnerability, the more sexual pleasure a couple will experience.

Emotions or feelings expressed and shared between partners are the lifeblood of a relationship. If you take the emotions out of the sexual experience, it becomes one-dimensional, a body trip that inevitably becomes boring once the novelty wears off.

When someone says that he or she is bored sexually, that tells us that this person is not involved in the sexual experience. One becomes involved sexually by being involved emotionally and by being vulnerable with the person with whom one is sexually involved. •

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# PERSONAL INTEGRITY

*Integrity is the integration of ideals, convictions, standards, beliefs—and behavior. When our behavior is congruent with our professed values, when ideals and practice match, we have integrity. ✦ Observe that before the issue of integrity can even be raised, we need principles of behavior—moral convictions about what is and is not appropriate; we need judgments about right and wrong action. If we do not yet hold standards, we are on too low a developmental rung even to be accused of hypocrisy. In such a case, our problems are too severe to be described merely as lack of integrity. Integrity arises as an issue only for those who profess standards and values, which of course is the great majority of human beings.*



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When we behave in ways that conflict with our judgment of what is appropriate, we lose face in our own eyes. We respect ourselves less. If the policy becomes habitual, we trust ourselves less or cease to trust ourselves at all.

No, we do not forfeit the right to practice self-acceptance in a basic sense we know that self-acceptance is a precondition of change or improvement, but self-esteem necessarily suffers. When a breach of integrity wounds self-esteem, only the practice of integrity can heal it.

At the simplest level, personal integrity entails such questions as “Am I honest, reliable, and trustworthy? Do I keep my promises? Do I do the things I say I admire and do I avoid the things I say I deplore? Am I fair and just in my dealings with others?”

Sometimes we may find ourselves caught in a conflict between different values that clash in a particular context—and the solution may be far from self-evident. Integrity does not guarantee that we will make the best choice; it only asks that our effort to find the best choice be authentic—that we stay conscious, stay connected with our knowledge, call on our best rational clarity, take responsibility for our choice and its consequences, do not seek to escape into mental fog.

#### CONGRUENCE

Integrity means congruence. Words and behavior match.

There are people we know whom we trust and others we do not. If we ask ourselves the reason, we will see that congruence is basic. We trust

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congruency and are suspicious of incongruency.

Studies disclose that many people in organizations do not trust those above them. Why? Lack of congruence. Beautiful mission statements unsupported by practice. The doctrine of respect for the individual is disgraced in action. Slogans about customer service on the walls unmatched by the realities of daily business. Sermons about honesty mocked by cheating. Promises of fairness betrayed by favoritism.

In most organizations however, there are men and woman whom others trust. Why? They keep their

word. They honor their commitments. They don't just promise to stick up for their people, they do it. They just don't preach fairness, they practice it. They don't just counsel honesty and integrity, they live it.

I gave a group of executives this sentence to complete: If I want people to perceive me as trustworthy... Here are typical endings: I must keep my word; I must be even-handed in my dealings with everyone; I must walk my talk; I must follow through on my commitments; I must look after my people against the higher-ups; I must be consistent. To any executive who wishes to be perceived as trustworthy, there is no mystery about what is required.

There are parents whom their children trust and there are parents whom their children do not trust. Why? The principle is the same as above: congruence. Children may not be able to articulate what they know, but they know.

#### WHEN WE BETRAY OUR STANDARDS

To understand why lapses of integrity are detrimental to self-esteem, consider what a lapse of integrity entails. If I act in contradiction to a moral value held by someone else but not by me, I may or may not be wrong, but I cannot be faulted for having betrayed my convictions. If, however, I act against what I myself regard as right, if my actions clash with my expressed values; then I act against my judgment, I betray my mind. Hypocrisy, by its very nature, is self-invalidating. It is mind rejecting itself. A default on integrity undermines me and contaminates my sense of self. It damages me as no external rebuke or rejection can damage me.

If I give sermons on honesty to my children yet lie to my friends and neighbors, if I become righteous and indignant when people do

not keep their commitments to me but disregard my commitments to others, if I preach a concern with quality but indifferently sell my customers shoddy goods, if I unload bonds I know to be falling in value to a client who trusts my honor, if I pretend to care about my staff's ideas when my mind is already made up, if I out-manuever a colleague in the office and appropriate her achievements, if I ask for honest feedback and penalize the employee who disagrees with me, if I ask for pay sacrifices from others on the grounds of hard times and then give myself a gigantic bonus—I may evade my hypocrisy, I may produce any number of rationalizations, but the fact remains I launch an assault on my self-respect that no rationalization will dispel.

If I am uniquely situated to raise my self-esteem, I am also uniquely situated to lower it.

One of the great self-deceptions is to tell oneself, "Only I will know." Only I will know I am a liar; only I will know I deal unethically with people who trust me; only I will know I have no intention of honoring my promise. The implication is that my judgment is unimportant and that only the judgment of others counts. But when it comes to matters of self-esteem I have more to fear from my own judgment than from anyone else's. In the inner courtroom of my mind, mine is the only judgment that counts. My ego, the "I" at the center of my consciousness, is the judge from whom there is no escape. I can avoid people who have learned the humiliating truth about me; I cannot avoid myself.

I recall a news article I read some years ago about a medical researcher of high repute who was discovered to have been faking his data for a long time while piling up grant after grant and honor after honor. There was no way for self-esteem not to be a casualty of such behav-

*Most of the issues of integrity we face are not big issues but small ones, yet the accumulated weight of our choices has an impact on our sense of self.*

ior, even before the fakery was revealed. He knowingly chose to live in a world of unreality where his achievements and prestige were equally unreal. Long before others knew, he knew. Impostors of this kind, who live for an illusion in someone else's mind, which they hold as more important than their own knowledge of the truth, do not enjoy good self-esteem.

Most of the issues of integrity we face are not big issues but small ones, yet the accumulated weight of our choices has an impact on our sense of self. I conduct weekly ongoing "self-esteem groups" for people who have come together for a specific purpose, to grow in self-efficacy and self-respect. One evening I gave the group this sentence stem: If I bring five per cent more integrity into my life... As we went around the circle, here are the endings that were expressed:

If I bring five per cent more integrity into my life...

I'd tell people when they do things that bother me.

I wouldn't pad my expense account.

I'd be truthful with my husband about what my clothes cost.

I'd tell my parents I don't believe in God.

I'd admit it when I'm flirting.

I wouldn't be so ingratiating to people I dislike.

I wouldn't laugh at jokes I think stupid and vulgar.

I'd put in more of an effort at work.

I'd help my wife more with chores, as I promised.

I'd tell customers the truth about what they're buying.

I wouldn't just say what people want to hear.

I wouldn't sell my soul to be popular.

I'd say "no" when I want to say "no."

I would acknowledge my responsibility to people I've hurt.

I'd make amends.

I'd keep my promises. wouldn't pretend agreement.

I wouldn't deny it when I'm angry.

I'd make more of an effort to be fair and not just fly off the handle.

I'd admit it when others have helped me.

I'd admit it to my children when I know I'm wrong.

I wouldn't take supplies home from the office.

The ease and speed of people's responses point to the fact that these matters are not very far beneath the surface of awareness, although there is understandable motivation to evade them. A tragedy of many lives is that people greatly underestimate the self-esteem costs and consequences of hypocrisy and dishonesty; they imagine that at worst, all that is involved is some discomfort; but, it is the spirit itself that is contaminated.

#### *DEALING WITH GUILT*

The essence of guilt, whether major or minor, is moral self reproach. I did wrong when it was



possible for me to do otherwise. Guilt always carries the implication of choice and responsibility, whether or not we are consciously aware of it. For this reason, it is imperative that we be clear on what is and is not in our power—what is and is not a breach of integrity. Otherwise, we run the risk of accepting guilt inappropriately.

For example, suppose someone we love—a husband, a wife, a child—is killed in an accident. Even though we may know the thought is irrational, we may tell ourselves, “Somehow I should have prevented it.” Perhaps this guilt is fed in part by our regrets over actions taken or not taken while the person was alive. In the case of deaths that seem senseless, such as when a person is hit by a careless automobile driver or dies during minor surgery, the survivor may experience an unbearable feeling of being out of control, of being at the mercy of an event that has no rational significance. Then self blame or self reproach can ameliorate the anguish, can diminish a sense of impotence. The survivor feels, “If only I had done such and such differently, this terrible accident would not have occurred.” Thus “guilt” can serve the desire for efficacy by providing an illusion of efficacy. We see the same principle when children blame themselves for their parents’ wrongdoing (“If I weren’t bad, Daddy wouldn’t have hit Mommy.” If I weren’t bad, Mommy wouldn’t have gotten drunk and set the house on fire.”)

