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Lotus

Journal For Personal Transformation



Understanding others is knowledge.

Understanding oneself is enlightenment.

From the Editor...

*Gen•tle (jent'l) generous, kind, serene, patient,
mild, tame, polite, of noble birth.*

Gentleness connects us to our inner self. It does not use force, as its strength comes from persistence. Gentleness nourishes us like a light rain, washing away our judgmental thoughts, leaving us quiet and open. A quiet mind allows us to turn inward, to hear answers to questions such as, "What is right for me now?" Our frantic mind is calmed, freeing us to hear our inner knowing. Insights can surface once criticism is hushed.

When we are gentle we befriend ourselves, and thus restore trust in ourselves. Gentleness bathes shame, guilt, and intolerance with understanding and healing. It creates the inner safety needed to process our feelings. It salves our wounds. Hurt is massaged and pain is soothed as old injuries are cleansed.

Being gentle increases our sensitivity. Our senses improve and we are able to respond to subtle stimuli, both inside and outside of ourselves. Once we learn to listen, our truths, decisions, and needs are revealed to us. We see nature, people, and events more clearly and we can interact differently with life.

With gentleness near our hearts we won't cause harm. Harmful behavior and thinking destroy trust and breed confusion. Acts founded upon criticisms and judgments deny us love, learning, and the benefits of gentleness.

To invoke gentleness, simply breathe and whisper, "Be gentle." Hurried breathing slows and negative thinking subsides. Ask, "What do I need right now?" and silently await the answer.

Loving ourselves, respecting life, and experiencing joy are the results of being gentle. To be joyful, we have to be alive in the moment. Gentleness puts us in the present because it keeps us tuned into our inner experience and wisdom while keeping us attentive to our environment.

Let's commit to an intimate connection with life. Let us gently and tenderly be.

Welcome to Lotus.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor

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Another Side of Life—Death

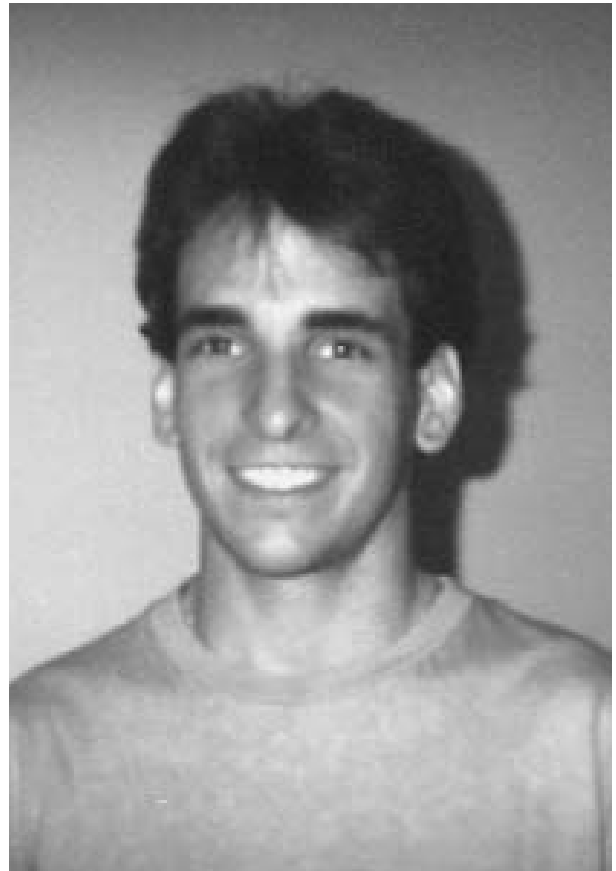
P A T R I C K E I N B E R G E R

I left for the nursing home feeling good. I was thirteen years old and was going to see a friend, Irving Wendt, at the nursing home. I tried to see him the week before but the nurses didn't let me since he was sick. I felt bad about leaving him but I knew he'd understand. Besides, I'd see him the next week.

I was nervous on the first day we met. What does a kid say to an old guy? When I looked into the room, I saw a fragile, elderly man slouched in a wheelchair. He had a few dozen wisps of pure white hair that reminded me of angel hair at Christmas. He looked like he might fall apart if you blew on him. When I introduced myself, he just stared. It was obvious he didn't know what I was talking about, but he still took the cookies I brought, reaching out with his long, thin arms. He didn't talk much, only to answer questions like, "How are you?"

When I went back the next week, he didn't remember me right away. However after a few visits, he actually seemed to look forward to my coming and even talked for short periods of time. I don't know why I kept going back week after week, since most of the time we just sat while I thought of things to say or we watched television. In fact, there are only a few fond memories I have of our time together.

One memory that will stay with me always is the day he showed me something very special. He had been confined to a wheelchair for a few years and only got out of it to go to



Patrick Einberger, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Feldenkrais

Career Assurance

Success Story

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bed, the bathroom, or to have a sponge bath. However on this particular day, he had me stop in the hall. There was a childish gleam in his eyes and his whole body was practically humming with excitement. "I've been practicing walking for a month now," said Irving in a hushed and excited voice. I was scared. What if he fell? Should I tell him to sit down and take the chance of damaging our friendship? While my mind asked questions, Irving locked the wheels on his chair and started to stand. He clenched the railing on the wall and instructed me to pull the chair in front of him. He grasped the handles and started walking in slow and jerky shuffles. After about two dozen steps, he had me turn his chair around so he could sit. He smiled up at me and said excitedly, "Maybe in a few months I can get a walker!" Then I could come over for dinner and go with him on walks around town and to the library.

At the moment, I began to realize the impact I was having on his life. Here was a grown man getting excited over 24 small steps. That was the first time I realized that I loved him. His family never came to visit, so I was his only connection to life.

Almost exactly one year after we first met, I walked into Irving's room. I noticed immediately that it was too clean, too empty. I walked to the game room where he often fell asleep. It too was empty. My heart started to beat a little quicker. Though it was already 1 p.m., I checked the cafeteria. I fought hard to keep from running. There was still no sign of him. Well, maybe I missed him while I was looking and he was back in his room. As my mind already knew and my heart unwillingly suspected, he was not

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REIKI PLUS

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McClelland Music

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there. I asked the nurse if she knew where Irving could be. My mind had not let the connection of his absence and death enter my consciousness, so I was honestly surprised when the nurse said, "Oh, he died on Friday."

A large part of me broke down right there. Fortunately, a different and seldom seen part of me came forward, the adult Pat. It knew just what to say and started asking important questions about the funeral. The nurses must have seen through this adult Pat, for they gave me a look reserved for kids who lose their friends.

They answered my questions and I was on my way. In the few minutes it took me to walk home, I felt all of my painful emotions spinning and churning. The pain seemed almost unbearable. I struggled to stuff these feelings back down. When I walked into my house, my parents knew something was wrong. They weren't expecting me back for at least an hour and here I was back in fifteen minutes. I knew that if I stopped to talk, I would cry. I tried sneaking past them and into my room, but they stopped me by asking, "Pat, what is wrong?" Words that seemed a mile wide choked my throat.

"He's dead," I squeaked. I tried to retreat again, for I could feel the tears and emotions trying to swell and break through.

"What?" my parents asked.

I weakly repeated, "He's dead." Then it came. I stood with my shoulders slumped and cried shamelessly, leaning my head against the wall so I wouldn't fall.

After my initial cry, I mourned in silence and in private. I had accepted his death and only regretted the fact that I couldn't say good-bye. I went to his funeral with

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Success Story



A Whole New View of Life

B E T T Y F L O W E R S

My story begins when I was a freshman in high school. One day I saw this good looking guy going into a classroom and knew I would marry him. I did when I was seventeen years old and out of high school one week. I grew up in a small town in North Carolina where it was acceptable to marry young.

I went to college, then took a job, and had my son when I was twenty. By age twenty-three, my nerves were a wreck. I was unhappy all the time. It took me ten more years to realize what was going on, that I was being verbally abused by my husband. At first I thought he was trying to help me. He was six years older and more worldly, and I thought that he was trying to educate me. In fact, that's what he told me. But it slowly dawned on me that he was taking his frustrations out on me. He was also having extramarital affairs. I did not want to admit this at first for I knew if I faced the truth about his affairs, I would have to do something and I couldn't face that yet.

I realized that he was seeing other women the weekend I brought my son home from the hospital. On Sunday afternoon a lot of guests came by. In mid-afternoon some people from his work came to see the baby and while they were there he told me that he had to leave. I asked him where he was going but he wouldn't say. There I was with people I didn't know. I had just had a C-section and was weak and embar-



Betty Flowers Nelson, Madison, South Dakota.

J O H N F K E N N E D Y

L E S L E Y G R A D U A T E

N O R T H S T A R

from Vol 3 #5 page 10 (dancing)

Success Story

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rassed at the same time. Even though I knew that he was seeing other women, it would be years and countless other women before I would admit that to myself.

When my son was six years old, my husband and I separated for almost two years. I got my real estate license and a job with a big land developer. I loved it! I finally had found something I was good at. By the time my husband and I reconciled, I had confidence in myself and my abilities. Four and a half years later, I opened up my own real estate office. When we reconciled, my husband assured me that I was the only woman he wanted. Six months later, he was gone every night. He had taken up raccoon hunting, a night-time sport. How convenient.

He was verbally abusive and my self-confidence once more began to suffer. I turned to food for comfort. I had always had a weight problem but had managed to keep it under control.

I stopped caring. In two years, I put on seventy pounds. The only things that gave me pleasure were my job and food.

My husband began to tell me that I was fat and that he was ashamed to be seen with me. One Christmas, he stood at the bedroom door, looked at me, and said, "You're the ugliest, fattiest woman I have ever seen" and turned around and walked out the door. I was so hurt and ashamed that I was speechless. We went to his mother's house and he acted like nothing had been said. Another incident occurred at the funeral home after my father died. I was sitting on a couch when my girlfriend came in. I tried to rise to greet her but my knees were so weak that I had trouble standing. My husband said,

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ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITY

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"Well, if she wasn't so fat she could stand." I was so embarrassed. During the funeral he belittled my father and was very non-supportive. I'll never forget the pain that he caused me during that trying time.

My business continued to grow, but at home everything was falling apart. I guess the straw that broke the camel's back was my suspicion that my husband had got his best friend's girlfriend pregnant.

When my husband and his friend went hunting, the friend would do drugs and drink alcohol until he passed out. My husband would then take his friend home. Even though he hunted every night, my husband came home with very few raccoons.

Then the two stopped hunting together. Shortly thereafter, I learned that his friend's girlfriend was pregnant. My husband was upset more often and frequently had the "shakes." He would look at me and shake all over, something he had never done before. It didn't take a genius to figure out that when the friend passed out, my husband took him home and had spent time with the girlfriend. His best friend and girlfriend married, but he and my husband were never close again.

I had lost all respect for my husband and couldn't stand to be in the same room with him. I threw myself into my work and tried to stay away from home. I dieted and rapidly lost weight. This drove my husband crazy. As long as I was fat and he could keep my self-confidence down, he knew I would put up with his behavior. I changed a lot. I became active on our local real estate board and in our community. I didn't realize it but I was moving away from my husband and becoming more self-sufficient. My

husband tried to sabotage my diet but I wouldn't let him affect me any more. The more he put me down, the more confidence it seemed to give me. I had lost thirty six pounds and had become president of our local real estate board when my husband decided to force my hand.

It happened on a Sunday. He was in one of his "moods." I stayed away from him because I knew we would argue. He came into the room where I was watching television and I knew that he was going to pick a fight. I ignored him but he sat down at my feet. I tried to move but he held on to me. Then he put his hand around my throat and told me he could knock my head through the wall if he wanted to. I didn't say anything which made him madder. He stood up and told me to get out. I just looked at him. When he saw I was not leaving, he told me he was going to get his gun and if I were there when he got back, he was going to blow my head off. I knew he was out of control so I put my shoes on. He came back in and pushed me out of the door, shouting at the top of his lungs. My son and I left town that night. I called my attorney and asked him for assistance, as I knew that I would never go back to that relationship. The next few months were pure hell. No one should have to go through what I did to get out of an abusive relationship.

The important thing is that I was strong and did not go back to him. I fought for my rights and kept my dignity. It took me some-time to realize that my husband had been abusive to me. He had only twice tried to hit me, but he was mentally abusive.

It has taken five years to recover, and still there are things that I cannot get over. There are days that I

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Success Story



Evolving Relationships

J O H N S E N A

Not only can you go home again, but you can also enjoy it and move in. At least that has been our experience with our two adult sons. When they left home — one for the work place, one for college — the idea of being empty-nesters (an unappetizing metaphor, considering that birds keep their nests together with spittle) was not unappealing to Sylvia and me. No longer would our air conditioning ducts spread the sounds of the Grateful Dead; no longer would I have to race my older son for the daily crossword puzzle or hide my chocolate chip cookies; no longer would I have to share my VCR with terminators or run a free answering service.

More significantly, my wife and I looked forward to entering a new, more private, more romantic period of our lives. We would be able to savor quiet dinners and intimate conversations, take impromptu trips, maybe even make love in the family room. Like anthropologists, we would rediscover old habits and old haunts, old priorities and old excitement. We would rediscover each other. Even Sylvia's dream of taking the QE2 luxury ocean liner to England could become a reality. We were happily entering an age of self-indulgence.

At least that was our dream. We were awakened from our reverie when our older son came home and remarked that he would like to postpone his decision to find an apartment and our collegiate son discovered that his mother's cooking



John Sena, Columbus, Ohio.

was preferable to the most lavish meal at the commons called Texas Straw Hat (a tempting delicacy consisting of baked beans and melted cheese poured over Fritos).

I was amazed at how easily and quickly our sons reverted to their adolescent roles after moving home. With a genetic programming that would shame both lemmings and migratory birds, they returned to former patterns and practices. The silence that we had come to relish was filled with sounds of the Grateful Dead. Conversations at dinner revolved around dating, permission to use our cars, and postmortems on the Simpsons. Steam from 20 minute showers once more threatened to turn our second floor into a giant sauna. Our QE2 plans left port and my wife and I were stranded at home without a compass, a chart, or a sail. My daydreams of retirement were replaced by thoughts of slouching toward the inevitable prostrate operation.

This is not to say that we no longer enjoyed the company of our sons. They are delightful human beings and I marvel at how handsome and intelligent they have grown. There was remarkably little tension or dissension while they lived with us. I liked to watch sports with them and Sylvia enjoyed preparing their favorite meals. Yet, there was something wrong with this arrangement and it had nothing to do with conflict or authority figures or gratuitous advice or the generation gap or personal freedom versus house rules. But I simply couldn't put my finger on what was wrong.

My flash of insight came late on a Friday afternoon when one son asked if he could have a few bucks

for a date at precisely the time that I was opening a promotional letter advising me of the many benefits of membership in the American Association of Retired Persons. The two events seemed incongruous. Instead of growing and changing and entering new phases of our lives, my wife and I and our two sons were all trapped in a time warp. It was at that moment that I realized that we were unwillingly and unconsciously preventing each other from assuming our new roles. We had become co-dependents in maintaining a state of suspended animation.

Our sons had returned home only superficially for reasons of finance, comfort, and tasty meals. I think the real reason they returned was a hesitation to face life, a lack of confidence in themselves, anxiety about the future, and unwillingness to test their wings. It is a cold, wet world out there, and a warm, dry nest is eminently preferable. The realities and responsibilities of adulthood are strong enough to infect any one with acute Peter Panism, a condition that has reached epidemic proportions among the children of some of my friends.

I finally realized that allowing my sons to continue their lives of dependency, encouraging them to remain in a perpetual state of youthful bliss, was not an act of kindness. As long as they stayed at home they would not have to shoulder real responsibilities, make independent decisions, create a budget, establish priorities, or plan a future. Career and personal goals would remain fuzzy because they did not have to think about them. I was standing in the way of their right of passage into adulthood.

C I I S

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F I T H I A N P R E S S

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And, they were preventing my wife and me from entering a new and exciting period of our lives. While our children lived at home we always placed them on the center perch, but now it was time to redirect to each other the energy and attention we had given to raising them. We wanted our existence to extend beyond parenthood. We had been looking forward to renewing the privacy and freedom of our early years together, when spontaneity and play were the order of the day. We wished to play hooky, bay the moon, eat grapes and spit out the seeds, only now with the self-knowledge and self-acceptance that comes with gray hair and liver spots.

When I asked for a family meeting to explain our feelings, I was prepared for a tense moment. I devised a careful strategy that would protect both their pride and sense of family. I would be sensitive and understanding, yet my logic would be relentless, my arguments compelling. As I warmed to the task, I discovered that, as so often happens, my sons were far ahead of me. They too had realized the anachronistic nature of our living arrangements but had been waiting for a push from us.


Our oldest son now rents a second story from a wonderful family in a neighboring town, and our collegiate son lives in a fraternity house near campus. Although we no longer live under one roof, we visit and call one another often, for we remain an integral part of each other's lives. Our relationships are evolving instead of remaining static. 



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PRESCOTT COLLEGE, ROWAN BAILLIE

Joyful Living

MARY ANN VAVALETTE

“Learning is a creative and joyful activity of continuous discovery.”

To be joyful we have to be alive in the present moment. Freeing the mind and letting the body move while being present to our movement can be one of the most transforming experiences available to us. The following is a list of resources to support your aliveness.

▲ Gabrielle Roth has created a remarkably transforming video that teaches a movement that brings you in touch with your inner most self. Her methods cultivate the intuitive, spontaneous self by exploring the body's natural movements from very slow and almost static to wildly abandoned, surrendering to the natural rhythms of the body.

She calls her video, "The Wave." It is a fascinating journey through five universal rhythms to inspire your own natural style, your intuitive dance. Flowing is the mother of all rhythms, feminine, earthy, circular, and rooted. Staccato is masculine, connected to the heart beat, precise and linear. Chaos is the combining of feminine and masculine, giving birth to a wild child. It is wild, abandoned, rooted, and earthy. Lyrical is airy, light, and lifted up. Stillness is meditative, empty, experiencing inner and outer space. These rhythms connect and in fact make a complete wave.

With practice the movement brings you deeper into your body, deeper into the dance and deeper into the spirit of life. You'll stay in touch with the subtle changes in your energy. At times creative energy spews from you, sometimes lyrical and light; at others, you may be on the dark side, feeling rigid or tense, or spaced out and disconnected. Through practice, you recognize what state you are in, and how to shift the energy. Dancing the wave of the five rhythms is a spiritual practice rooted in the body—a physical prayer—and offers a fresh perspective for wisdom and understanding.