The protection of self-esteem requires a clear understanding of the limits of personal responsibility. Where there is no power, there can be no responsibility, and where there is no responsibility, there can be no reasonable self-reproach. Regret, yes; guilt, no.

The idea of Original Sin—of guilt where there is no possibility of innocence, no freedom of choice,

*The idea of  
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its very nature.*

no alternatives available—is anti-self-esteem by its very nature. The very notion of guilt without volition or responsibility is an assault on reason as well as on morality.

Let us think about guilt, and how it can be resolved, in situations where we are personally responsible. Generally speaking, five steps are needed to restore one’s sense of integrity with regard to a particular breach.

1. We must own the fact that it is we who have taken the particular action. We must face and accept the full reality of what we have done, without disowning or avoidance. We own, we accept, we take responsibility.

2. We seek to understand why we did what we did. We do this compassionately but without evasive alibiing.

3. If others are involved, as they often are, we acknowledge explicitly to the relevant person or persons the harm we have done. We convey our understanding of the consequences of our behavior. We acknowledge how they have been

affected by us. We convey understanding of their feelings.

4. We take any and all actions available that might make amends for or minimize the harm we have done.

5. We firmly commit ourselves to behaving differently in the future.

Without all these steps, we may continue to feel guilty over some wrong behavior, even though it happened years ago, even though our psychotherapist might have told us everyone makes mistakes, and even though the wronged person may have offered forgiveness. None of that may be enough; self-esteem remains unsatisfied.

Sometimes we try to make amends without ever owning or facing what we have done. Or we keep saying, “I’m sorry.” Or we go out of our way to be nice to the person we have wronged without ever addressing the wrong explicitly. Or we ignore the fact that there are specific actions we could take to undo the harm we have caused. Sometimes, of course, there is no way to undo the harm, and we must accept and make our peace with that; we cannot do more than what is possible. But if we do not do what is possible and appropriate, guilt tends to linger on.

When guilt is a consequence of failed integrity, nothing less than an act of integrity can redress the breach.

*S E N T E N C E  
C O M P L E T I O N S T O  
F A C I L I T A T E T H E  
P R A C T I C E O F  
I N T E G R I T Y*

If we examine our lives, we may notice that our practice of integrity exhibits inconsistencies. There are areas where we practice it more and areas where we practice it less. Rather than evade this fact, it is useful to explore it. It is worthwhile to consider: What stands in the way

of my practicing integrity in every area of my life? What would happen if I lived my values consistently?

Here are sentence stems that can aid the process of exploration:

Integrity to me means...

If I think about the areas where I find it difficult to practice full integrity...

If I bring a higher level of consciousness to the areas where I find it difficult to practice full integrity...

If I bring five per cent more integrity into my life...

If I bring five per cent more integrity to my work...

If I bring five per cent more integrity to my relationships...

If I remain loyal to the values I truly believe are right...

If I refuse to live by values I do not respect...

If I treat my self-esteem as a high priority...

A suggestion: work with the first four of these stems for the first week and the second four the following week; on the weekends work with the stem "If any of what I am writing is true, it might be helpful if I..." If you choose to bring a high level of awareness to what you produce, you may discover that living with greater integrity has become more realizable.

#### A PRACTICAL APPLICATION

"Do you think padding my expense account is really so awful?" a client asked me. "Everyone does it."

"I imagine," I said to him, "that something about it must disturb you or you wouldn't have brought it up."

"I've been doing these stems, 'if I bring five per cent more integrity into my life,' and the other day when I began to fill out my expense sheet with padded items, I don't

*The challenge for people today, and it is not an easy one, is to maintain high personal standards while feeling that one is living in a moral sewer.*

know, it didn't feel comfortable. It felt wrong."

"Lying gave you a bad feeling," I remarked.

"Yes, so I filled it out truthfully, and then later I wondered if I wasn't a sucker."

"You wondered, why be concerned with my integrity if other people aren't concerned with theirs?"

"Hell, no, if I'd thought about it like that, I'd—" He broke off and stared thoughtfully into space.

"What?"

"What you just said is what it all really comes to, doesn't it."

"And if so, the question that naturally arises is, 'Do I take a poll on what I'll call acceptable behavior?'"

"But I think lying about my expenses is wrong!" he said, almost perplexed.

"So, then, what's the question...?"

"When I do something I think is wrong, it leaves, you know, a bad taste."

"I wonder what policy you'll adopt for the future."

"I feel cleaner when I'm honest."

"So you're saying, from the perspective of self-esteem, honesty is the best policy?"

"That's what it's looking like."

"I think that's a fairly important observation."

#### KEEPING YOUR INTEGRITY IN A CORRUPT WORLD

In a world where we regard ourselves and are regarded by others as accountable for our actions, the practice of integrity is relatively easier than in a world where the principle of personal accountability is absent. A culture of accountability tends to support our moral aspirations.

If we live in a society where business associates, corporate heads, political figures, religious leaders, and other public personalities hold themselves to high standards of morality, it is relatively easier for an average person to practice integrity than in a society where corruption, cynicism, and amorality are the norm. In the latter kind of society, the individual is likely to feel that the quest for personal integrity is futile and unrealistic—unless he or she is extraordinarily independent and autonomous.

The challenge for people today, and it is not an easy one, is to maintain high personal standards while feeling that one is living in a moral sewer. Grounds for such a feeling are to be found in the behavior of our public figures, the horror of world events, and in our so-called art and Entertainment, so much of which celebrates depravity, cruelty, and mindless violence; all contribute to making the practice of personal integrity a lonely and heroic undertaking.

If integrity is a source of self-esteem, then it is also, and never more so than today, an expression of self-esteem. •

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# Nonviolent Seeds

*“Once in Damascus when I was strolling along the street called Straight, I watched as a man riding slowly through the crowd on a bicycle with a basket of oranges precariously balanced on the handlebars was bumped by a porter so bent by a heavy burden that he had not seen the cyclist. The burden was dropped, the oranges scattered, and a bitter altercation broke out between the two men, surrounded by a circle of onlookers. After an angry exchange of shouted insults, as the bicyclist moved toward the porter with a clenched fist, a tattered little man slipped from the crowd, took the raised fist in his hands and kissed it. A murmur of approval ran through the watchers, the antagonists relaxed, then the people began picking up the oranges and the little man drifted away.”*

ALAN ODDIE/PHOTO EDIT

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“In Moscow, in what was then the Soviet Union, hundreds of people gathered outside the Parliament during the August 1991 attempted coup. They built barricades of trolley cars, buses, old pieces of metal, and box springs—not so much because that would stop the tanks for more than a few minutes, but to enable themselves to enter into dialogue with the attacking soldiers. Mothers and girls gave the soldiers cakes, food, kisses, and flowers and asked them not to kill their mothers, sisters, and brothers. One friend brought roses and distributed them to the soldiers and gave them a hug, saying, “Don’t shoot; be kind to the people.”

The little old man in Damascus might have been a Muslim or Jew or Christian. It didn’t matter to the crowd what faith he professed. When he moved into the middle of the disturbance, took the upraised fist in his hands and kissed it, he stopped an ugly altercation. His caring act made a big impression on the agitated onlookers. He had sowed nonviolent seeds on the street called Straight. The women who gave cakes and roses to the soldiers at the Parliament building, the Russian White House, during the attempted coup also sowed nonviolent seeds. The soldiers who took these gifts became emotionally unable to fire on the crowd, and the course of history was changed.

The legend of Johnny Appleseed who wandered through the

Midwest in the early years of the 19th century, sowing with generous abundance, was based on the life of a real person, John Chapman. As a boy in Massachusetts, he had a habit of wandering away on long trips in search of birds and flowers. In 1801, his wandering took him down the Ohio River, paddling a strange craft



of two canoes lashed together and filled with decaying apples. Having brought the apples from the cider presses of western Pennsylvania, John Chapman planted his first apple orchard two miles down river from Steubenville, Ohio.

After returning to Pennsylvania for more seeds, he continued planting. Besides the apples for which he became famous, John Chapman sowed seeds of many healing herbs, and indigenous peoples of the area considered him a great medicine man. Apple orchards flourished in what had been the wildness of Ohio and Indiana, thanks to the man who became forever known as Johnny Appleseed.

*The Johnny Appleseed song begins:*

*The Lord's been good to me.*

*And so I thank the Lord*

*For giving me the things I need,*

*The sun and the rain and the apple seed.*

*The Lord's been good to me.*

Another seed-sowing image comes from the troublesome terrain of Palestine, half a world away from the fertile fields of Ohio.

Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no grain.

And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and even a hundred-fold (Mark 4:3-8).

When seed-sowing works, as it did in this parable, it's like magic. The seed multiplies thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times. The wondrous power packed in tiny seeds interacts with the nutrients in the soil to produce bushels of apples in Indiana or fields of grain in Galilee.

But before the harvest, the seeds have to be sown. Sometimes that happens by chance, as when the wind blows them. Other times, they're sown scientifically by human beings who know what they're doing. Sowing for a success-

A/P WIDE WORLD PHOTO



ful harvest takes seeds ripe with potential—and it also takes receptive, fertile soil.

### NONVIOLENT SEEDS

The seeds we're looking at here are seeds of nonviolence. They are alive with the gentle power of Gandhi's satyagraha, truth force. They are bursting with the persuasive energy of Martin Luther King's soul force. These seeds are rich with reverence for the global ecosystem that nurtures us all. Kept fertile in our minds and hearts, they consist of an alert awareness of a new way of acting, of a different approach to other human beings and to our planet, different from business as usual. The seeds are not different in the sense of a scientific breakthrough or a newly discovered secret of human behavior. But they are different from the familiar pattern of anxious self-concern, of being swept along by the currents of the moment, of carelessly consuming whatever we want from the soil and air and water around us. These old behaviors are what the prophet Hosea called "sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind."

Instead of self-concern, nonviolent seeds contain compassionate other-concern, such as that shown by the old man in Damascus or the caring women outside the Parliament building in Moscow. Instead of drifting in the currents of the moment, the seeds express a critical awareness of what's going on and a personal perseverance in reaching for truth. They foster what King called a "Tough mind," a discerning vision of what needs to be accepted and what needs to be resisted. "The tough mind is sharp

and penetrating, breaking through the crust of legends and myths and sifting the true from the false," he wrote. Instead of casual consumption, these seeds generate a prudent and sparing use, trimmed to more spartan needs. Nonviolent seeds nurture a certainty that unchecked exploitation of Earth is poisoning our planet to



death. Nonviolent seeds also produce the recognition that returning violence for violence, hatred for hatred only multiplies trouble. As Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."

### FERTILE SOIL

Nonviolent seeds have power to change minds and hearts when the soil on which they're sown is fertile. And it often is, much more often than we might imagine. Gandhi considered nonviolence to be so congruent with human nature that he called it a law of our being. "Nonviolence is the law of our species," he said, "as violence is the law of the brute." He pointed out

that the normal pattern of human behavior is nonviolent in the sense that people usually give and take, learn to get along. They routinely make adjustments rather than fight.

I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of nonviolence, all the world over people live and retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations.

Gandhian nonviolence appeals to something deep in our hearts. People really do hunger for decency, even those whose life experiences have made them hard and aggressive.

The sower of nonviolent seed does not let a tough exterior deter from extending a humane hand—and keep extending it, even when met by rebuffs. Gandhi identified this kind of patience as a form of self-suffering. The key element in nonviolent example, he believed, is the willingness to suffer rather than strike back in retaliation. When others became explicitly aware of the power of nonviolence through the example of those who practiced it, they would be receptive and begin incorporating it in their own lives.

Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I, and I have come to this fundamental conclusion: that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy

the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the



heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword.

When our nonviolent seeds fall on the generous and creative side of human nature, they find the fertile soil that, miracle-like, produces the many-fold grain. After sowing them we find—another miracle—that the seeds themselves multiply. Unlike material possessions that diminish by being given away, intangible riches increase when they're shared. If we give away money, we have less of it for ourselves. But when we communicate compassion, when we sidestep an attack and respond with patience, when we live our appreciation of

the gifts of nature, we find our nonviolent seeds don't run out—they multiply. We have more of them to give. And those who receive them, when their own ground is fertile, start multiplying them still more.

Just as their increase seems a miracle, the origin of these nonviolent seeds is often a mystery. We don't make them, any more than we make apple seeds. We get them from others, when we're ready for them. Sometimes we have to be well plowed for them to take root in us. And that hurts. But when we're plowed and fertilized and ready, we can receive the seeds gratefully, store

them carefully, and sow them generously.

#### S E E D S F O R A L L

We can sow nonviolent seeds in our microcosm, the everyday world in which we live and move and have our being. Every one of our personal interactions can be engaged in with a greater degree of sensitivity, with a conscious effort to avoid words or deeds that hurt, and an equally conscious effort to say and do what will help. "In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything," Thomas Merton wrote. One of my favorite stories is the Buddhist Parable of the Tiger:

There was once a man who was crossing a field and met a

tiger. He ran to a great cliff and caught hold of a root and swung over the side of the cliff. But at the bottom of the cliff was another tiger. Soon two little mice came along and began to gnaw on the vine. The man looked in terror at the tiger below. But then he saw a strawberry vine. He picked a strawberry and ate it. How delicious it was!

We often remind each other, in times of stress, to pick a strawberry; it tastes so good. Once in a while we share the Tiger story with others. It never fails to provoke a smile and reduce some of the tension that so often builds up in these pressing times.

We can also sow nonviolent seeds in the macrocosm, the wide world that is our full human habitat. We can engage in community building, in modeling nonviolent conflict resolution, in making others aware of the suffering of migrant laborers. We can stop the nuclear trucks as we earlier stopped the nuclear train. And there might come a time of rare opportunity to exert significant change: ending a famine, averting a genocide, converting to clean energy. The possibilities are limitless. The fields are vast. The seeds are potent. And the results can be awe-inspiring. This is the way a great teacher put it, "A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head" (Mark 4:2-28).

"This," Jesus said, "is what the Kingdom of God is like."•

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# SEEKING THOSE WHO LOVE BEST

H A R O L D B L O O M F I E L D

*It is very important to have a clear vision of possibilities, a realistic model of loving human beings in a happy and healthy marriage and family.*

*Unfortunately, you may not have been exposed to a fully loving person in your family. During adolescence, you may have chosen a movie star, athlete, or rock singer as a role model. Rarely is a teen idol chosen for qualities of the heart.*

*The ideal to be sought and emulated too often becomes the celebrity, the power of fame and money instead of outstanding qualities of heart and mind. Culturally and individually, we must be more careful whom we hold up for admiration and recognition; for especially in our formative years, we learn a great deal from modeling.*

*Our culture is in need of a superior vision of our human capacity; the hero, the healer, the true leader have fallen by the wayside. We must expose ourselves and our youth to the best of our species—the loving, creative, and dedicated person, though he or she is not a headliner.*

*We, in the chain of humanity, have been taught that we are as weak as our weakest link. This is but half the truth—we are also as strong as our strongest link. Find loving models and emulate those qualities you admire most. Seek out and learn from those who love best. •*

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# RELATIONSHIPS: A PATH TO SELF GROWTH

*Our primary relationship is really with ourselves. Each of us is involved in developing all aspects of our being and bringing them into relationship with one another—becoming whole. Our relationships with other people constantly reflect exactly where we are in that process. For example, for many years I yearned to find the right man to be my life partner. I created many relationships with men who were unavailable or inappropriate in certain ways. Eventually, I realized they were reflecting my own inner ambivalence about committed relationship and the ways that I didn't truly love myself. It was only after I did much deep emotional healing work, learning truly to love and be committed to myself, that I met a wonderful man who is now my husband.*

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If we learn to see our relationships as the wonderfully accurate mirrors they are, revealing to us where we need to go with our own inner process, we can see much about ourselves that we would otherwise have a great deal of difficulty learning. Any and every relationship in our lives can be a reflection to us in this way—our friends, co-workers, neighbors, our children and other family members, as well as our primary partners. Even an encounter with a stranger can sometimes be an important learning experience.

It's very difficult to look inside ourselves and see what's going on particularly to see what we're unaware of. That's why it's important to look at our relationships as mirrors of our inner processes. Used in this way, relationships become one of the most valuable sources of healing and teaching in our lives. To understand how this works, we need to remind ourselves that we each, through our individual consciousness, create and shape the ways we experience external reality. This is as true in our relationships as in every other area of our lives, i.e., the relationships we create and shape reflect back to us what we are holding within our consciousnesses. We draw to us and

are drawn to people who match and reflect some aspect of ourselves.

Generally, we find that the easiest people to get along with are those who reflect aspects of ourselves that we feel comfortable with and accept—reflections of our primary selves or complimentary energies that we appreciate.

These are usually people who we consciously seek out or are drawn to

it stretches your mind in a way that you accept and enjoy—i.e., it stimulates a less developed aspect of yourself in a way that is comfortable and non-confrontational. It reflects that part of yourself that acknowledges a need to develop your intellectual side.

The people in our lives who make us uncomfortable, who annoy us, whom we feel judgmental or even combative toward, reflect parts of ourselves that we reject—usually aspects of our disowned selves, the shadow side of our personality. If you are a gentle, soft-spoken person, you may be very irritated by a person who seems loud and pushy. Or, if you are a direct, outspoken person you may feel uncomfortable with those who hold back and seem overly timid. The fact is that in both cases you are mirroring each other's disowned energies. The quiet person is being shown their undeveloped assertive side and the aggressive person is being shown their undeveloped reflective side.