Gabrielle also produces music that she can move to and use in her work. She and her husband, Robert Ansell, have created Raven

R A V E N

F E L D E N K R A I S G U I L D

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ROCK CREEK PRESS
QUANTAM SHIFT

Nash Publishing

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Recording with a group of top musicians. In her albums, the seed of the rhythms is planted into the consciousness of the listener-dancer. For more information on Roth's workshops and albums contact Raven Recording, call (800)767-2836.

▲ Prescott College is a private liberal arts college that values self-direction, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary studies. It offers a unique combination of environmental ideals, progressive educational philosophy, and commitment to serving diverse populations.

Not so long ago, a college education was seen as a four-year period in early adulthood, during which one memorized faculty wisdom and textbook knowledge in preparation for the life ahead. Even now, every September countless college classrooms assemble: professor at the front, instructing; students in rows, facing forward, listening, taking notes, readying themselves to recapitulate received knowledge in an examination.

In fact, life—modern life—is not like this. First of all, absolutely true facts are not easily found, and they do not last very long. What is supposedly known today is likely to be superseded or reconceptualized in a relatively short period of time. People are likely to make major career shifts two or three times in the course of their lives. In every field of work, leadership is increasingly defined as creating and managing change rather than preserving the status quo.

Prescott College is recognized for its leadership in field ecology and environmental studies. Its programs focus on the human and natural worlds and how they influence one another, educating students to understand, thrive in, and enhance





P R E S C O T T C O L L E G E

our world community and environment.

Prescott College features programs to serve diverse student populations. The Resident Degree Program is a four year program utilizing field and classroom instruction. The Adult Degree Program is mentor-designed to work with returning students wishing to complete their degree or acquire state-approved teaching certification. The Center for Indian Bilingual Teacher Education serves the Native American populations of Arizona and other states (currently Oklahoma). This program is also mentor-based with curricula that lead to teaching certification or bachelor of arts degree. The Master of Arts Program is an eighteen month self study program for students in the Southwest. (602)776-5180. Located at 220 Grove Ave., Prescott, AZ 86301.

▲ "Science, art and medicine have begun to recognize the ear as the regulator of movement, balance, thought, speech, expression, and emotions. Sound and music are the joyous midwives of learning and

health," says Don G. Campbell head of the Institute for Music Health and Education. For over a decade, he has researched the effects of sound and music on learning and health.

He demonstrates in practical ways the powers of tone and music to improve human well-being. Working with children with learning disabilities, he has used music to improve academic achievement in the belief that all learning can be improved with the addition of singing, chanting, clapping, body movements—any kind of rhythmic activity. "Music and movement are the most obvious keys to the brain," Campbell explains. "Certain ways of singing, chanting, and moving create dynamic changes in brain waves. Using the whole body to learn opens the channels between mind and body."

The Mystery School of Sound is a year-long program that meets quarterly in a Rocky Mountain valley and is open to all who wish to deepen their awareness of sound, ritual, spirituality, and personal transformation through music.



Other training programs in the therapeutic uses of sound and music are conducted throughout the US and Europe. For information write or call The Institute for Music, Health and Education, PO Box 4179, Boulder, Colorado 80306-4179. (303)443-8484.

▲ Quantum Shift, a process that leads to increased vitality and fulfillment by touching the heart, moving the body, and tapping core emotions and beliefs is based on the principle that we must go to the next level within ourselves before we can proceed to the next level in our lives. By breaking through critical self judgments and recognizing social expectations, we can experience deeper intimacy with others and acquire the ability to set healthy boundaries. With this shift

comes the leap into the realm of true intimacy, expansion of spirit, and high level creativity.

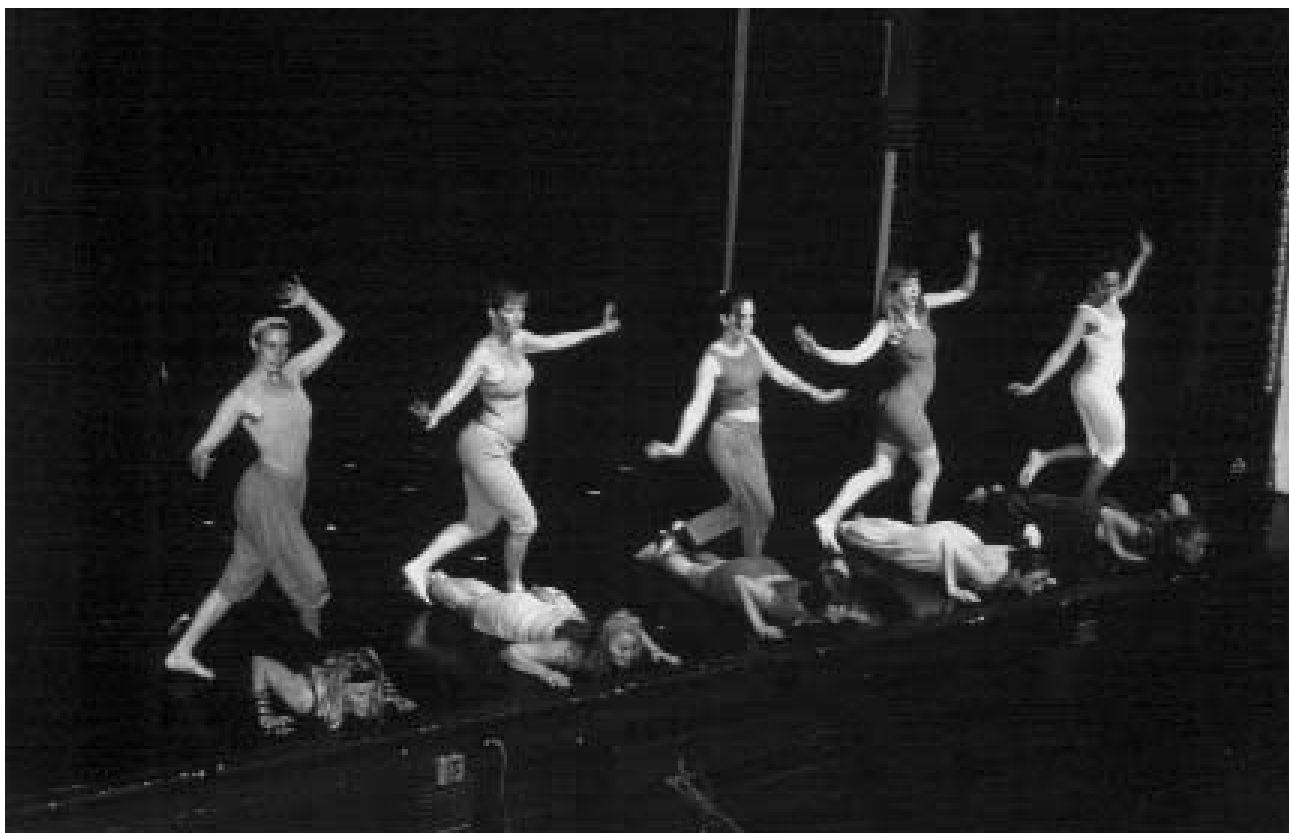
Transformation Vacations use the beauty, peacefulness, and healing powers of nature to relax, play, and revitalize. The tropical paradise of Maui, Hawaii, with jungle pools, waterfalls, beaches, forests, gardens, and 200 acres on Spring Mountain in Northern California with hiking trails, fresh-water springs, and virgin forests are environments that enhance personal transformation and bring home the tools for continued growth. Call (800)573-0528 for more information or contact Quantum Shift, 120 La Alondra Court, San Rafael, CA. 94903.

▲ Creative Painting recognizes the living process that happens between the painter and the paint-

ing. Self expression is our birthright and we need to reclaim its joys for ourselves. "Open yourself to the moment," says Michell Cassou of The Painting Experience. "You need to constantly let yourself invent and see where it leads you, rather than planning and manipulating. Creativity is already inside." Michell paints and lives this intuitive style and invites others to share the experience as well.

The Painting Experience Studio offers classes and workshops in creative painting for those who wish to use the tool of painting for personal expression and self-discovery. The inhibitions and patterns that prevent creative expression are carefully explored for each person to discover a natural experience of painting based directly upon feeling. For more information call (415)564-8515. The Painting Experience, 2101 20th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116.

▲ Across the Boundaries explores bridges between people of different cultures and between humans and other creatures. Based in mindfulness, it points a way to enter into the truth of this moment. The retreat begins on Bali and includes swimming in coral reefs, participation in the ceremonial life of the island at the ancient temple of Gunung Kawi and other sacred sites, and ends with a meditation retreat at the foot of the volcano, Agung. Then it travels to the rain forests and black rivers of southern Kalimantan (Borneo), where Orangutans once held in captivity are now returned to the wild and the retreat joins the staff in this process. The purpose of the retreat is to heighten communication between species, exploring how we can join with members of another order of beings as they are freed to



return home, and at the same time learn to protect ourselves from all that is wild within us.. Joan Halifax and Ken Ballard, Upaya, 1404 Cerro Gordo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501. (505)986-8528.

▲ Zen Mountain Monastery is a monastic training center, dedicated to providing authentic and traditional, yet distinctly American, Zen training to people of all ages and religious backgrounds. Located on 230 acres of mountains and rivers in the Catskill Mountain Forest Preserve here is an atmosphere conducive to study and introspection. Zen Buddhism is a grounded and practical spiritual training that encourages us to journey deep within ourselves to uncover peace, wisdom, and compassion that are a part of each of us.

John Daido Looi, Abbot and spiritual leader of the Zen Mountain Monastery, has a background as scientist, artist, naturalist and Zen priest. He lives perma-

nently at the monastery and is active in its day-to-day activities. He was previously a professional photographer and has continued artistic study and teaching. A four day festival of zazen, poetry readings, performances, workshops, and seminars combine spiritual practice with the study of art.

For a calendar of the many programs, including Aikido, Chi Kung, Chado: the tea ceremony, Kyudo: Zen Archery, the Eight Gates, and a week-long ecology retreat with Joanna Macy, contact Zmm, PO Box 197 PC, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457, or call (914)688-2228.

▲ The Women's Spirituality movement during the past two decades in the US and other parts of the world is a vital and challenging dimension of the feminist movement. The California Institute of Integral Studies has initiated the nation's first Ph.D. program concentrating on women's spirituality. The definition of

women's spirituality is broad and encompasses women's experience of the sacred and self, ways of knowing, physicality and sexuality, society and earth community, psychological development, and moral reasoning. An important goal is the integration of body, mind, and spirit and is encouraged through a combination of learning both cognitive and experiential. Empowering women to participate fully in global culture, and preparing leaders in education and social activism who will work to transform academic, social, cultural, and political institutions into more just and humane environments are an integral part of the program's vision.

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DEALING WITH YOUR CONFLICTING NEEDS

H O W A R D H A L P E R N

The road to a love relationship is replete with contradictions. Both ends of these contradictions can seem like truths. What is even more confusing is that both ends of these are true! These are paradoxes, assertions that in themselves are true and yet are contrary to other truths. The world of proverbs is filled with paradoxical contradictions, such as “Look before you leap” vs. “He who hesitates is lost.” Here are a “daunting dozen” paradoxes that you may have to come to terms with in the course of navigating a love relationship.

WALTER HODGES/ALLSTOCK

Howard Halpern has practiced psychotherapy in New York City for more than thirty-five years. His books include "Cutting Loose: An Adult Guide to Coming to Terms with Your Parents" and "How to Break Your Addiction to a Person." The following is from "Finally Getting it Right: From Addictive Love to the Real Thing" by Howard Halpern, Ph.D. Copyright 1994 by Howard Halpern, Ph.D. Printed by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. All rights reserved.



Life and love would be so much easier if just one side of these contradictions were true. Then our yearning to have *The Answer* could so easily be met. We would know what to do or at least at what goal we should aim. Instead we must realize that the answer lies in recognizing the simultaneous validity of contrary truths. This recognition, while frustrating and far from satisfying, will enable you to see that in pursuing a love relationship you need to steer a course between the two sides of the contradictions. If you veer too far toward either side, you can smash against the rocks. So you must be guided by your most insightful and most loving judgment.

PARADOX #1

I want to be generously loving:

- (a) to my partner and others.
- (b) to myself.

As you may know, love for others and self-love (as distinguished from narcissism) do not oppose each other but nurture each other. In his book "What Love Asks of Us," Nathaniel Branden writes,

If I enjoy a fundamental

If you maintain a position of total independence and self-reliance, you rule out any chance of making a loving connection; if you form an altogether dependent connection, you leave yourself no room for independence and self-reliance.

sense of efficacy and worth, and if as a consequence I feel lovable as a human being, then I have a basis or precedent for appreciating or loving others. I am not trapped in feelings of deficiency. I have a surplus of life within myself, an emotional *wealth* that I can channel into loving.

The opposite is also true. I can reverse Branden's statement and say with equal validity that when I appreciate and love another, it makes me feel that I am a good and giving person—and that gives me further impetus to appreciate and love myself.

The ability to love is a human capacity that is within our power to

develop and strengthen. It can be directed inwardly toward ourself and outwardly toward others. The greater your ability to direct it both ways, the more you will be able to be in a good love relationship. Nobody has described the need for both self-love and loving others better than Hillel, the first-century rabbi and philosopher who taught, "If I am not for myself, who will be; but, if I am for myself alone, then what am I?"

PARADOX #2

I want to be:

- (a) independent and self-reliant.
- (b) lovingly and dependably connected.

If you maintain a position of total independence and self-reliance, you rule out any chance of making a loving connection; if you form an altogether dependent connection, you leave yourself no room for independence and self-reliance. (One woman said of her mutually suffocating relationship with her husband, "It's awful. We're like two soggy spaghettis trying to lean on each other.") But it is only in these extreme forms that one position rules out another. They can go hand in hand when you recognize the importance of creating an ongoing balance between the pulls of these two human needs.

Dr. Althea Horner once pointed out to me that her book on achieving independence and intimacy was called "Being and Loving," not "Being or Loving." She wrote that, "[*Loving*] entails an emotional attachment to another human being, one predicated not only on one's dependency needs but also upon cherishing the other as the real person he or she is... *Being* refers to that clear and uninterrupted sense of 'I am. I exist. I go on.' It is the capacity to experience oneself

as a separate, real, and whole human being.” These two states can facilitate each other because a “separate, real, and whole human being” can have the security and courage to reach out and make a strong connection with another separate individual, and can have his or her separateness and realness confirmed by the loving response of the other. Many people have told me that when they developed a great sense of their own independence and self-sufficiency they were more easily able to develop a love relationship, and that when they had a happy and affirming love relationship their feelings of empowerment and independence were strengthened.

PARADOX #3

I want:

(a) to increase my capacity to love unconditionally and without strings.

(b) my love partner to attend to and meet many of my needs.

Why should you want to increase your capacity to love unconditionally? Dr. Judy Kuriansky gives this answer:

That an unconditional love is a state worth aspiring to is abundantly clear to people who experience it... It is a transcendent state where you give and receive love without thought of gain or loss. This is truly the highest state of love—where love is most healing and nurturing. It enables you to rise above so much of the “warfare” you may now think is inevitable between the sexes. It is the state where you *accept* your lover and feel accepted by him... where you experience loving without being con-



cerned about whether, or how, the other person responds.

Unconditionality is a powerful, basic and even spiritual way of loving.

Unconditional love does not mean accepting any kind of treatment or behavior from one's lover. You can love a person deeply and fully without feeling that you have to like everything he or she does, says, or thinks and certainly without feeling that you have to ignore your own needs in service to his or her needs. You enter a love rela-

tionship not just because you love someone, but also because you have many fundamental wants that you hope to gratify—for emotional intimacy, sexual pleasure, emotional and practical support, affection, companionship, and so on. Even if your love is deep and unconditional, you are not likely to be content if the love relationship does not provide some substantial satisfaction of these basic and legitimate wants.

In general, if you care about someone, the caring should be basic and deep and should have enough unconditional acceptance so that

DONNA DAY/ALLSTOCK

you can live with the needs that are unmet. Unless your unfulfilled needs feel essential or major, keep in mind that stretching yourself to accept some frustrations and disappointments is in great measure what love is about.

Also bear in mind that having feelings of unconditional love and getting your basic relationship needs gratified often go together because unconditional love, unless directed toward an impossible source, generally leads to a loving response.

PARADOX #4

I want:

- (a) more than anything to be loved and desired by the one I love.
- (b) to be mindful of and involved in bigger questions than whether he or she loves and desires me.

I do not believe it is possible to be in a love relationship without the question of whether you are loved and desired by the one you love being a central (though not always burning) concern. If you tend to be inordinately jealous, insecure, or possessive, this question may well take up too much time and space, leaving little for questions such as, "Will I get the promotion I have worked so hard for? Will my friend's biopsy results be negative? Is the ozone depletion going to fry us? Am I a good person? Is there a Higher Power?" If you are in a panic of doubt about being loved and desired, your answer to such questions (if you think about them at all) may well be, "Who cares?" But if your partner's affection is clear and steady, you should be able to turn from your concerns about the relationship back toward the larger world—whether this means your work, other people you care about, issues that concern you, cre-

Unconditional love does not mean accepting any kind of treatment or behavior from one's lover. You can love a person deeply and fully without feeling that you have to like everything he or she does...

ative efforts, or personal and spiritual growth.

There are extreme situations when people feel they can attend only to their relationship or only to bigger questions. When you have reason to feel the relationship is being jeopardized by a lessening in the caring and commitment of your partner, no question will feel more important than whether he or she loves and desires you. In such a case, you will need immediately to focus on whether your preoccupation reflects some basic insecurity or jealousy that has been characteristic of you or whether the danger signals you are picking up are real. It would be a mistake to let your involvement in other areas of your life, no matter how important and compelling, to distract you unduly from giving caring attention to your love relationship. When however there is an overarching crisis in the bigger world, your relationship

might seem quite secondary. You may feel painfully what Rick felt in the airport scene of *Casablanca* when he encourages his beloved to go off with her freedom-fighter husband because it's quite clear to him that their love affair doesn't amount to "a hill of beans" in the context of the tyranny and slaughter enveloping the globe.

Most of the time we do not have to choose between our concern with the relationship and our larger concerns. In fact the two usually support and quicken each other. You can find in the mutual affection and desire of a love relationship the inspiration that can motivate you to participate actively in other areas of your life and to experience the love bond as a glimpse of "something bigger" than yourself or the moment. Then flowing back the other way, your greater caring involvement with the larger world can deepen your love for your partner and may also make you more lovable and desirable.

PARADOX #5

I want:

- (a) to be happy in myself.
- (b) a good love relationship because it would make me happy.

PARADOX #6

I want:

- (a) to be able to respond to and take care of the little child inside me.
- (b) the one I love to hear, respond to, and take care of the little child inside me.

PARADOX #7

I want:

- (a) to become better and better at healing my own wounds and repairing my dysfunctions.
- (b) to enjoy the healing and growth-promoting power of a good love relationship.