Oftentimes, we find ourselves attracted to our opposites—people who have developed opposite qualities from the ones we most identify with. In these relationships, we are unconsciously seeking to become whole, drawn to people who express those energies that are undeveloped in our own personalities. On some level, we recognize that they have the potential to help us become more balanced.

People who express our opposite aspects can be our most powerful



in everyday friendship. If you are primarily a physically active person who loves sports, you may feel most comfortable with people who are similarly athletic. You may also enjoy a relationship with a friend who is somewhat more intellectual and less physical than you because

teachers if we allow them to be. But first we must acknowledge that they express what we want and need to develop in ourselves. Early in a relationship, we often sense that the other person is bringing us exactly what we need. It is, in fact, their differentness that is so attractive to us. However, unless we are able to acknowledge that this person is offering us a reflection of something we need to see in ourselves, the differentness that drew us to them can actually become a source of conflict. After a while, we may begin to resent them for the ways they are different and begin trying to change them to be more like us!

Of course, it's important in any relationship to learn constructive ways to communicate honestly about our needs, our likes and dislikes. However, along with letting the other person know our feelings, including ways we might wish they would change, we need to remind ourselves that we brought them into our lives to teach and inspire us to develop new aspects of ourselves. Our challenge, then, is to be open to discovering the parts of ourselves that they mirror for us, and to learn how we can express those parts of ourselves more in our own lives. For example, Joanne really loved the fact that her friend Tina was a free spirit who loved to "go with the flow." However, it began to annoy her that Tina was often late for appointments. She needed to communicate to Tina her desire not to be kept waiting. At the same time, she needed to keep in mind that Tina was in her life to help her get more in touch with her own spontaneity.

One very common relationship problem is the conflict between order and spontaneity. Some years ago, this dynamic was the central dramatic premise for the very popular play, movie, and television series, "The Odd Couple." Any two

*It is very common in a primary relationship for one person to want greater commitment, depth, and intimacy while the other wants more freedom, more space. This outer conflict mirrors essential polarities within each of us.*

people who live together can get into this polarization—one of them is neat and one of them is messy. Their arguments focus on trying to get the other person to change. But seen from a transformational point of view, the real conflict is between the very structured, organized, linear side of ourselves and our more spontaneous, intuitive, and creative aspects. One person is playing out one side and the other person is playing out the other side.

You can have endless conflicts between yourself and this other person until you recognize that person is mirroring your own inner conflict and is showing you what you want or need to develop in yourself. On the transformational path, you seek the balance between those two extremes by developing those "opposite" aspects in yourself so that you become more whole. Interestingly enough, when you

find more balance in yourself, the other person will often shift into a more balanced place as well, even though he or she knows nothing about the process! This is because we are energetically linked and strongly affected by one another.

It is very common in a primary relationship for one person to want greater commitment, depth, and intimacy while the other wants more freedom, more space. This outer conflict mirrors essential polarities within each of us. We all want closeness, intimacy, and commitment; at the same time, we fear loss of freedom and individuality. If you have this kind of conflict in a relationship, take a look at what it might represent about these polarities in yourself.

Another conflict that often comes up in close relationships arises when one person takes a more rational approach to life and is emotionally detached or aloof, the other may be highly emotional.

For example, if a very rational man finds himself with a very emotional woman, the message being mirrored to him is that he can become more whole by developing his emotional side, by getting more in touch with his feelings. And the message being mirrored to the woman is that she can become more whole by cultivating a more impersonal, detached, and rational energy that will give her life greater balance. If the two people don't begin to integrate their opposite energies—instead of trying to change each other—they will eventually polarize even further, the man becoming even more rational and the woman even more emotional.

Interestingly, as this occurs the "symptoms" of their need to develop the opposite side of themselves become more exaggerated and uncomfortable. In utter frustration, they may withdraw completely from each other and from others in



their lives who reflect their opposite aspects. They can begin to heal their relationships and their lives when they see their conflicts as mirrors. Either person can begin to break the impasse by taking steps to recognize his/her primary self and develop the opposite side.

Not long ago, I worked with a woman whose relationship with her husband clearly illustrated this point. He was trained as a computer engineer and spent most of his hours at work focused on very rational, linear, mental activities. She was a nursery school teacher, who worked with the emotions of very young children all day. Nancy described the early years of her marriage to Ken as “blissful.” She had never felt more complete or whole. Ken’s cool, detached way of approaching problems gave her a sense of calmness and security that her life alone had lacked.

In time, however, she began to feel that he was literally sucking her energy out of her. He retreated into his computer whenever she got emotional. She became nearly hysterical every time he tried to “explain away” what she was feeling. The chasm between them grew until she could barely stand to be in the same room with him. She accused him of being totally unable

to deal with anything emotional; he accused her of being totally irrational, lacking any ability to “work things out.”

Nancy began learning to see Ken’s behavior as a mirror, reflecting back to her what she needed to develop in herself. Rather than seeing her husband as her enemy—which she acknowledged that she had begun to do—she began to view him as her teacher. In time, the tension between them eased and the very qualities that they had begun to hate in each other became valuable guides, pointing the way not only to a more harmonious relationship but to a greater sense of balance within themselves.

It can be difficult for us to recognize or accept that people we have problems with are actually mirroring for us the disowned parts of ourselves. One simple way to tell if you are doing this is to check your own feelings; if you are feeling very judgmental toward that person, the chances are very good that they are mirroring your shadow side. Underneath, you may be jealous. Perhaps this person is expressing a kind of energy that you hold back or don’t allow yourself to express.

I feel it’s important to remember that mirroring in the way I’m

describing is very different from making the other person a “role model.” A role model is a person whom we admire and want to emulate. But in mirroring, our own self-discovery and self-development are the goal; we’re not trying to be like another person. The goal is to become more ourselves. The fact is that people mirroring our own needs may be even more out of balance than we are. They certainly don’t have to be people whom we look up to, as we might do with a role model. We don’t have to become like they are or go to an extreme to discover our center. However, we may need to allow ourselves to develop a little more of that energy that we are seeing reflected back to us.

For example, if you are a quiet, reserved, perhaps overly modest and self-effacing person, you might feel judgmental toward someone who always seems to seize the center of attention. They may be mirroring that part of you that would like to receive more attention but is afraid to. It’s not necessary to emulate this person, who may very well be out of balance in the opposite direction from you. Instead, allow that person to be a catalyst for your growth process. Try to see the essence of the quality that this person reflects to you, i.e., the desire for love and attention—and begin to investigate ways you can nurture and express that part of yourself in your own way.

We avoid the things that we’re afraid of because we think there will be dire consequences if we confront them. But the truly dire consequences in our lives come from avoiding things that we need to learn about or discover. We must instead learn to be more open and accepting of the things we’re afraid of, whether exploring our emotions or learning to balance our check-book! Acceptance is simply a willingness to look at, confront, and

TURN TO PAGE 89



# FEELING OUR LOSSES

*We hold pieces of grief within our hearts so they can tug at our spirits. There is so much to grieve—the lives we haven't led, the words we wished we had said, lost loves, lost childhoods, the souls of our sisters that have passed—fighting so that we could have a better life. Grief that the better life may not have been to be merely equals in a male world, but to be natural, instinctual, creative beings. The wild woman. ☞ There's no right or easy way to grieve. As author May Sarton wrote, "It is not absurd to feel such grief. I am undone." When I read great writers of the past and present—Virginia Woolf, George Sand, and Alice Walker—or I hear the songs of Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, and Bonnie Raitt, I realize how they pour forth their passion, their grief. French author Marguerite Duras writes of this in "The Lover."*

Laurel King is the author of "Women of Power." She is a writer and consultant who lives in Northern California with her husband Cris and her daughter Lily.



“One day, When I was already old, in the entrance of a public place a man came up to me. He introduced himself and said, ‘I’ve known you for years. Everyone says you were beautiful when you were young but I want to tell you I think you’re more beautiful now than then. Rather than your face as a young woman, I prefer your face as it is now. Ravaged.’”

Our society does not acknowledge grieving. I can almost hear Joseph Campbell asking, “Where are the wailing circles? Where are the dances of sorrow? Where are the rituals of death?” In our society we are encouraged to get over our grief, instead of feeling it. Fortunately, this is changing but as a whole it’s still the old “take a pill,” overwork, do anything to make the pain go away.

I remember asking my mother how she dealt with the death of her second child. Her baby was very much alive and on his way to being born when they arrived at the hospital; then the doctors said something happened and he was pronounced dead at birth. They left the hospital empty-handed and in deep sorrow. My mother told me that she felt so much pain, but nobody talked about those things then. She was told just to go on with her life. I felt so angry and sad for her when she told me this.