I grouped these three paradoxes together because they all relate to the question of whether a love relationship is important to and even necessary for our happiness, growth, and healing, or whether our pursuit of happiness, growth, and healing is independent of a love relationship. Perhaps the writer who comes down hardest on the side of the necessity of love relationships is Harville Hendrix, a couples therapist, who in his book "Keeping the Love You Find" argues that finding and keeping love is essential to our intact survival and forms "the context in which to explore our true nature." He writes.

Relationships pave the way for us to recapture our wholeness by correcting the distortions of care-taking and socialization that distanced us from our original selves. It is in unconditionally loving our partners, making it safe for them to open to love, letting that love sink in over time so that trust can build that allows their fullness to come back into being... The radical position I'm taking is that *love is the answer*. It is the love we give that heals our partner, and the love we receive that heals us. But it is only in loving that we truly change the rigid parts of ourselves... a committed partnership (far more effectively than the traditional paths of religion or psychotherapy) can bring us back to our original connectedness... It is nature's repair process.

What a persuasive and beautiful statement of the crucial role a love relationship can play in our growth

It is important to be sure you are not using your quest for insight to keep yourself from dealing with a world that frightens and frustrates you or are not using external involvements to keep yourself from traveling the painful and arduous path of self-knowledge.

and healing processes! And there is evident truth in it to which I wholeheartedly subscribe. But in these three paradoxes, as in the others, the other side also contains much truth. We can achieve major growth and healing on our own and by putting ourselves into situations that can make us more ready for and available to a love relationship. Second, I have known people who seem to flourish and grow well outside of a love relationship but seem to wither and become more limited within one. While we can then say that they were not yet ready for a love relationship, that they made

bad choices, or that they unremittingly repeated past destructive patterns, I nevertheless have to join them in concluding that unless or until they wish to and are able to be in a relationship in an entirely different way, their greater contentment and development may well lie outside a committed relationship. Hendrix would probably disagree. He states that "people disappointed in love don't want to hear that they *need* a relationship to heal. They want to feel they can be autonomous and restore their spiritual wholeness on their own... But this is a delusion. While there is much you can accomplish on your own... you can't go the whole way to healing without a partner."

How do you deal with these contradictions? As usual, by recognizing the truths inherent in both positions and then trying to steer the course that is best for you. Hendrix's statement supports that part of you that is seeking a love relationship because you feel it will be a vital source of happiness, flowering, and restoration. You can also take it as an important warning that you do yourself a terrible disservice if you let past hurts or disappointments in love discourage you from seeking what a good love relationship has to offer. But if you choose to live and grow without a committed relationship, then your truth is that this is what you find works best for you.

For most people however the two poles of these paradoxes are not mutually exclusive. Both are necessary components of a full and satisfying life. Most people would agree that they want to find happiness both within themselves *and* in a love relationship; they want to be able to take care of the needs of their own inner child *and* would

want their love partner to be responsive to those needs; they want to become better at healing their own emotional wounds *and* want their lives to be graced by the healing power of a good love relationship. It is a matter of finding your right balance.

PARADOX #8

I want to become a more loving person:

(a) through the pursuit of insight and self-knowledge.

(b) through active and caring involvement in the world.

You can so single-mindedly turn inward on a psychological or spiritual path that you become too disengaged to be involved lovingly with people in general or with a particular person. Conversely you can get so engaged with the outside world, through work, activities, courses, or intense romantic and sexual encounters, you are distracted from pursuing self-knowledge and self development. It is important to be sure you are not using your quest for insight to keep yourself from dealing with a world that frightens and frustrates you or are not using external involvements to keep yourself from traveling the painful and arduous path of self-knowledge.

If you are not using one end of the polarity as a defense against the other, then you can exchange and integrate the knowledge and energy you derive from each. This integration will increase your ability to deal with yourself and others in an increasingly effective, nourishing, and loving way. "The more we succeed in putting love and harmony into our outer world," Susan Jeffers writes, "the more we will succeed in putting love and harmony into our inner world. Our life must seek to create a context for love which



touches everything and everyone that comes into our sphere of being."

The pursuit of psychological self-knowledge can help you to see and correct many of the ways your past is distorting your present, can reduce some of your fears and anxieties, and can modify defenses that stand as a real barrier to a real love relationship in that real world out there. The pursuit of spiritual self-knowledge can help you to reduce

your feelings of separation from the world by focusing you on the underlying unity, can put your fears and preoccupations into a much larger perspective, and can reduce your need for addictive attachments so that love can flow more easily and freely. Energetic and effective engagement with the outside world can manifest that love in action; when you feel the impact of your caring involvement, you can be led

to deeper levels of both psychological and spiritual insight.

It is often true that in the early, limerant, head-over-heels obsessive focus on that particular piece of the outside world, *the beloved*, everything else fades into the background. Your interest in pursuing self-knowledge and in dealing with issues outside of the love affair may evaporate in the sun of that limerence. As the headiness of the limerence fades and a loving relationship remains, the intense feelings of love that have been discovered and released can make you more generally and generously loving. You will have gone from finding the wonder and beauty of the world in the being of your beloved to finding the wonder and beauty of your beloved in many places in the world.

PARADOX #9

I want to be able to:

(a) live fully in the moment with my partner.

(b) plan and actualize a satisfying future with my partner.

To reconcile these extremes, you have to recognize that you can have intense *love feelings* and romantic encounters while living totally in the here and now, but it is not possible to have a good *love relationship* without also having some meaningful thought toward a shared future. If you recognize that, it will bring the future (or at least your speculating about it and planning for it) into the present where you can look at it, help to shape it, see if it is what you want and enjoy it.

For women who want to have children, finding the right balance between present and future fulfillment can have a particular urgency, because of the stark biological fact of a time limit on fertility. There

A love relationship requires commitment, availability, and a good chunk of devotion. It requires the courage and persistence to resolve the inevitable disagreements without having the escape hatches provided by *another* ongoing love relationship.

are three categories of women for whom this is especially relevant: women who are in love with a man who does not want children (or with whom they would not want to have children); women who are involved with a man they are not in love with but who wants to marry them and have children with them; and women who are not currently involved with a man. All are aware that the clock is ticking. All are facing difficult decisions.

The need to choose between present and future fulfillment, and

among various possibilities for future fulfillment, is a factor in many decisions about love—for example, about whether or not to make a commitment, whether to stay in or end a relationship that is wonderful in the present but a poor risk for the future, whether to put career development ahead of a love commitment or vice versa, and whether to give precedence to the goal of parenthood or that of a fulfilling romantic relationship. How is one to find the right balance?

What is essential is that you attempt deeply and honestly to know your own feelings and priorities. In your imagination, stand at a crossroads where you can choose one or the other path you are considering. First go down one path trying to see as clearly as you can the most likely consequences of that choice. Ask yourself, where will that path lead? How will I feel about taking this road just after I choose it? How will I feel the next day? In a month? A year? Five years? Then do the same with the other path. You cannot foresee all the consequences. But in undertaking this investigation you are acknowledging that you must seek fulfillment in both the present and the future. And that often involves the disappointments and satisfactions of compromise.

PARADOX #10

I want to be:

(a) able to love a wide range of people.

(b) totally devoted to the one person I romantically love.

When you develop your capacity to be a loving person, you are able to love not only more deeply but also more widely. It is possible to have strong feelings of caring and affection toward many others without these feelings conflicting in

any substantial way with a primary love involvement. But if those feelings of caring and affection combine with romantic and passionate feelings, you will face a conflict between wanting to be romantically devoted to one person and wanting to be romantically involved with more than one person. That is why one of the questions most frequently asked by readers of my syndicated column, "On Your Own," was in essence, "Can you love two people at the same time?"

The answer is, sure you can. To say otherwise I would have to deny the experience of many people I have consulted with who have convinced me that they felt themselves to be quite romantically in love with two (or more!) people at the same time. However, they were often consulting me because this state of affairs provoked an internal crisis of conflicting feelings and loyalties, practical dilemmas involving time and hurt and rage in the people who knowingly or unknowingly shared their love. *The important question then is not whether you can romantically love more than one person at a time but whether you can have a full love relationship with more than one person at a time. The answer to this question is "no."*

A love relationship requires commitment, availability, and a good chunk of devotion. It requires the courage and persistence to resolve the inevitable disagreements without having the escape hatches provided by another ongoing love relationship. Being in more than one love relationship can hold forth many "double delights," offering the stimulation of variety and the thrill of intrigue, adventure, and danger. It can spark a heady feeling of being adored by more than one desirable

partner. It can also grant you the freedom of not feeling tied to any one person and the safety of having a "spare tire" if you are rejected or fall out of love with either one. I have seen instances where people became simultaneously romantically involved with more than one person and where it was, at least for a while, a growth and esteem-building experience. Yet, most people in this situation sooner or later find it unsatisfying and choose to give it up. How come?

Those who decide to give up being in multiple involvements usually do so not only because it becomes too nerve-racking and confusing a balancing act and not only because it usually engenders hurt and angry feelings in their partners and moral dilemmas in themselves, but also because they sense that there is something incomparably valuable in building a love relationship that carries the commitment to become more and more intimate, honest, and trusting. They understand the value of a relationship that permits them to know and to be profoundly known by another person and that satisfies many desires of their inner child while, at the same time, brings forward their most mature and giving self.

Moving in the direction of either pole of the paradox should not be at the expense of ignoring, impairing, or damaging its counterpart. The goals of being devotedly involved with one person and loving a wider range of people should reciprocally nourish each other, raising your overall capacity to be a loving person. Within this context, the specialness and unique place of the romantic love relationship can and should be maintained.

PARADOX # 11

I believe that:

(a) you have to work hard to make a love relationship successful.

(b) if you have to work hard at a love relationship, then there is something basically wrong with it.

Nobody can deny that a love relationship, particularly after the early stage of limerence and idealization, requires a good deal of work to survive and flourish. It is unrealistic and Pollyannaish to believe that you can remain indefinitely on a cloud, mesh frictionlessly and simply live happily ever after. But there is productive and gratifying work, and there is unproductive and demoralizing work. How can you distinguish between the two?

You can be pretty sure that your work is of the unproductive and demoralizing kind if:

- You are doing all or most of it by yourself.
- The other person is not committed to the improvement and continuity of the relationship.
- You find yourself trying to make the other person love you.
- You are always trying to win the other person's approval and twisting yourself out of shape to please him or her. You are giving much more than you are getting in terms of emotional support, affection, practical support, and degree of involvement. You are struggling to make your partner stop abusing you. (Non-abuse is an absolute prerequisite, not something you work on.)
- You are struggling to have a reliable and loving relationship with someone who is addicted to a substance or to a destructive pattern of behavior.
- You are trying to get a very narcissistic person to empathize with and caringly respond to your needs.

- You are working hard to get the other person to leave another relationship and be fully with you.

If you are involved in any of these exhausting and unproductive projects, then for you I would agree with the pole of the paradox that says that if you have to work hard on a love relationship, it indicates there is something basically wrong with it.

On the other hand, even when there are substantial and mutual feelings of love, reasonable give and take, and emotional availability of both partners—even then, a relationship still takes work! After all, each of you has a different history of hurts and a different set of needs and fears. Each of you has different preferences, ideas, and goals in love and life. Each of you is seeking, consciously or not, for the other person to make up for or heal the wounds created by previous deprivations, rejections, and traumas. Each of you may distort the other by overlooking or exaggerating shortcomings and imperfections. Differences will arise over how to spend time and how to spend money. Conflicts may arise about how sex should go and how often. Simple communication can get exasperatingly mixed up and frustrating. Each may feel unheard or misunderstood. There may be attempts at control and feelings of rage. Impulses to trash the relationship can feel overwhelming. *And all of this can occur in a relationship that has an abundance of loving feelings and many very fine things going for it!*

Negotiating and attempting to resolve these differences, finding out what each of you is willing and able to change, dealing with your own and the other person's self-centered and self-righteous

demands, learning to say what you need and want, and learning to listen respectfully to the other person's needs and wants—all of this takes work. But it doesn't have to be bitter work; you don't have to feel lashed to an oar on the Love Boat. This work can bring you the deep satisfaction of seeing yourself and your partner become more intimate and trusting in your shared search for resolution.

Fighting, expressing feelings and needs, understanding where these feelings and needs are coming from, listening, acknowledging, appreciating, taking responsibility for your (and only your) contribution to problems, and making efforts to change old, destructive patterns—these are the work of a relationship. You must do your half, while recognizing the disappointing possibility that the other person may not do his or her half and that in this case the relationship will probably not get better. But even if the relationship doesn't, you will.

So how can we resolve the contradiction between the necessity for hard work versus the belief that a good relationship should not need hard work? We can realize that it is a false issue. Every relationship must involve work if it is to grow but when the effort is productive, mutual, and loving, it doesn't seem much like work.

PARADOX #12

I want, above all:

- (a) to feel passion and excitement in my love relationship.
- (b) to have friendship, sharing, and reliability in my love relationship.

Most people would not consider that they are in a romantic love

relationship unless they feel some intense and passionate involvement, including a considerable amount of sexual attraction and sexual excitement. This sexual intensity need not be there all the time and need not remain at the same level over time, but the fact that it has been there and can come back makes for a powerful and special bond.

Again, both poles of the paradox contain truth, and yet each pole without the other does not contain the whole truth. There is no question of the importance of passion in giving a love relationship vitality, but passion without friendship, sharing, and responsibility can be disastrous. If your passion has usually been tied to someone who for any reason is bad for you, I cannot guarantee that you will experience the same kind of inflamed excitement with someone who is good for you. A certain element of that old passion may be inextricably tied to the kind of person who provokes the old, self-destructive Attachment Hunger yearnings. But neither could I guarantee that those who give up cocaine will experience the same ecstatic high from jogging or meditating or loving that they experienced from coke. I could assure them however that these pursuits would provide them with a wonderful, more deeply satisfying high than a toxic, mind-altering chemical. In like manner I can assure you that you can find passion in the caring, sharing, and reliability of a good and mutual love relationship. And while it may not have the same crazy intensity of your old destructive fix, it can be the most deeply satisfying high of your life. It may even turn out to be, as many people have discovered, even more exciting. 🍄



QUESTION AUTHORITY

S A M K E E N

The first requirement for a modern spiritual practice is to be clearheaded when we think about or act on what it means to live within a sacred cosmos, when we consider why we are here. We have no more urgent priority than to reunite intelligence with the experience of the sacred so that we may think about our political, economic, ecological, and psychological problems with inspired minds.

ROBERT BRENNER/PHOTO EDIT

Sam Keen, Ph.D., was for many years a consulting editor for "Psychology Today." His books include "Fire in the Belly," "Inward Bound," "To a Dancing God," and "Faces of the Enemy." The following is from "Hymns to an Unknown God: Awakening the Spirit in Everyday Life" by Sam Keen. Copyright 1994 by Sam Keen. Printed by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. All rights reserved.



Currently we are in the middle of an epidemic of thoughtlessness, a resurgence of religious fundamentalism that has defined "faith" as the property of religious institutions, and a mindless march of abstract intelligence on a drunken binge that produces progress at the cost of destroying the environment. Humankind is suffering from a tragic divorce of reason and faith, from dispirited thinking. A spiritual lobotomy is not going to cure us of the consequences of blind faith and thoughtless action. To find our way through the thicket, we need the courage to think carefully, to re-examine our beliefs to know on what they are founded. My own rules of reason follow the brief section here that recounts how I came to terms with the absence of authority.

Think as an existing individual, with heart, mind, and spirit, not as an "objective" intellectual or professor.

The existentialist philosophers were my first heroes of the journey through the mindscape, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Camus, Sartre, and Marcel. They gave me the clue to the nature of a passionate mind. You have to think

"History is full of disastrous examples of blind faith, over-belief, and gullibility; it is littered with gods who have failed. Followers of Christ, Communism, and Capitalism alike have conducted cruel crusades..."

as somebody, not as anybody or nobody. I am embodied in a specific historical time and situation, born into a certain family, informed by idiosyncratic experiences. I must think as that singular man who wrestles with the problems, gifts, and wounds with which his life has presented him.

QUESTION AUTHORITY

The path to personal freedom involves two long and terrifying steps across the void. Step one: Question authority. Step two: Overthrow authority.

Church, cult, and state easily imprison believers within a self-sealing system of self-defined authority. Much as they would hate to be included within the same congregation, well-scrubbed Roman Catholics, plain-vanilla Southern Baptists, and Presbyterians are no less captivated by a circular logic

than are the followers of the Ayatollah or Guru XYZ. Their authorities claim: We are the repository and guardians of the Truth; therefore we are the Authority. If you question Authority—Truth (ie. us)—it is evidence that your mind is clouded, your faith is weak, and you stand in Error.

To question the authority of pope, bible, synod, guru, or party, a believer must leave the security of the group mind, venture out onto the quaking ground of personal doubt and issue this declaration of independence: Henceforth my experience of life will be the jury, my mind and heart the judges that will determine what is true and sacred. I am the author and the authority in my own life.

The nature of our life-journey will be shaped by whether we take these two decisive steps. Many pastors, priests, and true believers are tortured by doubts but refuse to take the radical step and sever the umbilical cord to exterior authority. I have a friend who was for years a disciple of Bhagwan Rajneesh. Every year he would come to visit and proclaim that the guru was freeing his mind. All the while he was wearing the red and orange uniform and making apologies for Rajneesh's habit of collecting Rolls-Royces and for the bizarre goings-on at the cult headquarters in Antelope, Oregon. (These included plots to murder disloyal disciples.) In like fashion, the majority of Roman Catholics in the United States recognize the moral imperative to control population growth and use birth control but they refuse openly to question the authority of the church.

To my mind, a kind of mild-to-severe schizophrenia results from



trying to keep one foot in and one foot out of an authoritarian church or belief-system. A person, like a nation, cannot long exist half-slave and half-free. If we nibble at the fruit of the tree of knowledge but still cling to the security of Authority, we are caught in the impossible position of trying to take a journey and stay home at the same time.

GATHER AND EVALUATE EVIDENCE

Perhaps miraculous healings take place at Lourdes; perhaps Allah is calling for a holy war; perhaps Sai Baba materialized diamonds from thin air; perhaps Jesus is the son of God. But to be intellectually responsible, we need to investigate and evaluate the evidence for such religious claims. Obviously this task is not as easy as gathering the evidence for claims for stock market offerings or hypotheses in the natural sciences.

Nevertheless it is always appropriate to ask, "How do you know?" "What is the evidence?" and "How would I go about establishing the truth or falsity or the reasonableness or unreasonableness of this?"