Many children are taught that the feeling of loss is just something to get over. Often when children cry over a loss, parents try to fix it by distracting them. Often because parents can’t face their own grief, they tell the child to “Stop Crying!” “Stop Feeling!”

Our wild woman can help us grieve. She is our natural self, the feminine, our feelings. We can call on her, allowing her to be with us as we move through the pain. Grief is painful. I am particularly referring to the stage of grief where someone is in great sadness, despair, and

emptiness. For some, it is as if all life has been sapped out of them and all faith is gone. This is a transition stage. In my own passage, when I could finally let myself move through the fear, panic, and anger to the tears, I was on my way to the other side. When I say “other side,” I’m not necessarily referring to the death of the physical body but a death of the old self, the old identity, the part of ourselves that holds onto the shame and the fear. An end to the suppression of our spiritual self and our wild hearts.



It is not easy to get into an emotional state where one will allow these feelings, especially when there are so many ways to avoid them through addictions and obsessions of all kinds. Yet our addictions which have been our great friends, protecting us from our feelings, now stand in the way of our living fully. They keep our wild woman hidden. For the wild woman to emerge completely, grieving needs to take place. The transition to the resolution needs to happen. It is not something people, or this society, can afford to avoid any longer without crashing completely.

The transition stage can be the most difficult. I compare it to what many women go through in childbirth. In birth transition, many women fear they’ll never make it. They scream, “Make this stop! God

help me. I won’t live through this!” When I’ve sat with my own grief and that of others, I hear similar cries, “Will I ever get over the past? Will the sadness ever end? When will I feel normal again? What’s the use, I just want it to be over.” A midwife told me, that a part of wisdom is dealing with grief and knowing that when you or someone near you is in the middle of pain, it will pass.

In her book, *On Death and Dying*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross described the fourth stage of grief as feelings of despair, loss of faith, sadness, and depression. When Kubler-Ross first sought to understand what dying people felt, she was called a vulture by her colleagues. “You’ve got a lot of nerve asking the dying how they’re feeling,” they’d complain but from her work emerged the recognition of five stages of grief. The first stage is denial, fear and panic; the second stage, bargaining (Oh

no, this can't be happening; there must be something I can do to make it stop); the third stage, anger; and the fourth stage, depression. Allowing yourself the time to experience all of these feelings is the transition that takes us to the fifth stage, resolution. Resolution brings acceptance of the loss and trust that life, or death, has something new to offer and perhaps even helps reclaim the trust in the spiritual that has been lost. Later, Melba Cosgrove, author of *How To Survive The Loss of a Love*, took initiative to show how we can go through these five stages in any situation of loss. For example, a friend cancels a date, a breakup in a relationship, or a disappointment at work can cause us to feel a similiar fear, anger, and depression.

I dreamt that I walked into my friend's home and saw her dismembered hand on the floor, then her chopped-off foot. I followed the trail of body parts to her daughter's room where I saw hanging from the ceiling a blood-stained sheet filled with what I assumed were the rest of her body parts and possibly her daughter's. I screamed, ran from the house to the neighbors next door and asked them to call the police. I went in to the back yard where I screamed and howled, pounding on the grass, praying. I continued to sob and shake and scream. In this dream, I saw the paramedics coming toward me with a needle full of something they were going to use to deaden my pain. I ran from them screaming, "Won't anybody let me grieve?"

I woke up shaking, but I knew the answer to the question in the dream. I needed to let myself grieve. Three friends had recently moved (one to Paris, one to Canada, and one two-thousand miles away). This had all happened within a month and I didn't seem to have much time to feel it. I'd been angry and depressed on and off but I attributed that to overwork. The dream had served its purpose. I had to slow down and let myself feel the loss of their daily presence. Instead of adding my loss to the pieces of my wounded heart, I needed to set them and myself free.

We need to give ourselves the gift of mourning—the time to feel our losses. Today, many people are griev-

ing a childhood they never had. They begin by denying there ever was a problem, yet they can't figure out why their relationships or life have been so rough. Then, when they start to experience the fear and panic as they face the truth, people will often do whatever they can to avoid the feelings. When nothing seems to work, the rage pours forth. All the anger at what really happened to them and how they have had to lie to themselves to keep going is finally revealed. After the anger lessens, the fourth stage of grief follows: depression and/or lack of faith in anything. Finally, when one moves through this transition stage, a sense of resolution can follow.

I've seen people get stuck in certain stages of grief for years, maybe even a lifetime. They'll say, "I've been angry and/or frightened all my life. Are these the only feelings life has to offer me?" This is a sure indication that something traumatic happened to them and they were never able to work it through, or that growing up they lived in the daily dysfunction of fear and trauma and have not found a resolution. If you feel that this is happening to you, then you may want to work with someone who can help you discover the source of that pain, and move into a new way of life.

A friend of mine, who had been in therapy for eight years and had been working on his

childhood issues, looked at me one day and said, "No matter how much work I do on myself, I'll never get my childhood back." He was feeling despair and depression, and said those feelings kept pulling him back through the stages of grief. Yet, now that he knew what was happening to him, he could begin to move toward acceptance, acceptance that he could never go back and relive the childhood he deserved. He would not forget what happened to him but he could now choose to live with the truth and move forward.

Making the transition into resolution can take many forms. Beverly's friend, Kathy, was dying of cancer. She and her women friends had been experiencing the grief process, and it was deeply painful for all of them. Kathy, over time, had moved on to acceptance. More than anything before her death, she requested that all of them go to the beach and spend the weekend in the kind of joy



MYRLEEN FERGUSON/PHOTO EDIT



they had shared so much of. Everyone agreed. Beverly said it was not a time without pain, yet they were able to all laugh and cry about their lives together. Beverly said her friend had taught her so much about dying. As Kubler-Ross has said many times, the dying are our teachers.

It's not that situations of loss will ever disappear; it's how we choose to experience them that makes the difference. Are we going to hang onto the wound or when ready let the tears flow? The transition through the despair and hopelessness is what leads us to the resolution. It is like shedding skin or pushing out of a cocoon.

Phyllis hired a private investigator to find out about her grandmother's life and who her grandfather had been. Her father had tried earlier in his life to reach his mother to no avail. When Phyllis first began to get reports from the investigator, she discovered that her heritage was extremely sad. The first time she got a report, she cried and cried and couldn't do much of anything for days. Then she got home late one night and there was another report waiting for her. She opened it to find the bleak and sad part of this side of her family continue to unfold. That night she was restless.

As more reports came, Phyllis began to choose the time when she would read them, often asking a friend to be with her. She gradually came to accept that she could not change the past. Although she continued to mourn the information she received, she was able with time to let go of the pain of a past that had always been a secret to her. She had wanted to know of her past and although it had not been what she expected or hoped for, she now knew what she had always wanted to know.

She had information about her family and herself that gave clarity to pieces of her life. She was able now to shed some of the past and make new beginnings.

The resolution is a time for regaining a sense of trust in oneself, in a spiritual force, in life. One's self-esteem grows when one can look back and say, "I made it through and I know that with support, I can continue to handle the losses in my life." There's strength in building self-trust when you are in deep pain and saying, "I can't take it a minute longer." Now you can look back and know that things do change and you can trust yourself when you are stuck in the middle of the worst of it. Now you know more about your grief and its whole range of emotions. Life with its share of pain doesn't automatically dissolve; it just becomes easier.

With resolution comes hope, new vitality, an opening into your soul, to the next step. When we fully grieve, we can discover who we are today and enjoy the power of our wild woman. As our wild woman breaks loose, we are faced with the loss of our old ways of being and thinking. We are less willing to be controlled or to control others. We become more of who we want to be and allow that natural spirit to surface.

Our wild woman can show us what is waiting for us—the spontaneity, the spirituality, fun, and depths of being. If we are willing to release the old concept of ourselves as women, we can find what is new for us in the present and look positively toward the future. •

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# Lotus Resources For Growth

## Success Story

*Continued from page 18*

I see-sawed back and forth about going back to my husband. I lived in a war of the opposites, and I was being ravaged by their opposing dictates.

Learning to wait in limbo with no assurances that I'd ever get out was an outrageous challenge and leap of faith. I'd never been religious and had serious doubts about God and religion, the whole package. But I needed help, and I prayed for guidance. One day as I was jogging, I wondered why I had to endure everything alone when other people seemed to have help from family or friends. I mentally scanned my past traumas and hardships, noting how I had to weather them alone. Then it dawned on me that perhaps I'd endured them all alone because I could rely on myself to get me through! This insight gave me a new view of myself as someone whom I could respect and trust, who would always be there for me when the chips were down. I realized how all of my searching over the years took me outside of myself, for what could only be found inside of myself. This was the moment when the labor pains of the past two years brought forth the beginning of my new life.