SUBJECT ALL HEARSAY EVIDENCE TO CROSS-EXAMINATION

No authority, no revered tradition, no unquestionable revelation has any automatic standing in the court of reason. The utterances of Moses, Buddha, Jesus, or Mohammed, no less than the religious claims of Swedenborg, Sun Myung Moon, David Koresh, or the Pope—and the pronouncements of political leaders—must be tested against the minimum standards of reasonableness. All truth claims are subject to the same rules of evidence. We need to be vigilant, remembering that sincere believers can be mistaken. History is full of disastrous examples of blind faith,

over-belief, and gullibility; it is littered with gods who have failed. Followers of Christ, Communism, and Capitalism alike have conducted cruel crusades, and blood is a poor argument for truth. That billions of people have believed in reincarnation or in the resurrection of Jesus or in witchcraft does not exempt their believers today from the requirement of producing evidence for their validity.

BE INTERNALLY CONSISTENT

The minimum requirement for any belief-system is that it be internally consistent. An inconsistent system is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Self-contradiction, like the sound of metal grinding against metal in an engine, is a symptom of an impending breakdown. It is for instance inconsistent to claim that (1) God is love; (2) we, being created in the image of God, must love our neighbors as ourselves; and (3) God orders his cho-

sen people to slaughter the inhabitants of the Holy Land. (Blessed shall you be when you dash their little ones' heads against stones.) Only by betraying intellectual responsibility can anyone believe all three of these statements, even if all of them are contained within the "revealed" text of the Bible. When we insist on believing contradictory assertions, we settle into a condition of spiritual schizophrenia in which faith and reason live in exile from each other.

I came upon a humorous instance of inconsistency early in my teaching career. Several young professors and I found out, after we had arrived at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, that faculty members were expected to sign a pledge to refrain from alcohol. We refused and the rebellion of the Young Turks began. During long faculty meetings in which the issue was debated, the New Testament professor, Dr. Love, argued that grapes are a gift from God but fermentation turns them into ungodly wine. During the supper break in our final meeting, we were standing in line at the salad counter of the cafeteria. I asked casually and as innocent as a viper, "Dr. Love, do you like blue cheese dressing on your salad?" "Yes," he replied. "It's fermented," I said. After midnight, the meeting ended with a victory for the forces of consistency and several of us adjourned to a nearby public house to enjoy blue cheese and the fruit of the vine.

To witness the emotional and moral consequences of a more serious failure to practice the intellectual virtue of consistency, visit a site where "pro-life" and "pro-choice" advocates are confronting each other over the issue of abortion. Each side maintains that it is motivated by reverence for life. But by a

strange twist in logic, each side maintains its self-righteousness through a failure to be consistent. Most pro-life advocates are in favor of the death penalty, and most pro-

"The failure to strive for completeness is probably the most common failing in the thinking of all individuals and organizations... We focus our eyes on one small truth so hypnotically that we neglect all other truths."

choice advocates are against it. Those who favor abortion protect themselves from awareness of their inconsistency by insisting that the fetus is not a life to be revered, while those who favor the death penalty insist that the criminal is not a life to be revered. The result: sustained conflict.

**CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR
CORE BELIEFS ARE
CONSISTENT WITH
KNOWN FACTS**

Reasonable metaphysical speculation must conform to the same rule of external consistency that

governs theoretical physics. As stated by the physicist Richard Feynman, "The essence of the scientific imagination was a powerful and almost painful rule. What scientists create must match reality. It must match what is already known. Scientific creativity is imagination in a straitjacket... Whatever we are allowed to imagine in science must be consistent with everything else we know." Metaphysics and theology must necessarily have a speculative and imaginative element, but everything they posit must be consistent with what we know. We can believe in supposed miracles that violate known laws of nature only if we are willing to suspend all critical judgment. We know enough about water to know that men do not walk on it, and we know enough about virgins to know they do not give birth. However, although we do not understand the mechanisms involved, we also know that spontaneous remissions of cancer occur, that poisonous snakes can sometimes be handled safely, and that there are instances of clairvoyance and ESP.

STRIVE FOR COHERENCE

A reasonable belief-system must strive for coherence. Beyond the minimal requirement that it not be self-contradictory, a belief-system needs to hang together and present a unifying picture of the seen and unseen world. Human rationality is a process of creating a narrative from a chaotic mass of facts. Reason aims at connecting a bewildering variety of dots into a single picture, molding a diverse experience into a single story.

At the moment, a radical pluralism traveling under the label "the postmodern mind" is in fashion in intellectual circles. The feeling is abroad that nothing adds up, that

there is only randomness. The contemporary style in the arts, in morality, and in politics is to abandon the traditional search for coherence and settle for making collages. Life has become MTV—one image, one experience placed alongside another without any connection. All dots and no connecting lines.

Anyone seeking wisdom is well advised to be skeptical about the latest styles. In intellectual life as in ladies' clothes, there are regular swings in fashion. Hemlines go up and down. In one decade we strive toward synthesis; in the next we deconstruct that synthesis. First, we make one big picture out of little bits of data; then we smash the picture and examine the component parts. Currently, empires are disintegrating, syntheses are coming apart, walls are tumbling down, and diversity, chaos and the rights of ethnic minorities are the news of the day. Day after tomorrow, new ordering principles, empires, and unifying stories will emerge.

In "The Sentiment of Rationality," William James identified this rhythm as inherent in the nature of mind itself. To think is to try to bring order into diversity and vice versa. Too little order, and we have schizophrenia; too much, and we have tyranny. Madness comes in opposite varieties—incoherence and supercoherence. The ravings of an alcoholic with delirium tremens are a spewing-forth of unconnected sentences that don't add up. By contrast, the conspiracy theories of a paranoid are airtight. Rationality is the mind breathing in and out, constructing parts into wholes,

then taking apart the whole into its component.

The inspired mind, like God, is always in the process of creating order out of chaos. Being partial



and frail, humankind can never entirely see life steady and whole. But we lose something essentially human if we cease aspiring to center and unify our experience into a single vision. Classical Greek thinkers, religious apologists, and philosophers of science agree on little else except that the human mind is able to discern the rationality and order that rules through things. The microcosm is part of the macrocosm, the human *logos* grasps the divine *logos*, the holographic mind reflects the holographic universe. Mind is stretched to its limits only when it strives to achieve coherence.

STRIVE FOR COMPLETENESS

Completeness, like coherence, is both a necessary and an impossible requirement of thought. No one can possibly embrace the totality of knowledge, but a reasonable world view cannot ignore entire domains of knowledge or experience. At the moment we are in deep trouble because the technological-economic paradigm ignores the ecological evidence that the Earth has limited natural resources and carrying capacity.

A world view needs to address itself to the great mythic questions that are perennial because they reflect the struggle to come to terms with unavoidable elements in the human condition—birth, sexuality, politics, haunting beauty, heartbreaking evil, decision, work, suffering, tragedy, and death.

The failure to strive for completeness is probably the most common failing in the thinking of all individuals and organizations. Something like tunnel vision seems to affect our thought processes. We focus our eyes on one small truth so hypnotically that we neglect all other truths. Like horses hitched to a wagon, we plod forward, seeing only the narrow swath of reality that is within the field of vision permitted by our blinders. As the German philosopher Goethe said, "Most sects are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny."

The result of thinking with blinders on is a very lopsided life. We become true believers rather than explorers, propagandists rather than philosophers, fanatics

rather than lovers.

Many New Age spiritual groups so over-focus on willpower, on creating our own reality, on total responsibility and absolute freedom that they become blind to the tragic destiny that condemns a labor organizer in El Salvador to be killed by a death squad or a child born with AIDS to die at an early age.

At the opposite extreme, we are increasingly subscribing to a social philosophy that denies freedom and individual responsibility. The rush to claim victimhood is becoming an epidemic. Criminal behavior is forgiven because experts explain that deviant behavior is caused by hidden social and psychological forces. We are victims of family, gender, class, economics, or hormones. PMS, post-traumatic stress syndrome, or hypoglycemia induced by eating too many Twinkies become the cause and excuse for murder. Anything that can be named a syndrome creates a new class of victims.

PREFER SIMPLICITY

Other things being equal, reason strives for the simplest explanation. In metaphysics as in physical science, the most beautiful and elegant explanation is the simplest. Occam's razor—Don't multiply entities or explanatory principles beyond what is necessary—helps us to avoid overbelief. The traditional pantheon of demons, angels, witches, and ghosts; the sorcerers with whose antics Carlos Castaneda filled the heads of a generation; and books like "Rosemary's Baby" seem more appropriate subjects for fantasy films than for serious spiritual consideration. Authentic mysteries

are everywhere; we need not create occult entities. The manufacture of supernatural miracles is growing in direct proportion to the decline in



the sense of wonder. An actual wolverine is far more miraculous than a nonexistent werewolf. The benevolence of good men and women is far more astonishing than dreams of angels.

For some people, there seems to be no end to the search for occult explanations. No amount of evidence will ever convince a true conspiracy buff that Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy or that a small congregation of bankers is not controlling the United States government. If all else fails, we should conclude that sometimes things are what they appear to be. A rose is a rose is a rose. Even Freud, who had a taste for elaborate theories of dream interpretation, said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

RESPECT COMPLEXITY

Seemingly, this rule contradicts the previous one. But the virtue of simplicity rapidly turns into the vice of oversimplifying when we try to homogenize complex phenomena.

Sometimes clear thinking requires using the knife—either/or. At other times it requires us to arrange a complex marriage

between both/and. An apparent contradiction may be a fundamental paradox that cannot be dissolved by thought. For instance, quantum physicists can begin to understand the strange way light behaves only by dealing with it as if it were both wave and particle. When we are dealing with the human psyche, we can assume that only the contradictions are true. Because we contain an amalgam of conscious and unconscious motives, our feelings toward others are ambivalent, a complex com-

pound of love and hate, desire and fear. Likewise, each person's freedom and destiny are so intertwined, it takes a lifetime to discover what is within our power and what is not.

ENGAGE IN DELIBERATION, DIALOGUE, CONVERSATION

An inspired life requires a community of dialogue and conversation because the treasure is always in earthen vessels. All encounters with the holy are mediated through the distorted medium of some local culture—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or Hopi. The perspective of every believer is biased. The only way to protect ourselves against the idolatry that creeps into culture-bound religion is to solicit the perspective of the wider community. Conversation creates community and compassion. Monologue creates distention and fanaticism.

Reason is the name we give to the consensus that emerges from the conversation between persons and communities of widely divergent life-experiences. To the degree that reason has any influence on the conduct of life, it represents the triumph of a human community formed by a million individual conversations between

ROBERT BRENNER/PHOTO EDIT

When we trust our neighbors and friends enough to speak about the mysteries, we learn to distinguish between responsible belief and credulity, between faith and fanaticism. Authentic faith always seeks a dialogue with reason because the knowledge of the heart and the head must be in harmony, or the psyche will remain dis-eased.

people of different faiths and belief-systems. It is also unspoken testimony to the faith that we can figure out the rationale of things together better than we can individually.

Spiritual discrimination like reason itself, grows out of dialogue. Wilhelm Pauck, the Reformation scholar, used to say, "Luther believed that something happened in gab. The word, talk, dialogue are important." It is only by talking about the things that matter most that an individual and a community develop wisdom. When we trust our neighbors and friends enough to speak about the mysteries, we learn to distinguish between responsible belief and credulity, between faith and fanaticism. Authentic faith always seeks a dialogue with reason because the knowledge of the heart and the head must be in harmony, or the psyche will remain dis-eased.

SUBMIT YOUR BELIEFS TO
THE TEST OF MORAL ACTION
AND THE REQUIREMENT OF
COMPASSION

The protagonist of Norman Rush's novel, "Mating," suggests two interesting ways we can check our belief-systems. He says, "I am not an enemy of any system per se. I collect systems. I am an agnostic

about systems, but I love them. What I say is we should ask the same questions of any system we consider. What are its fruits?... How much compulsion is required to keep it working?"

Once the formal requirements of reason have been satisfied, the ultimate test of a religion or spirituality is the kind of life it produces. "By their fruits you shall know them." William James said that it is easy to produce religious experiences but hard to produce religious lives. The mark of an authentic faith is whether it inspires an ongoing effort toward the moral transformation of the self and a habit of care-full social action. An authentic spiritual quest should lead to joy and compassion. As the hymn says, "Take from our lives the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess, the beauty of Thy peace."

The test of "how much compulsion is required to keep it working" is an interesting guideline for belief-systems. Airtight ideologies have a way of turning into tyrannical political systems. As a world view and philosophy of life, Communism satisfied many of the theoretical requirements of reason but it became morally corrupt as a

compulsive output of propaganda, double-think, force of arms; and political repression became necessary to keep it afloat. By contrast, Tibetan Buddhism, as exemplified in the life and teachings of the Dalai Lama, involves a rigorous ordering of every detail of life and constant attention to the quest for enlightenment but it seems to produce a high degree of compassionate action. The more completely a world view and life-map structure time and direct our energies, the greater certainty the system offers. But any system that we must serve in a compulsive manner destroys wonder, imagination, and freedom.

CONSTRUCTING A SPIRITUAL
BULLSHIT DETECTOR

Circumstances led me to go beyond assembling a tool kit for assessing the reasonableness of belief-systems to construct what I like to call my spiritual bullshit detector, a series of caution signs to help guard against over-belief, irrational and destructive world views, and idolatrous commitments.

Think of these signs as similar to the warning label on a cigarette package. Caution: These practices may be hazardous to your spiritual health.

Be careful of charismatic leaders, unquestioned authorities, enlight-

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DEATH IS A MIRROR

DAVID FEINSTEIN AND PEG ELLIOTT MAYO

The knowledge that death is approaching may have the paradoxical effect of mobilizing a person into a more profound sense of being alive. Two years after a near-fatal heart attack, Abraham Maslow, one of this century's greatest psychologists, spoke of the intervening period as "the postmortem life." Reflecting on how these years were a kind of bonus, an extra gift, he noted that "if you're reconciled with death or even if you are pretty well assured that you will have a good death, a dignified one, then every single moment of every single day is transformed because the pervasive undercurrent—the fear of death—is removed."

PAUL HARRIS/ALLSTOCK

The confrontation with death and the reprieve from it makes everything look so precious, so sacred, so beautiful.

In the postmortem life everything gets doubly precious, gets piercingly important. You get stabbed by things, by flowers and by babies and by beautiful things—just the very act of living, of walking and breathing and eating and having friends and chatting. Everything seems to look more beautiful rather than less, and one gets the much-intensified sense of miracles... The confrontation with death and the reprieve from it makes everything look so precious, so sacred, so beautiful that I feel more strongly than ever the impulse to love it, to embrace it, and to let myself be overwhelmed by it.

People who, like Maslow, come into peace with the inevitability of death are apt to find that life becomes sweeter. This paradox holds a comforting twist. Even if they don't reach serenity about death until the last few years of life, as did Maslow, or until the last few days (and clinical evidence bears this out), as they do attain it, they attain in retrospect new meaning for the lives they have lived. But why delay in finding peace about death and the renewed vitality that attends it?

ADVERSITY AND THE REBIRTH OF SPIRIT

Charles Cameron was sixty-seven when his world unraveled.

Within a six-month period, he discovered that he had diabetes, his company required that he retire (a step he'd wanted to postpone for another three years), and his wife of forty-four years died in a plane crash. He became despairing and suicidal.

Never a religious person, Charles had no emotional, intellectual, or spiritual framework into which he could fit his losses. His life had comprised his work but, as he said later, "not much else." Stripped of his occupation as a sales executive for a pump-manufacturing firm, his humdrum but amicable marriage, and what had seemed good health, he saw no reason to live. It was only at the insistence of his grown son that he grudgingly agreed to enter psychotherapy. Charles said he had "abandoned hope and was just going through my paces to satisfy Danny. I really *wanted* to die, but I was also afraid of dying."

Charles's first task in therapy was to grieve his losses—professional identity, a secure and ordered marriage, and what felt like "the best years of my life—they're all behind me." It took him nearly a year of therapy to see beyond his pained confusion and come to a reluctant awareness that with proper care he might well live another twenty years. Initially, this seemed a gloomy prospect. "All I could imagine was a life of insulin shots, waning strength, dutiful dinner

invitations from the kids, and television."

At this time Charles was in a serious automobile accident. Six weeks later, we asked him to describe his experience. He said, "I was on my way back from our mountain cabin—I was getting ready to put the place on the market when it happened. I took a curve a little too fast—thinking about Margie and the good times we'd had up there.

"The next thing, I was airborne, and I saw the world tilt. I don't know how long it was but when I came to, I was hanging upside down by the seat belt, and my head hurt like hell. I was cold and it was getting dark. Everything in the car had shifted around and I couldn't undo the buckle. The headlights were on but I couldn't reach the horn—I was more scared than I've ever been in my life.

"I passed out, probably from all the blood rushing to my head but I didn't pass out completely, if you know what I mean—kind of in and out. Like I knew where I was and that I was probably going to die in this grotesque way but part of me felt sort of separated from it, too. Pretty soon the separated part began to turn away, to disconnect. Then I began to look around. It was a beautiful place—deep woods, river in the canyon, and a full moon coming over the ridge. And I noticed it was sort of misty foggy and I was just drifting over the for-

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est floor. I didn't seem to have any substance and the wind was moving me.

"Then came the moment I realized—but deeper than words—that *I am part of it all!* Even though I now believe I had literally died, I knew I didn't want to leave until I made friends with the planet again. I remembered being a kid and reveling in nature and I knew I had to touch that again before I'd be ready to die. And I knew that something was holding it all together—all the pieces. I was irresistibly drawn to finding out more about what that was.

"I came to, still upside down, but I was thinking better. I squirmed around and got the seat belt unfastened. Then I crawled out of the passenger window and up the bank, and the first car along saw me.

"For a week I just basically sat and thought about what had happened. Actually it wasn't *thought*—I sat and absorbed the experience. There never was any doubt about its reality but what did it mean? Sally [his daughter-in-law] was a big help.

"She's interested in all that 'woo-woo' stuff like the *I Ching*, Tarot, and crystals. She told me that she was reading an article in one of her magazines that reminded her of my accident. It talked about a Tarot card called 'the Hanged Man,' and she read a passage to me:

The card represents surrender to death and resurrection as the soul leaves the body and then returns. Personality is torn away and a higher power takes over. In the card, a man is pictured hanging upside down, attached to the tree by a snake, a symbol of wisdom.

Energy rushes to the head, stimulating greater awareness. In his limited and precarious position, his only task is that of fighting for his life. While he struggles, all of his old realities drop away. He moves into a state of non-ordinary reality where anything is possible, where freedom and enlightenment reside. The boundaries between life and death blur and, if the initiation is successful, the initiate realizes that death is part of life. He then realizes the importance of living life fully and with passion.