Today I am still on the path, but longer live the war of the opposites. My divorce is final and I'm going to start my Ph.D. program in health psychology next fall. Ben is now in kindergarten. We are a happy family of two, and I am slowly building a larger family of friends. I am grateful for Don's visit, which led me to this hard-won growth, and I look forward to more transformations along the way. •

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# Go the Limit

R A Y R A L E I G H



If you're more than fifty years old and people say you are ancient, don't believe it. Or if you're more than sixty and people say you're over the hill, don't accept it. Or if you're more than eighty or ninety and people cluck and mutter, "too bad, you've had it," it's not true. There's more good time ahead of you.

Most of us quit too easily. A little pain and we give up. A disabling accident and we stop everything. But there are some who go the limit. Take a pill and keep on going. A little pain won't kill you. At our age, most of us have learned to live with pain. Get a walker, crutch, wheelchair, a tank of oxygen, or a pacemaker and keep going. In our community, we have a paraplegic confined to a wheelchair whose disability magically disappears when he gets into the swimming pool to head up the water volley-ball games. We have another wheel-ee who teaches advanced contract bridge and no one thinks of him as disabled. He once took me to task, gently, when I mentioned his disability. "I'm not disabled—I just can't walk." We have a man with an artificial leg. Get him on a dance floor and his improvised dance routine will shake the rafters.

A note on the wall behind me reads, "I sizzle with zeal and enthusiasm and spring forth with a mighty

faith to do the things that ought to be done by me." That was written by Charles Fillmore in his ninety-fourth

year. An old axiom says, "Ninety percent of the work is done by ten percent of the people." Imagine what could be accomplished if ninety percent of the people were productive. We could perform wonders. Society relegates us seniors to the heap of the helpless and hopeless but we have a great deal going for us. With our many years come experience and good judgment. If experience is the best teacher, then we seniors have been the best taught. We have the time to do things. Most seniors are retired and don't have the pressure of making a living. Now, let's make a life. No reason to sit back and do nothing, be nothing. This world needs a lot of input, involvement, correction, and help. It's our traditional role and we should fulfill it, so let us all become involved.

It's rewarding to awaken in the morning and have a full day awaiting you. It's much better than having an empty life, being bored and being a drag on everyone around you. When you are active, your life improves. Your appetite is better. Your sleep is sounder. Your self-esteem is higher. You become a better person, and your part of the world benefits. •

# Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

*Creating Community Anywhere: Finding Support and Connection in a Fragmented World*

Carolyn Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen  
New York: Tarcher/Perigee Books, 1993  
\$15.95 Paperback

In the Forward, Scott Peck touts "Creating Community Anywhere" as "the most comprehensive book I know about the community movement in all its variety, complete with helpful, up-to-date resources."

There can be no doubt that Carolyn Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen, both professional writers about community, have indeed conducted extensive research on the many evolving forms of community that are dotting the social landscape of America. New types of communities of all kinds, they write, "are choosing to honor diversity, encourage change, and support individual expression within flexible, evolving structures that the members reexamine regularly."

Even the authors themselves, a Community of two, experienced interpersonal conflicts during the writing of the book and did some reexamining of their own by consulting a "conflict resolution mediator." The outcome of that mediation is a book that will inform readers about proto-communities (e.g., civic organizations), co-housing arrangements, workplace and electronic communities, alternatives to retirement homes, cities and neighborhoods developing communal spirit, neighborhood salons, twelve-step groups, eco-villages, visionary residential communities, and many others.

Shaffer and Anundsen vowed "to offer a fresh perspective on the nature of community." They have done that and much more.

They discuss, for instance, the many studies that substantiate the claim that "social connectedness" is essen-

tial to one's health. To cite one study, Dr. James House of the University of Michigan has reported that death rates are 100 to 300 percent higher for men who live alone or shun social ties and 50 to 150 percent higher for women. At St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital and Columbia University in New York City researchers found, the authors write, that "living alone is a major independent risk factor comparable to such factors as previous heart damage and heart rhythm disturbances."

They even get into the nuts-and-bolts steps required for starting a community, complete with checklists on how to conduct conflict-resolution meetings, communicate effectively, draw up covenants in which purposes and objectives are stated, work for a "cooperative edge," recognize the "shadow side" of community, deal with emotional issues, and ultimately find, as they put it, "a balance between the I and the we."

Although practical at its core, the book also presents a systems view of community building that includes a spiritual dimension. The authors frequently highlight the importance of spiritual freedom within a community. Of course, such communities as the Ananda World Brotherhood Village in northern California (and branches elsewhere) offer a contrast. There residents live in a "dharmacracy," in which the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda inform their every decision. There are also many "visionary communities" that "perceive a deep connection between spirituality and nature."

Shaffer and Anundsen mince no words in pointing out again and again that forming and developing communities of any kind can be a difficult process. The "natural phases in community life" that they write about—excitement, autonomy, stability, synergy, and transformation—are usually not passed through with great ease, if the scores upon scores of real-life examples are any indication. But the authors believe a realistic ideal can be reached—the "conscious community."

After reading *Creating Community Anywhere*—a

## Reviews

most valuable and worthwhile book—I think you'll believe that what they say about such a communal ideal is possible too: "Conscious community nurtures in each of its members the unfoldment from within that allows them to become more fully who they are—and it nurtures its own unfolding as well. Its members trust that what best serves the community's collective evolution also will best serve the individual evolution of its members, and vice versa—provided the members speak their truth with love and hold their individual needs and the group's needs in their awareness."

### *The Thirst for Wholeness: Attachment, Addiction, and the Spiritual Path*

Christina Grof  
San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993  
\$20.00 Cloth.

Christina Grof has emerged from alcohol addiction and the abysmal pain of incest with a message for seekers who yearn for a balance between their "small self and deeper self." Those experiencing a "transformational crisis or spiritual emergency." And those who long for a conscious entrance to a spiritual dimension in which their most essential nature can find its clearest expression.

The Thirst for Wholeness explores the connection between spirituality and addiction. Grof asks, "Could it be that this all-involving drama is really a long and complex treasure hunt for the key that will unlock the gate to our true nature?"

She is not, however, claiming that addiction or the suffering of abuse is a prerequisite to spiritual journeying. In fact, her critique of the "disease model" of addiction merits careful consideration; for she doesn't believe that every "exagger-

ated attachment" should be labeled as pathological. For her a "wellness model" is more applicable to all attachments, whether they are linked to excessive behaviors, influenced mostly by environmental factors, or to addictions, influenced by both environmental and biological (i.e., genetic) factors.

Her discussion of recovery from addictions sets the criterion for clarity, "Recovery is really rediscovery. The original definition of the word recovery extends beyond implications for pathology. To recover means 'to get back, to find or identify again.' In our recovery, we get back our wholeness."

Grof also notes implicitly the connection between abuse and addiction. It is not unusual for people who are abused, especially during childhood, later to form addictions and hide behind them. But there should be some question about her rather expansive view of physical, emotional, intellectual, religious, and spiritual abuse. I sometimes wonder if even the most well-meaning persons underestimate the resiliency of humans.

Although Grof decries the victim role that too many persons assume (hence absolving themselves from personal responsibility), she nevertheless catalogues abuses to such an extent as to blur the line between what is imperfection and what is dysfunctional. Not all imperfections (in the Buddhist sense of unskillful behaviors) should be considered abuses deriving from a dysfunctional context.

In other words, the assumption that ninety-six percent of society is dysfunctional should not remain unexamined. Just as all attachments cannot be considered addictions according to a disease model, all mindless behaviors cannot be considered abuses according to a dysfunctional model.

Those reservations aside, I still

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### Reviews

recommend Grof's book highly; for the fact persists that people's attachments and addictions—no matter what their underlying causes—are often so extreme as to require the help of a functional family, whether it be your "family of origin," a circle of friends, a chemical addiction center, support groups, psychotherapy, or a spiritual community. Grof recognizes all of these options, and she discusses at length the "pitfalls" of the spiritual path and its lasting rewards.

In a suitably broad context, she writes, "sobriety connotes freedom not only from alcohol, drugs, food, or other addictions but also from compulsive, excessive behavior." She also points out that there are many spiritual freedom paths to travel, which can lead to a "mystical world view" that is both "inclusive, unitize, and expansive" and grounded in everyday reality.

The Thirst for Wholeness is a graceful overview about how one can emerge from the darkest addictions, move into the spiritual light of a new day, and become a practical mystic with an expanded purpose in life.

### Creating

Robert Fritz  
New York: Fawcett Columbine,  
1991 \$20.00 Cloth

More than halfway through *Creating*, Robert Fritz writes, "Creating is life-giving and involving. When one creates there is often a wonderful experience of the fusing of the spiritual and the sensual, the meeting of spirit and matter, and the joining of humanness and Divinity in a special moment in time." (italics the author's)

Those are rather inspirational words, but before readers get to that passage they might wonder what led to its being written.

Anyone expecting a New Age excursion into the creative spirit will be disappointed. Anyone expecting a formula for developing human potential in creative realms will be disappointed. Anyone drawn to a trendy psychological discussion of creative dynamics will be disappointed.

Don't expect anything and Robert Fritz will surprise you, challenge you, and perhaps, occasionally, even shock you. He questions so many assumptions about the act of creating that you will no doubt find yourself in mental tailspins. Good. I like to think of this book as an extensive Zen koan that will in the end derail many of our most cherished and antiquated trains of thought about creating.

For example, test yourselves with the following statements or questions: "Why is the true self any less illusionary than the illusionary self?" or "Speculation cannot lead to real involvement; it can only lead to reflected involvement;" or "The ability to create has nothing to do with what you believe about the world;" or "Your feelings are irrelevant to the creative process."

There are no magic pills of creativity that will transform you. Fritz counsels, "Love is what creating is about." But not love of life or yourself or a world view—not if it is out of necessity or a sense of obligation. He writes, "In the creative process, love is generative rather than simply responsive." For instance, a musician doesn't write music because it is needed, but because he loves music and wants to bring music into the world. Or a film director's love of film is generative because it "pre-dates the stimulus for love."

Sound simplistic? Believe me, there is nothing simplistic about this book. It is packed with so many of what I call "in-your-face insights" that you will possibly

## Reviews

never think of creating in the same way. Fritz is like a Zen master with a stick; he will whack your head (shaking up those assumptions) because deep down he would like for you to experience the joy of bringing whatever creations you want into the world.

My references to Zen are not incidental. Many of the psychological observations of Fritz bear a remarkable parallel to what one can read in Buddhist literature. His chapter on ideal-belief and ideal-reality conflicts contains a penetrating analysis on how preoccupations with identity cause one to distort reality. Why? Because ideals can seldom be aligned with who we are. In a sense, we lie to ourselves. Or to quote Fritz, "Part of the function of the ideal is designed to obscure less welcomed beliefs and opinions." So we often develop compensating strategies to buttress our opinions of ourselves. One that he especially critiques with sharp acumen is self-esteem, which he thinks of as psychological propaganda.

The involvement that he writes about when creating parallels the concept of mindfulness. His advice that we shake hands with our inner demons, and get to know them, parallels Buddhist teachings about self-observation during meditation. And so on.

I have given all my attention to the psychology of Creating rather than to its more practical aspects (the A-to-Z's of creating effectively) for a reason. I do so because Fritz is a relentless pursuer of present reality—both from within and without. If we in some way try to circumvent reality, he is saying that our creating will not be—as it is for him—"like a perpetual state of being in love."

To him creating is a gift that involves the freedom to choose what we will create, based on what we know about reality in the pre-

## Expressive Arts Ad

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## Light Institute ad



## Reviews

sent moment. That is a priceless gift worth opening up and accepting.

### *Insight Meditation: The Practice of Freedom*

Joseph Goldstein Boston: Shambhala, 1993 \$13.00 Cloth

Mindlessness is so prevalent in these times because too many people wouldn't know mindfulness if it slapped them in the face. Moments of clear seeing into oneself are often just that: moments.

This observation is not intended to be cynical, but to draw attention to the value of books like *Insight Meditation: The Practice of*

*Freedom*, which informs readers in lucid terms of the need for the understanding and, more importantly, practice of mindfulness.

Joseph Goldstein has been practicing vipassana, insight meditation since his Peace Corps days in Thailand (1967) till the present.

The contraction caused by identification with a sense of a permanent self can be deadly, he admonishes. The deceptions of the ego are many. By practicing Dharma, though, and perceiving into "the truth of the way things are," one can truly let go of the limitations and torments of the mind and experience the kind of freedom that can result in sustained mindful living.

One's own suffering and that of others is recognized. Compassion and wisdom emerge.

"Compassion feels the suffering caused by ignorance," Goldstein writes, "and wisdom understands what to do."

To reach such equanimity in one's life is possible, he affirms. To my mind, his writing indeed reflects clearly a life lived mindfully, informed by compassion and wisdom. He strikes me as one who lives the Dharma.

The book can serve well as a primer for initiates who wish to learn basic Buddhist precepts, but it can also serve as a powerful corrective for many of the erroneous notions that Westerners have formed about such concepts as grace, acceptance, ego and self, personality, surrender, karma, no-self, and death. Also, any doubts you might have harbored about Buddhism being passionless and fatalistic will be challenged and, hopefully, removed.

It became clearer to me while reading the book why so many Americans are allured to the Buddha's teachings. Buddhism is a very advanced, yet subtle, psychology of the possibilities of human being and, on the flip side, the delimiting thoughts and behaviors that separate us from our natural endowment, a pure mind.

As Goldstein puts it, "We may be visited by various hindrances and defilements that color our mind for some time, but they are only visitors; they do not own the house." Or as Nyoshu Khenpo Rinpoche said, "The price of gold goes up and down, but the nature of gold remains the same."

In other words, "the pure nature of mind abides."

Of course, Buddha knew that to temper a sword of wisdom to cut through delusions and illusions is not accomplished through sheer determination of will in a short

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JF Kennedy Ad





*“Sacred Music, Sacred Dance for World Harmony” performed by nine monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery in their year-long tour of the USA.*

time. Insight and loving kindness meditation is a gradual practice, Goldstein writes, although the enlightenment might be sudden. There are many practical considerations. First things first. For example, the ten wholesome qualities in our minds” (“parami” in Pali)—generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolve, loving kindness, and equanimity—do not become the experiential basis for mindful living just because of some one’s belief in and reliance upon an American can-do attitude. Suffice to say, that Insight Meditation is a luminous

reminder that being liberated requires learning to live in balance with the furious flux of activity that characterizes both our minds and the mind-made world that surrounds us.

But Goldstein will leave no one in doubt that the path towards liberation is joyful as well as necessary.

*Sacred Music, Sacred Dance.*

*Reported by Kathryn Burke*

On an extraordinary peace mission, Tibetan Lamas from the Drepung Loseling Monastery are traveling throughout the United

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S I E R R A C L U B

S T U T T E R I N G  
F O U N D A T I O N

*Reviews*

States this year performing their ancient sacred ritual music and dance.

The Tibetan culture, one of the most ancient heritages on earth, has become a greatly endangered tradition. Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, monasteries were closed, monks killed or imprisoned, and the destruction of the culture begun.

Today, the Drepung Loseling Monastery survives, transplanted into southern India. The Dalai Lama travels the world, promoting peace, as do these monks who were hand-picked for the year-long mission by the Dalai Lama.

Their peace offerings includes creating healing mandalas with colored sand and the spectacular music/dance performances, presented in rich, colorful brocade costumes, accompanied by traditional Tibetan instruments: longhorn trumpets, cymbals, drums, and bells. The unusual songs and chants come from the monks' unique ability to sing three notes of a chord simultaneously. Among the titles of their ancient dances are "Invocation of the Forces of Goodness," "Longevity Dance of the Space Beings," and "Dance of the Skeleton Lords."

For information about where the monks will be performing, or to have your local university or organization sponsor a performance, contact Sandy Newhouse, Jefferson Tibetan Society, 1214 Belleview Ave. Charlottesville VA 22901; (804)293-3737. •

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## Success Story

*Continued from page 15*

seemed like a battle of wills, a test of partnership strength. With these angry feelings recorded on my journal pages, I sat, exhausted, re-reading the script I had written for myself. Now where was I headed?

The end of this story comes after another transformation, a quantum leap from anger and introspection to another level of self-knowledge and acceptance. I saw that the outer shell of my life operates in almost constant and trivial conversation. Talking validates me. "Children should be seen and not heard" planted the idea that real grown-ups—the important people and the good people—were the ones who were talking. Lots of emotional baggage cluttered this orbit.

Once I had acknowledged this verbal self, I began to find a place without words—my inner being before I understood language, before I developed a vocabulary and established a system of judging almost everything. In this newly-discovered inner place, I saw my feelings as shapes, colors, movement, rather than words and labels with histories and old pain. The sense of watching my feelings move and change enlightened me about my deepest feelings, the ones that I was somehow able to feel but never seemed to be able to express. I simply felt them, saw them, understood them.

This is the best explanation I can give of how it feels to find a center that exists without language. After all, I am trying to use words to describe a place that has none. I existed in this place by observing passively, learning, seeing, experiencing. Resolution of my feelings came not through my intellect and verbalizations. Rather, harmony settled in my mind in synchrony with changes in colors and textures I saw within myself. And for another week, I drifted in and out of my silent core, fascinated with the movement in my liquid center.