"Blew my mind! These words described exactly my experience hanging there in that car, and they gave form to my deepest inklings about the meaning of the experience. In the following weeks, it was as if the walls fell outward and I could explore ideas and feelings in a new way. A sense of peace came over me that I could not remember having had since I was a boy hiking in the Sierra Nevada. But I also had a sense of urgency. I wanted to drink up the richness of life I saw all around me. I started hiking again, and on every hike I've seen stunning sights I will never forget. I've also been taking much pleasure in reading John Muir's nature journals. The greatest joy comes from my children and particularly I must admit my grandchildren. I was always proud of them but I never slowed down enough to really let myself know them. Now I can enter their world and it is the most extraordinary privilege I've ever had. I can speak with them in their own language and begin to teach them some of the lessons I've garnered in my own life. I hope I will be around

long enough to see them into their own marriages and children but even if I'm not, I think I'm planting the best guidance I have right into their foundations."

Coming to the brink of our mortality is usually terrifying. On the one hand, we tend to push away such dreadful proof of our vulnerability as quickly as possible. We cannot after all live effectively if we are endlessly focused on the precariousness of life. On the other hand, if we face the underlying anxiety and at the same time learn to accept our mortality, as did Charles Cameron, we invite a rebirth of spirit.

Somewhere in the process, the instinctual terror of death is likely to explode within us. To move through it successfully is to conquer a large measure of the nameless anxiety that we, individually and as a culture, exert so much effort to keep out of our minds. When we have effectively squared off and faced that anxiety, we reclaim our misplaced energy. Less encumbered by nameless fears, we engage life with new vitality. This transformation is however a formidable challenge and our culture provides few rites of passage to help us through it.

PERSONAL RITUALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE

"Illness," observed Marcel Proust, "is the most heeded of doctors—to goodness and wisdom we only make promises; we obey pain." And fear. The inner strength and renewed vigor that proved to be the fruits of Charles Cameron's life crisis were harvested within a field of emotional pain. Pain and the fear of pain are certainly among nature's primary markers for guiding behavior and directing growth. Pain is an

emphatic critic and teacher, but it is not the only teacher along the way.

Rituals and rites of passage are social inventions that once guided the human spirit on its journey through the world. The culture's wisdom was etched into the mind and body of every person participating in its rituals. Today, the lack of unity and coherence in the culture's mythic guidance allows and in fact forces people to think and act for themselves in ways that were unimaginable in the past. Major shifts in the culture's mythology regarding issues as vital as what it means to be a man, a woman, a parent, a good citizen, a success—are being hammered out on the anvil of individual lives. Even what it means to die, once insistently established by religious canon, is left for each individual to puzzle through. We encounter these challenges without, for the most part, the benefit of sturdy tradition, inspiring myth, or vital ritual. Meanwhile we are collectively starving for wise guidance attuned to the unique needs of the day—able to support the emphatic individuality that so strongly characterizes the modern psyche while promoting greater community and connection with the cosmos. Dare we, unschooled and tentative, take on the task of reanimating myth and ritual as integral parts of our own lives?

The following three cases demonstrate the use of psychologically sophisticated rituals. These cases focus on creatively meeting the anguish of bereavement. One of the most important ways we can prepare to accept our own mortality is in the manner by which we come to terms with the

Coming to the brink of our mortality is usually terrifying. On the one hand, we tend to push away such dreadful proof of our vulnerability as quickly as possible. We cannot after all live effectively if we are endlessly focused on the precariousness of life.

deaths of those we love. The rituals illustrated in the following vignettes help the bereaved work through their grief, appreciate the love shared and the gifts gained from the one they have lost, and in the face of death, reflect upon what truly matters in life.

CONTEMPORARY RITUALS FOR FACING LOSS

Imagine the distress as Christmas approaches shortly after the drowning of a family's infant son in their backyard swimming pool. The prospect of having to bear, amidst the surrounding revels of a festive holiday season, the

unspeakable grief of having lost their freshest and dearest was anticipated with dread.

Faced with this dilemma, the Cortneys saw their choices as being either to take their three remaining children on a trip in an attempt to "skip" the holiday season altogether or to go ahead with their typical preparations and hope to somehow make it through a "business as usual" holiday. The therapist who was helping the family work through their bereavement, however, encouraged them to consider a third alternative, one that recognized that they were in a process of mourning, that mourning involves specific stages and tasks that may be embraced, and that they could use the holiday season to help themselves move onward in their grief process. They chose to make the holiday a very special "memorial Christmas" for Bobby. Although not an entirely joyous time, it was not entirely somber or at all hopeless. It was alive with authentic feelings, a deepening of bonds, and an honoring of a beloved bright child. The holiday turned out to be the essence of nondenial, a conscious, distinct commitment to healing.

The Cortneys identified three aspects of Christmas that focused the family's attention and could be used in honoring the memory of their son: gift giving, caroling, and decorating the tree. Throughout these activities, Bobby's picture was prominently displayed.

As the family exchanged gifts, each member, having had time in advance to think about what they would say, spoke of the gift Bobby had been in their lives. The impact of sharing gifts with one another was immeasurably deepened in an

atmosphere that poignantly celebrated the preciousness of loved ones. Another family tradition for the Cortneys was to sing Christmas carols. That year they interspersed Bobby's favorite songs, "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" and "Muffin Man," with the traditional carols. To their surprise, they found that laughter broke through their tears, for some the first light heartedness since Bobby's death. Finally around the tree, they recalled fondly Bobby's first and only Christmas, when he intently observed the family members busily putting up the decorations and then proceeded to hang his own bent-handle spoon on a low branch. For every Christmas from then on, placing Bobby's spoon on the tree was an important part of the celebration.

As you saw with the Cortneys, the social potency of an established holiday can be an element that is worked into family rituals. For Brad and Myra East, dread of the coming Thanksgiving clouded their anticipations. Since their four children had grown and moved away, Thanksgiving was the holiday around which they all gathered in celebration. However, Myra's brother Charlie, the family's favorite uncle, had died the previous June after a bout with lung cancer brought on by thirty-five years of smoking. Aunt Dee, widowed, depressed, and disoriented, was hard to be around and, from the time she'd married into the family, had never been anyone's favorite relative anyway.

In late October, Myra, Brad, and the adult children discussed over the phone how they might use the upcoming Thanksgiving gathering to ritualize the loss of Uncle Charlie, whose presence had enlivened decades of Thanksgivings. Plans in place, Dee

was gently informed that the holiday would be dedicated to Charlie's memory. She was asked to bring his favorite winter hat and other significant memorabilia with her. Despite her protests and trepidations, she was finally persuaded.

The theme of the day was "Thanks, God, for Charlie." Everyone spoke of favorite memories around the table. Later with the men crashed in front of the television watching football, Charlie's cap sat on top of the set (where it was placed every successive Thanksgiving), keeping him ever present in spirit and sparking memories of his past enthusiasm.

At the end of the day, the Easts put Dee in the center of a hug circle and gave thanks for her (surprising themselves with their sincerity). Then they went to the backyard ceremoniously to plant a persimmon (Charlie's favorite fruit) tree. Under it they buried the old football he had always brought for them to toss around during half-time of the televised games. The fruit of that tree was ever after served as a Thanksgiving treat.

What might, without conscious choice and inventive ritual, have turned into a polite but forced holiday gathering became a memorable and deeply meaningful celebration of Charlie's life. Engineering such an outcome often requires courage as well as creativity. One of the bleakest holiday circumstances any of us is likely to face is widowhood in late middle age with children scattered and friends immersed in their own unbroken traditions. Loneliness, loss of purpose, and deep sorrow may lead to depression and even suicide.

Marge was sixty-seven when her

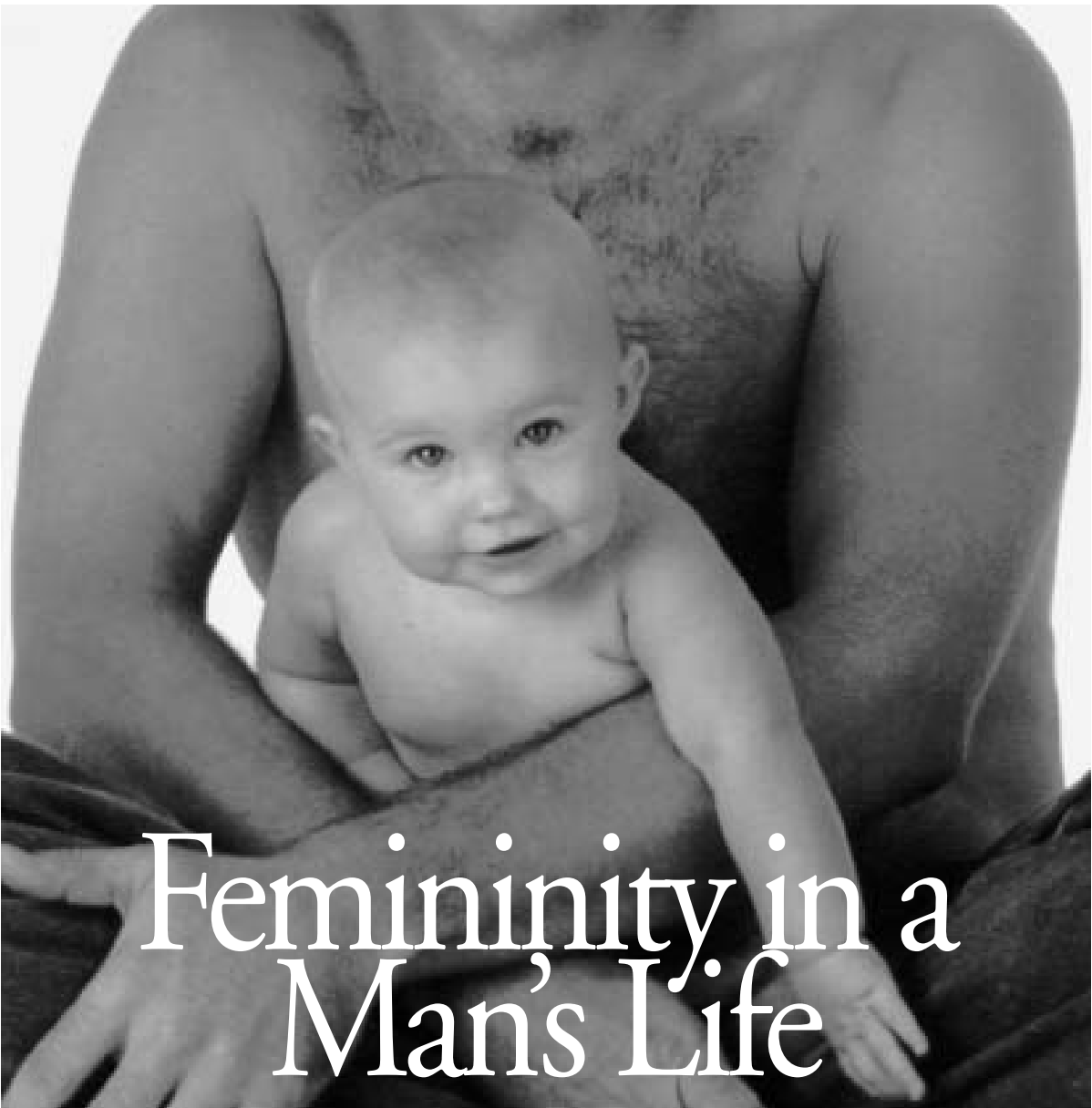
husband died after thirty-eight years of marriage. Their two adult children were helpful in the beginning but soon returned to their active lives across the state. The first Christmas, Marge visited her daughter but felt alien and confused about her role. Worse, she feared she was a depressing, inconvenient element in their festivities, and whether or not this was accurate mattered less than her perception.

Resolved to do the next holiday season differently, Marge rose to the challenge of *re-visioning* her understanding of herself and the holiday season. Her role as the welcoming mother and matron to homecoming family was past. She didn't want to be a "tag-along" in her children's lives, and she began to cultivate a refreshed view of the possibilities.

Marge identified sources of her pleasure around the holidays, including food preparation, decorating, and gift giving. She resolved to keep what delighted her as she rethought the holiday experience.

Marge was a skilled watercolor artist, and she set about making small gifts and planning decorations with inventive themes and color combinations. Instead of the traditional turkey and mincemeat pie meal, she developed an original menu using elaborate Greek recipes.

Then, feeling excited, Marge contacted the local college for names of foreign students stranded in a strange country. She invited eight of them, and the party was a roaring success that became a delightful tradition and a source of important relationships for her throughout the year. By the second Christmas, she had twenty guests, all she could squeeze into her home. 🍷



Femininity in a Man's Life

R O B E R T J O H N S O N

Few men understand how important femininity is in their lives, both inner and outer. Almost all of a man's sense of value, worth, safety, joy, contentment, belongingness, and happiness derives from his inner feminine nature. If God created male and female and gave them equal power (I like to translate the critical word rib as "side" or "half" in the Genesis story of the creation of Eve), the delicate and subtle half that is the province of femininity is as powerful as the masculine province. Men in their arrogance generally think it is their strength, possessions, and dominations that bring them happiness. But it is not so. Happiness is feminine in a man, a feeling quality, and generally mysterious to him.

TOM MCCARTHY/PHOTO EDIT

Robert A. Johnson is a noted lecturer and Jungian analyst and the author of numerous books, including "He," "She," "We," "Ecstasy," "Owning Your Own Shadow," and "The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden." The following is from "Lying With The Heavenly Woman" by Robert Johnson. Copyright 1990 by Robert Johnson. Printed by arrangement with Harper San Francisco, a division of Harper Collins Publishers.



Without good masculinity, a man is weak, ineffective, and useless; but, it is femininity that inspires his strength, meaning, and value. He is likely to look both inward and outward for this elusive quality, and we will find both inner and outer femininity in our search. Inner aspects of femininity in a man are difficult for him to comprehend since we live in a culture not well equipped to examine such things; the outer aspects—his mother, wife, sister, daughter—are easier to identify.

Our Western patriarchal culture has been built on a model that has produced one of the most advanced civilizations ever to exist. Our science, high material standards of living, greatly expanded capacities of travel and communication, the great vista of the twentieth century—all these have been won at the cost of disregard for another faculty, that of *feeling*. There is little room for the feeling function in a society that worships rationality and abstraction as deeply as we do. Coolness and objectivity are absolutely required for the scientific pursuit. The term *abstract* comes from the Greek *ab*,

"to move away from," and *strabere*, "to stand." We must stand at least a little apart from any subject to make an abstract relationship to it. And that standing apart instantly wounds the feeling function. Put more simply, one cannot accomplish disciplined tasks if one listens to the feeling function. The cool world of abstraction has no place for the warm world of feeling. Almost every woman suffers this lack of feeling from her man—both inner and outer—and is mostly inarticulate in her complaint of the one-sidedness of modern life. Men become feeling-barren when they school themselves in the modern arts of abstraction and rationality.

Sanskrit, that feeling-rich language that is the basis of most East Indian tongues, has ninety-six terms for love. Ancient Persian has eighty. Greek has three. And we have only one. The Eskimo language has thirty words for snow since snow is such a vital, element in their lives. If we had thirty words for relationship, we would be better equipped to observe that important dimension of our lives.

Certainly this is prime evidence that feeling and relationship are the inferior functions in our society. Lack of language for any subject means lack of interest in that area. We build wonderful Boeing 747s and atomic generators but we build very poor marriages and relationships. We stand in severe danger that our Brave New World of mechanical marvels may be overturned by the poor quality of the feeling function that has accompanied it.

One can tell at a glance from the feminine figures in a man's dreams what relationship he has to

happiness and a sense of well-being in his life. If the women in his dreams are happy and relate well to him, he will be happy. If they are ill or weak or angry, he will have little or no sense of wellbeing. I know of no other single element that has so much to do with a man's happiness.

Dr. Jung once analyzed for his students a series of dreams of a very gifted man. One dream was that a woman came into the room, put her hands to her head, moaned, and left. "Now he will catch it!" observed Dr. Jung. If a man's inner woman disapproves and walks out on him, things will go badly in his feeling life and his sense of worth. In the Mahabharata, the great Hindu epic poem, there is a terrible moment when the king has sighted the Shakti (an embodiment of the feminine principle of the universe); her reply is to close the seven portals of her body, compress her breath, and shoot out of the top of her head, returning to the formless universe from which she came. All the male elements of the whole kingdom are bereft at the loss of the feminine principle and are in a state of mourning. Sad is the man whose Shakti has left him because he has offended her.

It also follows that good contact with the interior woman will make it much easier to be on good terms with the exterior women of one's life. Finally we must admit that we are talking about femininity in its profound aspect, which cannot be divided into interior and exterior aspects. But until we earn the right to this unity, we had best make careful differentiation of the inner and outer. Goethe, in

his masterpiece *Faust*, ends the great drama with the words "The Eternal Feminine leads us on." This is the view of a mature man who had earned the right to a unified view of femininity. This maturity cost Goethe a lifetime of highly conscious inner work. *Faust* is the best guide we have in Western literature for this work. This account of a great soul journey can best be read as Goethe's autobiography; in it he outlines the steps he followed to come to terms with the actual women in his story and with his interior feminine nature. This is modern man laid out in contemporary language for our guidance. We may be grateful for Goethe's instruction in this art.

It is immediately obvious that femininity is the color and delight and animation of a man's life. Without femininity a man is poverty-stricken and without life. She is life. Though there are many, many forms of relating to that life-giving principle, they all have their basis in femininity.

A Persian myth tells this story in a touching manner. In the beginning God made a beam of light that went streaking through space in its free, unencumbered way. It was perfect mobility and delight. God also made a clod of earth and set it immobile in space where it was in perfect joy at its changeless feminine way. This went on for many eons before the inevitable happened. The beam of light ran into the clod of earth and became embedded in it. The beam of light cried out in dismay at its imprisonment and the clod of earth gasped in terror at the quickening that had occurred in its serene life. But both were irrevocably committed to this new life.

The offspring of this union was the melon, which embodied both the material element of life and the ethereal beam of light that transfused it. All of creation, say

I don't know of any element that cries for differentiation more than our attitudes toward femininity. If a man managed his office as indiscriminately as he generally manages his interior life, he would be bankrupt in a month.

the Persians, came from this melon.

This story is telling us that without the feminine, a man is an impotent beam of light streaking his ethereal way through the heavens but without any creativity.

Many words are revered in our language such as *salvation* and *redemption*—and I wish to add a new one that is equally necessary for modern man. That is *differentiation*, the art of clarity, of unmuddling. If one had the various con-

tents of the kitchen salt, pepper, sugar, vinegar, spices, and so on—all mixed together in one indiscriminate mess, he could not proceed with any cooking. If a workman had all his tools dumped into one sack with the sharp ones and the dull ones and the wet ones and the dry ones indiscriminately mixed, he could not work properly. Psychologically speaking, lack of differentiation and clarity brings similar problems in a man's feminine life. I don't know of any element that cries for differentiation more than our attitudes toward femininity. If a man managed his office as indiscriminately as he generally manages his interior life, he would be bankrupt in a month. It is not surprising that our culture is largely bankrupt in relatedness for this very reason.