I didn't plan to break the silence, it just happened. Alan and I walked into the kitchen on a rainy afternoon and we simply began to speak. It was a conversation about everyday things—the book he was reading, a new project I was starting at work. It was not, as I had imagined it would be, about having been silent for so long. It had been three weeks since we had spoken like this. •

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## Relationships

*Continued from page 73*

understand something instead of pushing it away.

Being willing to learn from our relationships does not mean that we should stay in situations that are not good for us. If a relationship is physically or emotionally abusive, what we have to learn from it is how to set boundaries and protect ourselves. This could mean going into couples counseling to seek real and lasting resolutions. Or, it could mean leaving the relationship if that is the only way we could effectively take care of ourselves.

People can criticize or abuse us only to the degree that we accept or allow it. First we must take steps externally to take care of ourselves. Then we must look inside to heal the way that we criticize or abuse ourselves; out of the knowledge we gain in this way we can learn to love and support ourselves instead.

I recall the story of a woman raised by an emotionally and physically abusive father. She developed an internal "abusive father" energy which told her constantly how worthless and undeserving she was. She married a man who mirrored her pattern of internal self-abuse, constantly criticizing and belittling her and occasionally hitting her. She tolerated the situation for years because to her it seemed normal; she believed she deserved the abuse.

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## Sierra Club

## Letting Go

*Continued from page 37*

libidinal enslavement to the egotistical self: (1) the *libido dominandi* or lust for power over others and over nature; (2) the *libido sentiendi* or lust for intense sensation; and (3) the *libido sciendi* or lust for manipulative knowledge, knowledge that is primarily used to increase our own power, profit, and pleasure.

Two more recent writers, theologian Mary Reuter and the spiritual director Richard Rohr, echo Pascal's triple abyss in their analysis of the "attachments" that undermine our spirituality. Both Rohr and Reuter emphasize the psychological and emotional attachments that can devastate our spiritual lives, making the point that "attachment" does not have to be to material things to be spiritually destructive.

Reuter suggests three layers of attachment that need to be peeled back sequentially, like an onion. First, we need to become detached from material gain, second from self-importance, and third from the urge to dominate others. Only through this process of stripping away these attachments, she writes, can we lay claim to spiritual progress. Rohr uses a language more familiar to those steeped in Twelve Step spirituality. In an article on A.A.'s Third Step, he counsels that spirituality involves the "letting go" of three needs: the need to be in control, the need to be effective, and the need to be right. For alcoholics in early sobriety the last point may be the most important, for detachment from the need to be right, surrender of the "demand to have the last word" seems a prerequisite to the kind of listening that allows participation in the healing power of storytelling.

A folk tale that can be found in many traditions captures the essence of these points.

A rich man who owned much property fell seriously

ill, and though the doctors came to him from all over, none of them was able to cure him. His situation grew worse and worse, and all hope had been given up for him when one day a traveling dervish saw him and said, "Put a truly happy man's shirt on his back and he will get well."

The sick man's family and servants went looking for a truly happy man in town and could not find one, because there is no man whose happiness is complete. The sick man's favorite son, however, was determined to save his father's life by finding such a person, and so he left town and went looking elsewhere. He walked and walked until he reached the desert. By then it was nighttime and tired from his journey, he wished to sleep. Seeing a cave, he decided to seek shelter there and when he reached it, he heard a voice say from within, "How happy I am! What a wonderful day I had! And now I think I'll go to sleep."

Hearing this, the son was delighted to have accomplished his mission so soon. He entered the cave, strode quickly to the man inside it, and was about to strip off his shirt when he realized that the fellow was naked and had none. At a loss, he stood there dismayed. "What is it?" asked the man. "What do you want?"

"I heard you say you were a happy man," said the son, "and so I wanted to take your shirt because it alone can save my father's life."

"But if I had a shirt," said

the happy man, "I wouldn't be happy!"

*Release* flows from the understanding that all absolute attempts to control our own destiny—like all attempts to do anything "absolutely"—are ultimately doomed, for inevitably we will come up against something that we cannot control. The attempt to control the future and the demand to be in charge of everything in our lives sentence us to a daily existence obsessed with life-numbing worry.

A *Zen Comics* saying helps us to laugh at our pretensions by standing one of life's classic assumptions on its head:

I feel so much better since I gave up hope. •

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## Before We Forgive

*Continued from page 53*

do the same. That way, we might avoid having years of moldy, pent-up emotions to sort through.

10. Write a letter to our parents or those to be forgiven, telling them our feelings about what happened. We need not mail the letter.

11. Find a neutral party (therapist, sponsor, mentor, friend, member of the clergy) to talk to.

12. Learn not to take everything personally.

13. Learn to accept basic tenets of powerlessness.

14. Meditate, focusing on our need to forgive and to be forgiven.

15. Turn the other cheek.

16. Use your Higher Self in creative visualizations. •

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## Essence

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less of what may have occurred to me in the past.”

*In your book you say, “Responsibility is the act of claiming that you are the source for whatever is occurring.”*

**KATHLYN:** Random events occur and people wonder, “Is this something that I should look at or is this just a random, statistical event?” We developed the Rule of Three. If an event or pattern happens three or more times in your life, it is probably not due to something going on out there but is something that has to do with you. Make connections between events. If I walk down the street and a brick falls on my head, I might say, “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” If a brick falls on my head the following week, I am going to wonder, and if it happens three times, I am going to look at what I am doing to have this kind of event occurring in my life.

*Being responsible moves us into integrity.*

**GAY:** We do corporate consulting and help people learn how to function in a state of integrity in their work place. People generally have problems in the work place in regard to Hiding their Feelings, Not Telling the Truth, and Not Keeping Agreements. In many organizations you are pressured to hide your feelings, not to tell the truth, and not to keep your agreements as your entry ticket into that particular job. To be a successful liver of life, you need to build an integrity tripod under yourself.

**KATHLYN:** This integrity tripod is the heart of our work and the foundation on which all of the principles are based. Even in the work place you ask, “Is there something in this situation that I have been withholding, am not telling the truth about, either to myself or to the people I work with? Are there feelings that I am not letting myself

be aware of or am not expressing in a way that doesn’t blame any one, and are there agreements that I have made or not made that I am not keeping?”

In corporations, there is often a hidden agenda for people to make agreements with each other that nobody has any intention of keeping. That is part of the culture. You are expected to put out a certain number of agreements, that people can give lip service to without intention of keeping those agreements. It creates wasted productivity because people don’t know if this is an agreement that can be counted on or not. When people have integrity, there is a huge increase in their creativity and synergy because there is a group taking a hundred percent responsibility which creates tremendous cohesiveness. People build on each other’s contributions rather than getting into power struggles about whether or not they can trust a person to keep his or her agreements.

*Please define integrity.*

**GAY:** The original meaning of integrity is “revealing.” It means “operating in a state of wholeness.” An integrity experience is one in which your wholeness is honored. For example, integrity of feeling is to honor all of your feelings. Integrity of agreement is to honor all of your agreements. Integrity of truth is to honor the wholeness of truth and to speak the wholeness of truth. Everything begins in a state of wholeness. What makes us sick or unhappy is denying or moving away from that wholeness. Buddhists say, “The cause of human unhappiness is the inability to face and embrace some reality.” It is moving out of that state of wholeness that causes us to lack integrity.

**KATHLYN:** People come back into wholeness or integrity by paying attention, listening carefully, and by learning through the exper-

iences in their body. The result of living in integrity and wholeness is the release of tremendous creative potential and creative energy. You learn how to design your life creatively and by choice rather than just keeping your head above water. The big pay off is to see where that creative ripple leads. •

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## Relationships

Continued from page 89

Once she began therapy, she was able to recognize that her husband was reflecting her beliefs about herself. She gradually developed an ability to stand up for herself and eventually she left the relationship. After going through a deep emotional healing process, she remarried, this time to a man who was kind and supportive, reflecting the way she had learned to treat herself.

For many of us, our relationships have been such a painful struggle that it’s difficult to believe we could get to a place in our lives when all relationships are primarily supportive and satisfying. Yet, if we are willing to do our deep emotional work, our relationships can mirror every step of progress that we make in our relationships with ourselves. As we become more integrated our relationships become an incredible reflection of our aliveness, self-love, and self-expression. •

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# If I Had Only

*When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country.*

*But it, too, seemed immovable.*

*As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it.*

*And now as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize: If I had only changed my self first, then by example I would have changed my family.*

*From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country and, who knows, I may have even changed the world. •*

*These words were written on the tomb of an Anglican Bishop (1100 A.D.) in the crypts of Westminster Abbey. From the book "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Printed with permission from the publisher, Health Communications. Copyright 1993 by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen.*