The feminine world is notoriously difficult to differentiate, for it is diffuse by nature and resists form and order. It is the duty of femininity to blur the edges of masculine form and bring softness and relativity. This is warmth and delight—but only if contained and kept safe within sufficient masculine form and order.

If a man muddles his mother complex with his wife, the household will be in chaos. If he muddles his concept of anima and daughter, he will wound the daughter very deeply. If he cannot tell the difference between wife and daughter, another tragedy is in the making. Each of these aspects of femininity is a healthy and holy quality in its own right; but mixed, they make a lethal brew. Many men have only one vague muddled attitude toward femininity. Nothing but trouble can issue from such an unholy mix.

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RICHARD HUTCHINGS/PHOTO EDIT

Mad, Sad, Scared, & Glad

E L A I N E C H I L D S - G O W E L L

Feelings are so very important, yet there are many of us who won't feel our feelings. If when you are in the process of doing the lists of feelings (i.e., Mads / Sads / Scares / Glads), the letters, and the affirmations, and you FEEL a lot of energy in your body, i.e., you "feel" like crying, screaming, shouting, or other action—"Do It!"

Be sure that you are in a safe place so you can act out the energy in your body. Do not do any of this in a public place. Many people would be frightened by the force of your feeling work and would not handle it well. You have at least three options: you can do the work in your own home where you are not heard; you can work with a friend; or you can work with your therapist. It is important that your catharsis be connected to someone empathetic—a person, a pet, or a tree.

It is very important to acknowledge the energy in your body and not to gloss over it. This is one of the crucial points where people go into *denial*. Feelings are very taboo in so many families. Some families allow only one feeling; in others, only certain people are allowed the feeling; and in some families, *no feelings* are okay.

ENERGY TRANSFORMATION

Create a box of any size, material, shape. Use this magic box to put the person, event, feeling in while you are not doing your grief work. The box will transform for you some of the problem you are having with your loss.

SAFE WAYS TO LET OUT FEELINGS

Try one or more of the following exercises in a safe place:

1. Twist a towel or pull one with a friend.
2. Pound a pillow or your mattress with your fists, your pelvis, or a tennis racket.

3. Scream into a pillow or in the woods.

4. Have a temper tantrum on your bed or on a mattress.

5. Go for a long walk or a run, focusing on the feelings in your body movement.

6. Dig a hole in the ground in your backyard or in the woods and pour your feelings out into the ground.

7. Howl, growl, wail, sing sad songs, laugh, cry, yell, scream, or any other kind of noise and movement that will push you to express how you feel about the loss you have suffered. The interesting thing about these procedures is that feelings expressed from the core, clear your mind for *thinking* about the basic issues involved in your grief

8. Laugh uproariously, raucously, and with abandon at least once a day. Laughter does not need a reason. Just do it.

9. Dance or paint or draw your

feelings so that they move you and you move them.

10. Stop suffering about how you have been wronged. The suffering behavior is one of the ways people avoid working through their feelings and doing the necessary feeling work to relieve their tissues of the discomfort. Sometimes it is hard to differentiate *real feelings* from *racket feelings*.

11. Meditate; take time out to go inside.

12. Be any animal that appeals to you. Act out that animal's way of expressing mad/sad/scared/glad; i.e., hiss like a raccoon or cat. Growl like a dog. 🐾

Elaine Childs-Gowell, Ph.D., has been teaching, counseling, and doing psychotherapy for more than 20 years. She is currently in private practice as a Shaman healer and clinical transactional analyst in Seattle. Copyright 1992 by Elaine Childs-Gowell. From the book "Good Grief Rituals" by Elaine Childs-Gowell. Printed with permission from the publisher, Station Hill Press, Barrytown, New York.



When She Makes M

**I really love him and I know he loves me,
but it's so hard sometimes... We go out
with friends and I see all these women
with successful husbands and I can't
help it... I just sit there and stew
in my own envy.**

—M.M., age 33

**We fight about the bills all the time—he
doesn't pay his share. I know he would if
he could, he just can't. But we fight
anyway. It scares the hell out of me...
I'm afraid it's going to tear us apart.**

—R.O., age 26

**Every time my mother asks
how he's doing, I can see the
disappointment in her face.**

—W.F., age 42

More than He Does

S U S A N F O R W A R D

In the traditional marriage relationship, the man was expected to bring home the money. It wasn't so long ago that a woman rarely joined the work force by choice, but almost always by tragic necessity. If a man's wife worked, tongues would wag, "Isn't it a shame? The poor fellow can't support his family—the wife has to work."

And if a woman chose to work when she didn't have to, she could only maintain her social standing by treating her job as a hobby and her income as a disposable frill.

But in the last several decades, as two-income families have become common and women have made great strides in the workplace, our cultural attitudes about women and money have undergone some dramatic shifts—at least on the surface. Women are actively pursuing careers, sharing responsibilities for family income, and slowly but surely catching up to (and in some cases surpassing) men as family wage-earners.

Today in fact, there are hundreds of thousands of American women who earn significantly more money than their partners. Yet the impact of this financial imbalance

on relationships has gone largely unexplored.

While our society has slowly come to accept women's increasing independence, the flip side of this acceptance has been slower to develop. We have yet to come to terms with how a woman's financial achievements reflect on a less successful partner. If a woman makes more than her partner, people wonder: Is he after her money? Is she really that desperate? He must be good in bed.

If the situation is reversed and the man makes more than the woman, no one thinks twice about it. Those men who take primary financial responsibility for their families are fulfilling a traditional role that can be a great source of pride. There is very little of that same gratification for women. They are not fulfilling a time-hon-

ored role. And when they earn the greater part of the family income, they often experience very little of the social approval that cushions the burden for men.

Even in relatively healthy relationships, a disparity in income can create enormous and surprisingly complex tensions and conflicts.

WHAT WILL PEOPLE THINK?

Nancy felt like a million dollars as she and Bob walked into the ballroom. Her sexy new Valentino gown made her look ten years younger and Bob could have stepped out of the pages of GQ in the Armani tux she'd bought him that morning.

Bob hitched his shoulders uncomfortably. It wasn't so much the fit of the tux as the idea that irked him. It was such a waste of money. He could have just rented. But Nancy had insisted, "It's my money to waste, so don't give me an argument." So he hadn't. Instead, he'd just backed down, feeling like a powerless child.

With mixed feelings, he thought back on their last class reunion, the twentieth, where he'd run into Nancy for the first time since college. They'd originally met in their sophomore year and had been immediately attracted to one another. But they'd both been involved with other people at the time.

Two decades later, when he'd remet her at the reunion, they were both

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divorced and unattached. It had taken just one dance to rekindle the old fame.

Now, five years after that, they were going to another reunion as husband and wife. As Bob straightened his jacket, he wondered whether their marriage would last.

Nancy's freshman roommate Gloria was the first to see them. She rushed over and threw her arms around both of them at once.

"Don't you two ever age? You look great!" she said. "Can you believe it's been five years? What are you up to?"

Bob felt his stomach contract as if anticipating a blow.

"Still practicing law," Nancy replied. "Malpractice litigation, mostly."

"Raking it in no doubt," Gloria laughed. "What about you, Bob?"

Nancy felt a wave of panic that propelled her to cut Bob off before he could answer. It was an automatic reaction, a reflex. "He's in management... health clubs. Isn't that great?"

Bob felt the hair bristle on the back of his neck but he said nothing. Gloria smiled and went on to tell them about herself.

On the way home, Bob drove in silence. Nancy knew what was bothering him but she played dumb. "Is something wrong?"

"You did it again."

"What?"

"Why are you so ashamed of what I do?"

"I'm not ashamed of—"

"I'm not in management," he interrupted, "and I don't work at a goddamned health club! I coach kids at the YMCA, all right? Get used to it. I know it's not glamorous, but I happen to like it."

"You're making a big thing out of nothing."

"You just can't get over the fact that

I only bring home twenty-four grand a year, can you?"

"That's ridiculous. You know that doesn't matter to me."

"If it didn't matter, you wouldn't have bought me this goddamned monkey suit."

"Can we not start in on the tux again, please?"

"It's a waste of money."

"It's my money, all right?"

"No! It's not all right! And I'd appreciate it if you'd stop rubbing it in!"

Nancy and Bob's fight was part of an ongoing pattern that had begun when they first decided to live together three years earlier. Bob had moved into Nancy's house at the time, and though they had decided to share their daily living expenses equally, they agreed that she would continue to pay the mortgage by herself. He simply did not make enough to share that expense and besides (she reasoned), it was her house.

Bob was apprehensive about how he would fit into Nancy's life because she was accustomed to spending much more money on entertainment and social events than his income allowed. But at first this was not an issue—in the bloom of new love, they preferred to spend most of their evenings alone at home anyway.

Nancy had assured Bob that his income was not a problem for her. They had had long discussions about their financial disparities and by coming to an amicable solution

about sharing expenses, they believed that they had dealt with the problem.

But the incident at the reunion was just one of many that revealed that Nancy was much less comfortable with the imbalance in their relative earning power than she claimed to be.

GIVING HIM DOUBLE MESSAGES

Nancy was an interesting client because she was relatively symptom free when she first came in to see me. She wasn't depressed; she wasn't a substance abuser; she wasn't experiencing any anxiety; and there had been no major traumas in her life.

But she was insightful enough to realize that she needed to resolve



DAVID YOUNG-WOLFF/PHOTO EDIT



her ambivalence about the disparity between her income and Bob's.

On the one hand, Nancy was reassuring Bob that she didn't care about how much money he made. But on the other, her obvious discomfort with his employment situation was telling him just the opposite.

Ambivalence is almost impossible to hide from your partner, no matter how loving and reassuring you try to be. And despite your best intentions, ambivalence has a natural tendency to express itself in confusing ways.

NANCY

I don't understand why I keep doing this. I do it to him all the time, not just at parties but when we're alone. Things just

slip out. I say these things about how I wish he made more money or cared about it more. What is it inside me that makes me keep hurting him like this? Why can't I just keep my big mouth shut?

I told Nancy that I didn't think learning to keep her mouth shut was the ideal solution. Although that might prevent her from hurting Bob's feelings, it would also clamp a tighter lid on her own feelings which were clearly trying to get out. This would be a temporary solution at best. Ultimately, her unconscious would find some way to act out her

ambivalent feelings.

Nancy's double messages revealed a conflict between what she thought she believed (that she really didn't care how much money Bob made) and what she felt in the pit of her stomach (that she wished he were more successful). And unfortunately when she acted out this internal conflict, it hurt and angered Bob, threatening what was basically an otherwise solid and satisfying relationship.

DEFINING YOUR WORTH BY HIS INCOME

When your partner makes less than you do, you are in a relationship that does not conform to social norms. And no matter how well-matched you and your partner may be, when the discrepancy in your

incomes is apparent to others, they may very well disapprove—whether openly, secretly, or unconsciously—of your match.

We internalize the judgments of others, rightly or wrongly. We soak up biases and opinions about how the financial balance in a relationship “ought” to be through our schooling, our religious training, our friends, our relatives, our co-workers, our role models, and the media we're exposed to.

Our society still tends to judge a man by his professional and financial success. No matter how much Nancy loved Bob, it was hard for her to ignore that part of herself that was molded by her culture. She assumed that others would share her hidden beliefs and think less of Bob if they knew how little he earned, so she tried to make Bob's job sound more important than it was.

NANCY

He's okay with what he does—why can't I be? I feel so damned guilty that I can't just accept him for who he is. I walk into a party and see some woman with a doctor or a lawyer and I can't get it out of my mind. I just can't. I mean, I love him I really do. He makes me laugh, he makes me feel loved, he makes my house feel like a home—what is my problem? I know it's not important how much money he makes. He's doing something meaningful, he's working with kids. And he gets a lot of fulfillment out of it. So why is it so embarrassing to me?

Nancy's confusion was understandable—embarrassment is a confusing emotion. She thought she was embarrassed for Bob, but in

fact, she *couldn't* have been. Embarrassment, by definition, is “a state of self-conscious distress”—with the emphasis on *self*. Nancy was embarrassed for herself.

We often feel *bad* for someone else or we feel *pity* because we empathize with someone *else's* embarrassment. But when *we* feel embarrassed, it is because of what we fear other people are thinking about *us*.

Despite the fact that Nancy was a successful professional, despite the fact that Bob was a loving man committed to his work for reasons that many would consider more important than money, Nancy still felt diminished by Bob's job. No matter how much she tried to convince herself to the contrary, she could not shake the buried belief that Bob's lack of financial drive was a measure of *her* inability to attract a successful man.

Sadly, in our culture women are still often judged, at least in part, by how good a “catch” they make. It's not a very enlightened way to look at relationships but it's still a fact of life for all too many women.

The opinions of others about untraditional relationships are often mirrored by our own deep-seated fears and conflicting beliefs about ourselves and our partner.

THE BATTLE OF THE BELIEFS

If you and your partner love each other but the disparity in your incomes keeps getting in the way, it's likely that your discomfort is arising from beliefs that you may not even be aware of.

We all have two kinds of beliefs. I call the first kind overt—beliefs we easily espouse, are readily aware of, and generally identify with. Overt belief are the ones we think

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we ought to live by, beliefs we think are “right.”

The other type, covert beliefs, are trickier. Covert beliefs are at least partially hidden and often contradict our overt beliefs. Covert beliefs are somehow shameful to admit, not only to others but to ourselves.

Nancy's ongoing ambivalence about Bob's financial situation indicated that her overt and covert beliefs were at odds. This conflict was damaging her relationship, but there was no way she could stop her beliefs from clashing if she didn't even know what her covert beliefs were. But before she could resolve her inner conflict, she had to identify the combatants.

DISARMING YOUR BELIEFS

To help Nancy get a line of her covert beliefs, I introduced an exercise called Disarming Your Beliefs. The premise was simple. I asked her first to write down some of the things she believed about relationships in which women make more money than their partners. These were overt beliefs—beliefs she was aware of, beliefs she had been expressing to Bob to reassure him (and herself) about her feelings for him.

Once her list was complete, I asked her to take it home and try to come up with a covert belief to contradict each overt belief. Even if the covert beliefs didn't necessarily seem true for her, they would still give her some jumping-off points to explore her inner conflicts.

The following week, Nancy brought in her assignment.

Overt belief: It doesn't matter how much a man makes as long as he contributes what he can.

Covert belief: Bob should contribute as much as I do.

Overt belief: A man should be judged by who he is, not by how much he makes.

Covert belief: There's something wrong with Bob because he isn't successful.

Overt belief: I don't care what other people think. I only care about how my partner and I feel about each other.

Covert belief: Bob's inadequate, and everybody knows it.

Overt belief: It doesn't bother me that my partner is less successful than I am.

Covert belief: Men are sup-

posed to make enough to take care of their wives.

Not surprisingly, Nancy felt uneasy about the covert beliefs she'd come up with because they were so demeaning to Bob. They seemed to contradict both her feelings for him and her values. I assured her that she had nothing to be ashamed of. We all find ourselves torn at times between our thoughts, feelings, or desires and the values with which we were raised.

Like so many covert beliefs, Nancy's were generally traditional, often judgmental, and sometimes based on stereotypes rather than facts. Her overt beliefs were more contemporary, reflecting some of the newer, more enlightened, empathetic social trends in our society. But old programming dies hard. Nancy's covert belief were deeply engrained by our culture, our society, and many of the relationships that served as role models when she was younger.

She was raised in a family where her father—a well-known psychiatrist—was the sole provider. Her mother was active in charity work and volunteer politics. Most of her parents' friends had traditional marriages, and those women who worked seemed to do so by choice, not necessity. Though Nancy grew up being encouraged to be independent, to go to college and later to law school, she still developed deep-rooted beliefs based on the relationship patterns she saw in most of the couples she knew as a child. Her expectation was that her partner should be able to support her, whether she needed it or not. This covert belief was contaminating her feelings for Bob.

I explained to Nancy that by bringing her covert beliefs into the

The opinions of others about untraditional relationships are often mirrored by our own deep-seated fears and conflicting beliefs about ourselves and our partner.

open, she could begin to disempower them. Awareness is a powerful weapon against the kinds of belief-driven demons that were pushing her to do things like embellishing Bob's job in public or making unintentionally hurtful remarks to him in private.

Whenever she felt embarrassed, she needed to remind herself that her embarrassment was coming from old beliefs that were damaging her relationship. In this way, her new awareness might short-circuit her impulse to act in self-defeating ways. I suggested that the next time she felt the urge to act as Bob's public relations representative in a social situation, she take a deep breath and say something to herself like:

I'm only embarrassed because these old beliefs are trying to undermine my love and my con-

fidence in Bob. The truth is, he's responsible, he's loving, and he's strong. I've got nothing to be embarrassed about.

Nancy was accomplishing two things by repeating this affirmation to herself. First, she was preventing herself from answering for Bob. By the time she'd finished saying her affirmation, Bob would already be answering for himself. And second, she was beginning to chip away at her discomfort by focusing on Bob's good qualities instead of allowing her embarrassment to control her.

This affirmation may seem simple but it was an important starting point for Nancy. The beliefs that she had grown up with were her money demons, and by making them conscious and then consciously denouncing them, she could begin to make real changes in her attitude toward Bob.

Nancy began to go down to the Y once a week to watch Bob work and this gave her a renewed appreciation for the social value of his work. It was obvious to her that the kids respected him and she was impressed with his ability to motivate them to do their best. As her own opinion changed, so did her concern about the attitudes of others.

As Nancy made these changes, Bob grew increasingly secure about her opinion of him. This in turn allowed him to accept gifts from her—like the tuxedo or the occasional expensive meal—without feeling that she was making a statement about his adequacy. As she became increasingly comfortable with his work, they both became less defensive about money issues and they found themselves fighting much less often. 🍀

J E A N N E A C H T E R B E R G , B A R B A R A D O S S E Y ,
& L E S L I E K O L K M E I E R



HEALING RITUALS

Whenever human beings are faced with challenges alone or come together in groups or in societies, they develop rituals. Rituals give significance to life's passages. They provide form and guidance to our lives, prescribing behaviors during the perilous times when bodies, minds, and spirits are broken. Without rituals, we would have no map for actions, no occasions for people to share their common bonds and experiences.

Jeanne Achterberg, Ph.D., psychologist and mind-body researcher, is also author of "Imagery in Healing" and "Woman as Healer." Nurses and health practitioners, (Mrs. Larry) Barbara Dossey, RN., MS., and Leslie Kolkmeier, RN., B.S., are co-authors of "Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice." The following is from "Rituals of Healing" by Jeanne Achterberg, Barbara Dossey, and Leslie Kolkmeier. Copyright 1994. Printed by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. All rights reserved.



It is often said that modern, industrialized countries such as the United States are devoid of rituals. On the contrary, we have abundant rituals for life's passages and health problems. Ministers preside at weddings and baptisms, schools conduct rituals of graduation into adulthood, funeral directors provide rites of mourning, and physicians attend virtually all of life's passages, including birth, pregnancy, menopause, and death.

The problem is not that we lack rituals but that these modern healing rituals often fail to honor deep human feelings, our need for sacred connection, and the ultimate power of the conscious mind. Today's rituals have been colored by technology, financial gain, and the dogma of authoritarian institutions, so that the rituals feel less sacrosanct to us than they did to our ancestors.

HEALING RITUAL: A BODY MIND SPIRIT CONCEPT

A healing ritual is any ritual whose purpose is to make whole—the root word of healing is *hale* or "to make whole." Healing may or may not apply to what is common-

RITUALS ARE:

Entering into a sacred space of mind.

Honoring the core of our own humanity.

Recognition of the power of the invisible forces that heal and connect and transcend.

Visible expressions of community bonding and support through biological and psychological passages of life.

Rites of separation from old ways of being and thinking and behaving, then integrating into new modes of living.

Communication and celebration, solemnity, and occasions for deep inner silence.

The ways all societies give meaning, richness, and structure to life.

Healing ceremonies.

ly labeled physical health. In many traditional cultures a person may be considered "healed" who has died peacefully or with unusual mental and spiritual insights. It is also believed that the purpose of healing is not just to return a body or mind back to what society considers normal. Rather, the goal is to become better, more enlightened, or stronger than before the problem existed, much as a broken bone, when mended, gains added strength.

WHY DO RITUALS WORK AS A HEALING FORCE?

The primary reason that ritual serves as a healing force is that many rituals have been developed over decades or centuries, through trial and error, until they have been seen to be successful. A contempo-

rary example of an effective ritual is the twelve-step program developed by Alcoholics Anonymous that is now used for many disorders, including overeating, gambling, and staying in bad relationships (or codependency). The twelve-step program is a highly structured ritual, with rules for meetings and prescriptions for behavior, with the added benefit of a supportive community. For many, following the steps leads to health, even after all their other efforts to heal themselves failed.

When you are frightened or worried, you become your own worst enemy. Planning, preparing for, and carrying out rituals offer meaningful activity and can substitute for non-constructive worrying. The cultural rituals of sending a father-to-be to boil water and the elaborate preparations for making the proverbial chicken soup are examples of anxiety-reducing healing activities. Preparing for surgery and other medical procedures can be concrete, beneficial rituals for a patient that go far beyond allaying worry by keeping busy. On the other hand, keeping busy is not such a bad idea if through it you distract yourself from needless anxiety.

Many scientific studies have proven the detrimental effects of prolonged anxiety or stress on the body's healing mechanisms. Body chemicals that are secreted during stress, such as adrenaline, can inhibit healing. Depression also impedes healing but in different ways. Sleeplessness and neglecting physical needs, such as nutrition and exercise, are associated with being depressed; people just don't take care of themselves when life seems to lose meaning. Depression that accompanies a significant loss,



such as the death of a loved one, significantly diminishes the body's ability to fight disease.

The body is in a better condition to repair itself when anxiety and depression are minimized. The vital signs (heart rate, blood pressure) are stable and the activity of the white blood cells is more effective. Rituals that reduce anxiety and depression therefore have direct benefits on healing.

Some of the most healing of all rituals are built around creative activities. One woman whose husband was slowly deteriorating from Alzheimer's disease enrolled in a quilting class. Each evening after she tucked him into bed, she sat down with her needle, surrounded by patches of beautiful fabrics. Carefully choosing the shapes and colors for each square required her utmost concentration and an

altered way of thinking. The repetitive, tiny stitches cleared her mind and gave her the first real sense of control she'd had all day. She felt her own creative processes—her own life—once again as the materials of her craft formed their pattern.

RITUALS REDUCE FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS

Helplessness is a devastating feeling that hundreds of research studies have shown to have a negative effect on health. Psychologists have studied its effect on humans and animals and have noted increased incidences of gastrointestinal problems and even cancer growth. When people give up or think there is nothing they can do, both the quantity and the quality of their lives suffer. On the other hand, people have been able to transcend the most difficult problems including concentration

camps, abandonment, and catastrophic disease when they have had a belief in their own ability to survive and overcome the situation.

The story of Martha Martin (not her real name), the wife of an Alaskan gold prospector, is a case in point. Sometime during the 1920's, Martha was alone on an island when an early autumn storm caused an avalanche that trapped her—pregnant, unconscious, and badly wounded—at the base of a mountain for several days. Her husband had been trapped elsewhere by the sudden storm. Then she faced alone one of the hardest winters on record, and she even delivered her own baby even though she'd never witnessed a birth, not even a kitten's.

After Martha regained consciousness and struggled back to her cabin, she made a splint for her

MYRLEEN FERGUSON/PHOTO EDIT

broken leg, a cast for her broken arm, put bacon grease on her deep scalp lacerations, and began a diary.

"I can hardly write but I must. For two reasons. First, I am afraid I may never live to tell my story, and second, I must do something to keep my sanity." Writing was only one of Martha's life-sustaining rituals; another was preparing a birth-day present for her unborn child.

"Most of today was devoted to the sea otter; getting the hide off was a real task. It's a lovely skin, the softest, silkiest, thickest fur I have ever seen. I am going to make a robe for my baby out of the beautiful fur. My darling child may be born in a lowly cabin but she shall be wrapped in one of the earth's most costly furs." Softening the skin was a daily task for the next few months. She wrote shortly before the child's birth, "I have been working and working at the otter skin, and I am making progress... A dozen times a day I pick it up, rub a part of it between my hands, brush it, hold it to my face, hold it at arm's length to admire it."

Her daughter, Donnas, was born after two days of labor, with Martha writing constantly between contractions to "order my thoughts, be calm, and not bother my head about all I don't know."

Late that winter, she held a baptismal ceremony, calling the deer who'd grown quite tame to be their witness. "I dipped the tips of my fingers in the water and signed my child with the sign of the cross. Then I threw more bread morsels to our guests, whose attention had begun to wander. 'I am the queen,' I told my baby, 'and you are the little princess. The cabin is our palace.'"

Martha's rituals are a metaphor for hope, linking the long days

HEALING IS:

A lifelong journey into wholeness.

Seeking harmony and balance in one's own life, in family, community, and global relations.

An instant of transcendence—above and beyond the self.

Embracing what is most feared.

Opening what has been closed, softening what has been hardened into obstruction.

Creativity and passion and love.

Seeking and expressing self in its fullness, its light and shadow, its male and female.

Remembering what has been forgotten about connection, and unity, and interdependence among all things living and non living.

Learning to trust life.

together with trust for survival. She and her daughter were rescued by some "good, good Indians," and when she left the island, it was not without regret. Living as a self-sufficient woman so close to nature had become sweetly satisfying.

Hope, which threaded itself through Martha's solitary winter, is the antithesis of helplessness, the antidote for hopelessness. The words "there is nothing more you can do" robs a situation of hope, creates profound helplessness, and can itself be a death sentence. There is *always* something you can do—even if it's writing about your own feelings—that can be life-sustaining and life-enhancing.

Rituals, when they involve repetitive behaviors—like pounding and scraping and bending an otter skin for days on end—clear the mind. In many religions, rituals consist of repetitive chants, songs, or prayers—all of which chase away troubling thoughts and quiet the mind. Most people who practice such rituals also believe that they allow for closer spiritual connections and a greater ability to hear both inner wisdom and the voice of God or a higher power. On a very basic biological level, the relaxed mental state or quiet mind that can occur during ritual is conducive to the body's healing mechanisms.

RITUALS ALLOW FOR DEMONSTRATIONS OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

One of the greatest gifts human beings give to one another is their presence during times of crisis. In Navajo culture, for example, severe sickness is treated by long "sings" when the loved ones gather, often for days at a time. The intricate sand paintings and precise and lengthy chants are a significant offering of time and talent.

A "modern medicine" example of a person who benefited greatly from a "sing" is Carol, a woman in her mid-forties who was diagnosed with acute leukemia. For three months she was desperately ill, hospitalized, and comatose much of the time. Her family conducted a bedside vigil for the entire period she was in the hospital, with at least one of them in her room at all times. Devout Catholics, they prayed, sang, and recited passages from the liturgy and the Bible; they read poetry and stories that Carol loved. When she was strong enough and lucid, she responded with childhood prayers.

Carol recovered from a diagno-

sis where complete remission is relatively rare regardless of medical treatment. How much of her recovery can be attributed to the invisible bonds of love so passionately demonstrated by her family will never be known. Carol herself feels that her family were all members of her healing team and interacted effectively with her own strong will to live, her imagery, her health consciousness, and aggressive medical interventions.

Community and family support such as Carol received has proven to contribute significantly to an impressive array of health factors. Persons who have strong support systems are likely to live longer, have enhanced immune systems, and recover more rapidly from a variety of diseases. In fact, the prestigious journal *Science* published a summary of more than fifty research studies showing these major health benefits.

Rituals conducted as part of family or community life may well be one of the essential factors in health promotion. Many stories of the Holocaust, for example, tell of women who were more able than men to adapt to the difficult conditions of the concentration camps because they bonded quickly into family-like networks, made rituals, and celebrated or honored special days and events.

RITUALS ENCOURAGE SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND COMPASSION FOR ONESELF

Feeling special or worthy or having self-esteem and belief and trust in oneself are integral to a state of health or wholeness. Rituals that focus community effort on the person who is ill are a tangible demonstration of one's self-worth.

An interesting element of illness is that it becomes an opportunity to

receive, and it allows people who might not normally speak or show their affection to do so. How often we hear, "I never really knew my kids cared or worried much about me until I got sick." The ritual of gift-giving is also important in all cultures. Flowers are given to an ill person not just to brighten up a room but as a symbolic offering that says, "I care about you; I am concerned about you; and I hope that you find serenity and well-being."

Some parts of ourselves that are troublesome can become reframed or empowered through ritual. Nancy, a graduate student in psychology, reported on her experiences in a vision quest, a three-day retreat in the California desert involving periods of solitude, fasting, and rituals designed for insight and personal and spiritual growth. She had always suffered from severe menstrual cramps. As the time for the retreat drew closer, it was apparent that her period would probably begin on the first day of the retreat.

The retreat leader talked to her about how special it was to be a woman and of how women long ago celebrated their menses by going into sacred "moon" houses or into their gardens. There they experienced their connection with the earth and honored the great mystery of their monthly flow. Nancy's dreaded period took on the guise of a sacred event. That was four years ago and she has not had cramps since.

Rituals also allow people to reinforce their compassion for themselves. Taking time out of a busy day to participate in a rite of self-healing is an indicator, too, of your belief in your own worthiness. Making the effort states very clearly

ly that "I deserve to stop whatever I am doing for others and move into the deep inner places of my being, in whatever way seems correct, to find rest and clarity and nurturance."

RITUALS MAY DIRECTLY EVOKE A HIGHER POWER OR HEALING SOURCE

Many people believe that the effects of rituals are a result of divine intervention, intercessory prayer, or having tapped into an "energy" source, or the invisible but potent healing power of love. One of the most beautiful rituals using the healing power of community is described by Virginia Hine in *The Last Letter to the Pebble People*, a book about her husband Aldie's death. Hine, an anthropologist, is a respected authority on self-generated rituals. After Aldie was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and before he began radiation, they decided to tap into what they believed was the "power of consensus." "All of us believed in the power of love as we had experienced it to change the direction of a life," she writes. The family sent out a Statement of Hope that included this remark, "We believe that energy forces for healing, beyond present medical knowledge, exist and can be tapped if many people join their thoughts and love together for this purpose."

Friends and family were asked to remember Aldie at five o'clock each day and to send a pebble as a symbol of their commitment to the experiment and as a remembrance of a power beyond self. The first day, about twenty people showed up, each bearing their pebble. They trooped to the back yard where Aldie placed the pebbles in the pool beneath a small fountain. Each day afterward, a group joined the

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Images of Manhood

*Warriors and toilers:
those seemed in my
boyhood vision to be
the chief destinies for
men.*

—Scott Russell Sanders

W A Y N E K R I T S B E R G ,
J O H N L E E & S H E P H E R D B L I S S

When many of us were growing up, gun-toting cowboys and steely-eyed soldiers were the main role models available. Real men were warriors, ready to die for honor. Our only other models of “real men” were those who worked in factories sixty or seventy hours a week, providing for their families at great personal expense. As young men, we may have tried out these “male” lifestyles. Some of us found little honor in warfare and felt hollow and empty after working many hours at a job we didn’t like.

Over time we are learning that being a “real man” is something that happens on the inside. Manliness becomes a feeling of conviction, a self confidence, a deep belief in ourselves that transcends the job we do. It is a state of mind, not an image to be projected to others.

What is most deeply important about being a man is different to each one of us and may not be evident to others at all. Yet we know when we have slipped away from this inner core of masculine strength we begin to sense an imbalance. When we live by our own inner standards, we are at peace with the world and with ourselves.

DEBORAH DAVIS/PHOTO EDIT

Wounds as Gifts

We may imagine our deep hurts not merely as wounds to be healed but as salt mines from which we gain a precious essence and without which the soul cannot live.

—James Hillman

All men are wounded. We are all casualties. Our wounds can become gifts. The wounds happened, perhaps long ago, and there is not much we can do about what actually caused them. However, a lot can be done regarding our response to the wounds and the relationship of the wounds to our present life. Some people ignore their wounds. Others dwell on them. Finding the right balance of attention is key—not allowing the wounds to dominate our lives, either by going underground or by remaining too much in the foreground.

A man ignores his wounds at great peril.

Wounds denied are likely to fester. Untended wounds can infect others—in one's family, at work, or in one's circle of friends. Our tasks as men include the mending of our wounds, transforming them into gifts that can feed the soul.



Rediscovering Passion

Without passion man is a mere latent force and possibility, like the flint which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth its spark.

—Henri Frederic Amiel

As men, we've learned well how to think. We've honed our reasoning to a sharp point. But what about our passion? True, we may carry a passion for our lovers or for increased income. Yet for many of us, any passion beyond these is far away, expertly hidden. We occasionally dream of "following our bliss,"

but our actions suggest that more often we follow our bank books.

Many of us were taught to ignore our dreams and deny our passions, just as we were supposed to deny the feelings of sadness and grief in our bodies. We were taught to ignore the body itself, the house of our passions.

But our passions must not be brushed aside in favor of rational thinking.

Reason is fine, but even a debate is sour if it isn't passionate.

Our passion, not our thoughts alone, gives salt to our lives. Passion makes youth survivable and hopeful, old age fruitful, and death acceptable, honorable, even great.

Father Wound

Much of my life has been built around avoiding the pain from my father. I have carefully constructed my life around it.

—Men's Gathering Participant

Our lives are greatly influenced by our wounds—where they come from and how we deal with them. There are vastly different ways of dealing with wounds—ignoring them, passing them on to others, or tending to and mending them. Wounds and modes of coping with them are passed on within families from generation to generation.

For many men, the deepest wounds were delivered by our own fathers. Perhaps they passively ignored us. Or they may have actively hurt us. Young and old men alike are wrestling with issues around their fathers. Men who have become fathers themselves, and even grandfathers, often have leftover business with their own fathers.

But we don't have to live our lives in reaction to our fathers or the ways they might have wounded us. We can take the time, effort, and risk to confront our father wounds. Even if our fathers have died, it is not too late to take a step in healing a father wound. Doing so can help our relationships with other men, enabling us better to solve problems with them directly.

PELICIA MARTINEZ/PHOTO EDIT

Wayne Kritsberg, is the author of "The Adult Children of Alcoholics Syndrome," "Healing Together," and "The Invisible Wound." John Lee is a speaker, teacher, and author of "The Flying Boy," "At My Father's Wedding," and "Facing the Fire." Also he is the founder of the Austin Men's Center. Shepherd Bliss helped found the mythopoetic men's movement, teaches men's studies, has contributed to more than a dozen books, and directs The Kokopelli Men's Lodge.

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ALAN ODDIE/PHOTO EDIT



LIVING FROM THE HEART

AN INTERVIEW WITH MELODY BEATTIE
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

Melody Beattie is the best-selling author of "Codependent No More," "The Language of Letting Go," and several other books. Her New book "The Lessons of Love" is currently on the New York Times BestSeller list.

"The Lessons of Love" isn't a grief book, although that's part of it, for grieving is inherently and mysteriously connected to loving deeply. It's a book about opening the heart, living from the heart, trusting the heart. It's a learning-to-live-again book. It's a story about love's ultimate and absolute lesson: that love is the only thing in this world that cannot be lost because it's the only thing that's real.

MELODY BEATTIE, RIGHT. WITH SON SHANE LEFT AND DAUGHTER NICOLE CENTER.

At the peak of Melody's success with "Codependent No More," Melody Beattie's life was turned upside down by the death of her twelve-year-old son. Her world shattered, Beattie withdrew into despair. Nothing and no one could move her out of her sorrow. Then gradually, she began to see that we always have a choice between succumbing to despair and embracing life. Slowly she learned that a passion for living can not only be reawakened but can flourish against the greatest of odds. Here was life's ultimate paradox: that while it can be unbearably cruel, it is still filled with beauty and worth living with passion.

LOTUS: *Your new book is a lovely treasure; it is very heart touching.*

MELODY: It is intended to be a magical little book about opening the heart. Most of my writing has been from my male side and is filled with information and ideas. This is a real shift. This book is written by my feminine side for the feminine side of the reader, to touch emotions, passion, creativity—that side of ourselves that is not quite so in control.

What launched your life-changing journey?

By 1990 I felt ready to coast for the rest of my life. I had dealt with my childhood and addiction issues and learned about co-dependency and being a single mom. Although my first forty-two years were hard and challenging, things were looking up. My career was built up and I made enough money to live on. I did work that I loved and had adjusted to being a single parent. The kids and I were doing great

Understanding
love didn't make
the pain go away.
Understanding
love freed
my heart.
It didn't mean
I'd never feel
pain again. An
open heart feels
pain and loss as
well as love and
joy. An open
heart feels all it
needs to feel.

together. I believed that life had turned around, meaning it would come to a standstill. Life was good and we were going to enjoy it. I was forty-two and knew time was quickly passing. Shane was 12 and Nicole was 14. I decided to go for it, to get our dream home. We lived in a very small house and I decided to get a house where Shane could have the swimming pool and pool table he always wanted. It would be a place for us to celebrate our final years together as a family. The move felt right. I found a home and closed the deal one evening. The next day the children went skiing and my son never came home. He fell while skiing, hit his head on a mogul, knocked his brain stem loose, and died. It broke my heart, shattered

our family, and began for me a journey I never, ever intended to take.

You called this a journey into the unknown. What do you mean?

We are either beginning, are in the middle of, or ending a journey. The nineties have been a journey into the unknown. In the eighties, I looked to the future, had a handle on things, and knew the direction I was going. I was pulled off that cliff in 1991. The way of life I learned as a result of my recent journey is a way of life I am going to continue to live. I am more guided by my feminine side, by emotions, intuition, passion, and creativity. I no longer am a single person eking my way through the universe. I live as a vital part of a living universe.

Were there journeys within the journey?

It was a roller coaster ride, an absolute roller coaster ride. Most of my previous writing was about issues of control. This experience was extreme. I was on a roller coaster and I let myself ride not knowing where I was going, being willing to have the experience, to trust it, and look at the scenery.

What helped you tolerate the ride?

I had no choice. I had literally been pushed off the cliff. If you are falling through mid-air, you don't have a choice about that journey. You are on it. There were some things that helped me. I believe that we are never alone. Even if we can't see faces, we are not alone. We have to be quiet to hear that kind of guidance. There were times when I thought I couldn't go on, but life takes us where it is going to take us. Even with my pain, shattered heart, and rage with the universe for what it had done, I felt a burning curios-

ity because I had lived long enough to know that there aren't any accidents. Questions haunted me. Where is this going? What am I supposed to be learning? What is happening to me?

This is not a journey that can be intellectualized. When we attempt to intellectualize the process, we lose it because it is an experience. I am living life now with my process. I focus less on my head and more in my heart. I am willing to experience and to go through things without understanding them. Insights usually come much later on.

You said that life began to be breathed back into you. Please describe that?

I got to a juncture, right before the first anniversary of my son's death, where I knew I had to make a choice. Was I going to commit to life and stay here or was I going to leave? I do not mean suicide. I am talking about a deeper level; simply quitting, giving up, saying I am done. An experience happened and I knew that I had to choose. I consciously made the choice to stick around. About a month after that the universe began dancing with me, bringing me events, and literally pulling me back to life in a whole new way.

What event brought you to this turning point?

I had been going through the motions. I am a strong woman. I was getting out of bed, moving around, and at least getting dressed, but around Christmas I stopped. There was this dark thing around me and I couldn't fight it. I was in bed one night and Nicole came up and said, "Mom, Mike is here to see you." Mike is a friend of mine, my best friend's brother. I went down stairs and started to make that small

kind of chit chat that we do. Mike stopped in midstream and said, "Melody, my God, you are in trouble. You are almost dead." I knew he wasn't talking off the top of his head; he spoke a real message. It was time. Mike's words brought consciousness. There is such a difference between kind of knowing something and actually hearing it. I knew that I had to choose and I was absolutely terrified. It wasn't that I wanted to die. In many ways I felt finished with life on this planet. I wanted to see my son, to reconnect with him. On the other hand, I was torn. My daughter was here and she needed me, but my heart wasn't in my life.

I was doing all of the things that I had been told were helpful to do, but couldn't interrupt or control my journey. When we are shattered open, we can't go to our meetings, read our books, and be all better. I got scared. I was doing everything I knew to do and it still wasn't working. I then decided to do the only other thing that I knew how to do. I went to my computer and wrote a letter to God. I made a commitment to life, an agreement that I would be fully alive as long as I was here, and that this commitment would be unconditional, not depending on the presence or absence of any other human being. I signed and dated it.

After you made a conscious decision to live, the universe began dancing with you. How is the universe different with you?

Once I made the choice to stay here, the universe began bringing me the things I needed to come back to life. It began to show and teach me new things. First, my intuition, my inner voice, said you need to go on a health kick. I got a

juicer. Drinking vegetable juices purified and detoxified me. Dark stuff moved out of my body, lightening me up. An old friend came back in to my life. He helped. He was willing to go to the place where I was, to talk to me and to bring messages to me. I came from a family of origin where love was not felt. I had lived in a lot of pain. When people talked about universal or divine love, I never understood. Part of coming back to life was finding that divine, or universal, love *is* real and *is* there for me. It uses people, ideas, things or objects to bring us the pieces we need. Divine love began appearing in many ways, shapes, and forms to bring me exactly what I needed to move forward.

You said that you listened to your inner voice. What do you mean?

A good part of this journey has been the shift from my head, which I had been comfortable in all of my life, to my heart. When you are in your head, you can do your day planner for the next three months, have all of your appointments, and just follow the instructions. When you are in your heart, you wake up every day and listen to your heart, asking, What do I do now? What is right now? You still have your appointments and responsibilities but live in the world in a different way. I had listened to my inner voice, or heart, before but this is now a way of life. I listen to my inner voice many times daily for guidance. I am living from my heart.

How is life different, living from your heart?

It is a gentler way, a more magical way. There is still pain but even then I stay in the process rather

than approaching pain as just an emotion that I will go through. There is a path for me through each day. I listen to my heart about what would feel good for me, not what is on everyone else's agenda but what I need, what my body needs, and where my soul is. I am talking about living life from the heart and soul, being connected with my soul to let it guide me through life. Listening to my inner voice means operating from the foundation of love and trust that I am a vital part of the living universe. By listening to my heart, I stay on track. When something happens it is an experience to incorporate into spiritual growth. Everything that happens is incorporated.

What were the lessons of love?

I believe that we come to this planet for a two-fold mission. We come here because we need to learn, accomplish our own growth, and because we need to work, to give on a service level. I now believe that one of the reasons I came here was to understand love. The title "Lessons of Love" is based on this revelation. I had a peak moment when I was transformed, when my eyes opened, and I really saw, understood, and received love.

The lessons were many along the way. I learned forgiveness, a principle that had been abused in my life, coming as I did from an alcoholic family who pounded the idea of forgiveness to death. I learned to love myself like nobody else in the world loves me. I learned the magical art of being and letting the doing come from the being, rather than the other way around. Those were my lessons. We are each on our own path. In each of our lives the universe is dancing with us, trying to teach us, to help

us learn what we came here to learn about love. I always thought love had to feel warm, fuzzy, magical and euphoric, and that is not true.

"Why should people bother to love if all they're going to get is a broken heart?" she asked.

"Because," I said, "love is what we do best."

You learned to respect more deeply the seasons and cycles of life. Would you talk about that?

I used to say that after putting all our pieces together, life would stay one way for a long time. I had a very static approach towards life. My vision has changed. I now believe that life is evolving. We are like plants, growing and changing every second. We are evolutionary in nature. An example of a static approach is to say, "I planned out my life at eighteen and this is the way it is going to be." A more natural way is to understand that we go through seasons. These seasons and cycles come from our soul and through our heart and lead us to our destiny. Life is never static.

Belief in seasons and cycles is a long term perspective. Even though your pain was unbearable, curios-

ity about where this was leading sustained you.

Absolutely. Every cycle or season leads to another. Even though they hurt like hell, they faithfully lead us in the direction that we are pursuing. There is something to be learned or gained from all seasons.

During the journey you realized that you needed to change your message.

I did some speaking after my son died. All I could say was, "I am so shattered. My heart is broken. I really have nothing more to say. I haven't figured this out." Then I experienced love and developed a different vision for life. This book is an introduction in story form of what I call the magical way of living. It is a way of connecting and trusting seasons and cycles, of understanding that this is how we operate, of being guided not occasionally but regularly, of living in a way that energizes rather than drains us, and of living with an open heart. We keep our hearts open to everything that comes our way and understand that being connected to ourselves, our emotions, and our responses leads us into the next cycle or season.

What do you say to someone who has just dropped off the cliff as a result of some tragedy?

There are a lot of people with broken hearts. I say to people that while that pain is hard, it can be the beginning of a very rich emotional and spiritual journey if you choose to take it.

Embracing it all?

Embracing the emotions, taking responsibility for ourselves, and being willing to ride on the roller coaster with our hands up in the air. 🌈

Confronted *with* Shadow

From earliest times, humanity has struggled with the problem of evil. The dark mysteries of life—the unity of the cycles of birth and death, light and darkness, day and night—have been externalized in our experience. No longer are they mysteries; they have become polarities, turned into “good” and “bad.” Religions have helped us to struggle with these oppositions, adding a moral effort and a spiritual dimension to our understanding, all the while reinforcing the dualistic perception of our world. Worldwide, the artists, storytellers, priests, priestesses, and healers have always reflected these great themes back to us, challenging us to bring our struggle with the unknown into awareness, to acknowledge and confront the forces in life that give us the most trouble.

Jeremiah Abrams has worked for the past 24 years as a Jungian therapist, dream analyst, writer, counselor, teacher, and consultant. He is author of "Meeting the Shadow" and "Reclaiming the Inner Child."



Today, we are confronted with the problem of evil in our shrinking global community. We see cruelty and greed blindly played out on a daily basis by governments, community leaders, corporations, and individuals alike. In this age of information, we cannot escape this knowledge. And along with our heightened awareness of these evils comes the inevitable fear and foreboding. Being better informed of the human capacity for evil has not seemed to ease our anxieties, though our curiosity has grown more morbid with the proliferation of news and information media. The age-old question, "Whence comes evil?" remains unanswered.

Facing evil in our country or in the world requires first facing it in ourselves. The task of realizing the shadow—what Jung called the "apprentice-work"—is an individual problem that has cultural consequences. All inner work—any psychological or spiritual development—begins with work upon the shadow. The shadow themes that run through our lives are too easily projected onto others and into solutions that involve the cooperation of the outer world; as long as we externalize our issues this way we are bound to feel powerless to effect or resolve the complexities of



modern life. What then is our hope? Von Franz writes that, "When Jung's students once asked him if the third (and probably most horrendous) world war could be avoided, he answered that it depended on how many individuals could reconcile the opposites within themselves."

Without developing the capacity to see and integrate shadow, we stand to destroy ourselves *and* our ideals; what awareness each indi-

vidual can develop may save us, for we each can contribute our share toward a critical mass of awareness that is building in our world. "The only devils in the world," said Mahatma Gandhi, who understood the power of individual action, "are those running around in our own hearts. That is where the battle should be fought."

In the process of adapting to civilization, we inevitably come face-to-face with emotions and desires



which society says are either taboo or “uncivilized.” The average person, believing that he or she is no more than an ego-identity, represses these unacceptable aspects to the unconscious where they coalesce into a more or less autonomous splinter-personality: it is all shadow. The more strongly and rigidly we identify with our “I,” the more we must deny the other aspects of our personality. Such adaptation comes at a great cost to the individual soul. What we cannot admit in ourselves, we are condemned to experience fatefully in others. The containment of those unacceptable parts, and the posturing required to hide what we cannot love in ourselves, steals energy that is then otherwise unavailable to us.

So we can’t really live our lives fully without dealing with the shadow. The shadow is the thing that constricts, the narrow gate. Until you find enough courage (“take heart”) to own *all* of your experience and confront your personal

demons, your aliveness will be greatly limited. We each must confront our fear and shame, and recover those parts of ourselves that have been demonized or exiled from our conscious awareness. What follows is the moral effort of shadow work; through discernment, we find a place in our conscious personality for what previously has been denied.

The social standards of our culture tend to discourage this expansion of awareness. One becomes “well-adjusted” at the expense of personal truth. To get to our personal truth we have to suffer, actually actually to feel such un-love and torment that we recognize our suffering and realize that something is missing. When the point of recognition arrives—if it arrives—what we’ve banished from our consciousness rises to the surface and becomes a moral problem. We start to recognize our own dark nature as real and present. We’ve now entered what Jung himself called

“the essential condition for self-knowledge.” Shadow work can yield dramatic results, a new humility accompanied by an increase in energetic aliveness, a newfound compassion for oneself and others, and for some an initiation and a rebirth. As the ancient oracular verses of the *I Ching* express it:

It is only when we have the courage to face things exactly as they are, without any self-deception or illusion, that a light will develop out of events by which the path to success may be recognized.

SHADOW REMINDERS: REMEMBER TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU REMEMBER

To accept shadow means accepting the inherent ambiguities in life. We need to honor shadow, make it a part of ourselves, not banish it or heal it or be dominated by it. An important result of shadow work, perhaps the most important, is the growing development of *compassion*,

JOHN LIVZEY/ALISTOCK

Buddhists say that we should never get rid of our negative energy; rather we should transform it into the energy of enlightenment. We need to remember this principle in our everyday lives, especially when we are wrestling with circumstances that are too ambiguous to tolerate.

the opening of one's heart, the real and actual acceptance and love of others specifically for that piece of humanity's imperfection which it carries. In what we don't accept about ourselves and others—what we individually or collectively deny, exile, or project—there lies the possibility to discover our fuller humanity.

Shadow work is heart work. It operates on the principle "As above, so below." If something happens inside, then it also becomes real outside. If enough of us carry our share of the darkness and open ourselves compassionately to the world around us, then—as a nation and as individuals—we add to the critical mass of awareness that is helping to create a compassionate culture, one that can tolerate paradox and ambiguity, one that allows these qualities to coexist with order and clarity. "What gives soul to people," said the Greek psychologist Evangelos Christou, "is the capacity to experience the paradox of life."


Shadow work *is* soul work. And the frontier where we confront the shadow is, as it has always been, within one's own sphere of influence, within one's personal sense of joy and suffering, within the indi-

vidual soul. We need to invoke the Greek god Hermes who governs shadow work; we need to honor the archetype that serves the dual roles of messenger (bearing the truths of the gods and goddesses) and trickster who guides souls to Hades, helping us to cross over and clearly see the other side of things, the underbelly of life.

It isn't enough merely to have insight into the shadow. To "understand" can be the kiss of death. One cannot just know the ideas and turn this psychological approach into an intellectual game. Ultimately, what is essential is that we walk all the talk, *apply* the insight, *embody* our awareness in action. Otherwise, shadow awareness just creates *more* shadow. The writer Henry Miller, a true American cut from the cloth of individualism, reminds us that, "The full and joyful acceptance of the worst in oneself may be the only sure way of transforming it." As Miller also once said of the role of the artist, the purpose of shadow work is "to inoculate the world with disillusionment."

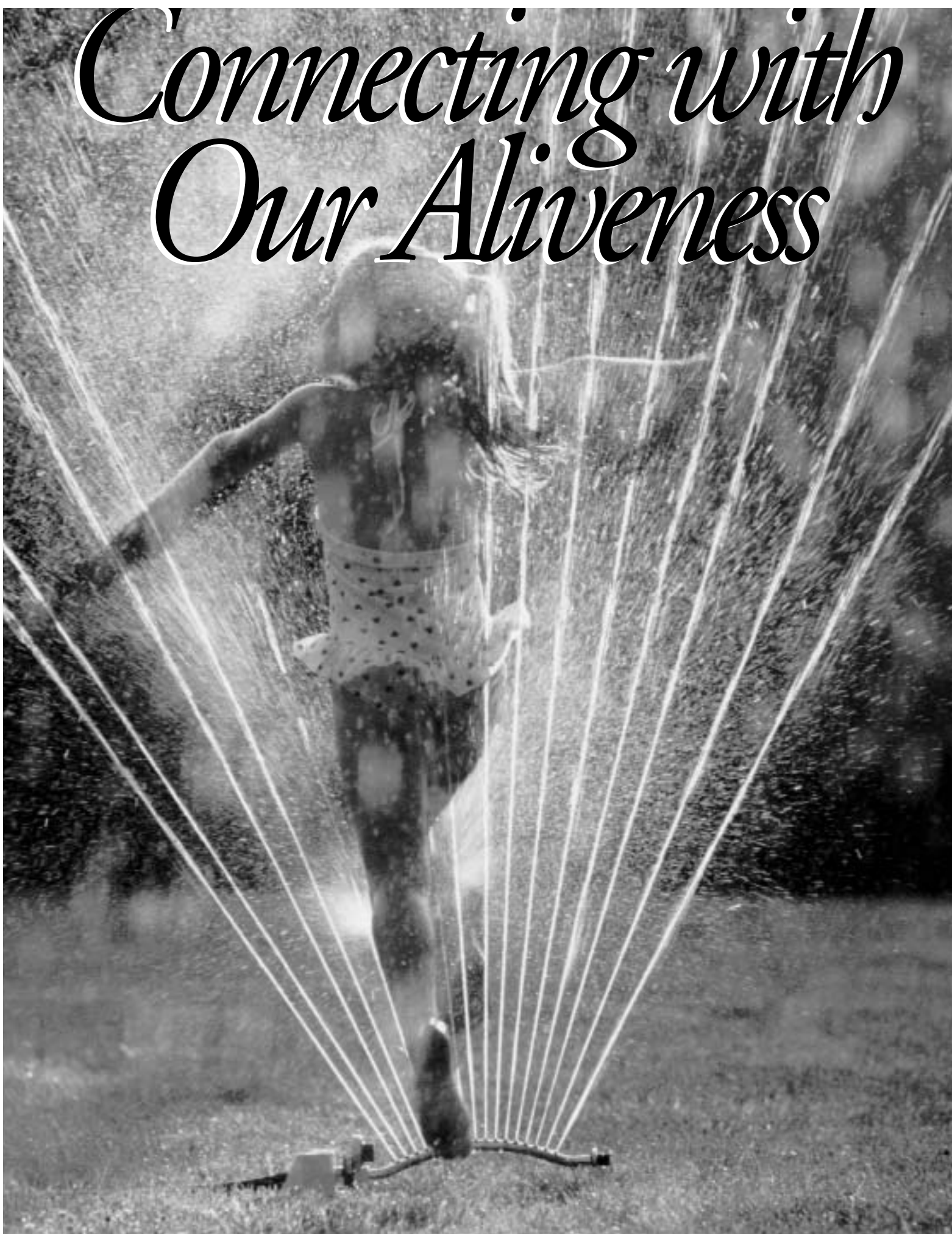
Shadow work demands that we persist at unifying our awareness. Like the practice called the "Middle Way" in Buddhism, shadow inte-

gration is an enabling, unifying awareness which allows us to reduce the shadow's inhibiting or destructive potentials, releasing trapped positive life energies that might otherwise be caught in the pretense and posturing required to conceal the shadow. It is above all a humbling experience. The Buddhists say that we should never get rid of our negative energy; rather we should *transform* it into the energy of enlightenment. We need to remember this principle in our everyday lives, especially when we are wrestling with circumstances that are too ambiguous to tolerate. The contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche says that we must "Remember to remember when we remember."

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light. To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.—
Wendell Berry 

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Connecting with Our Aliveness



According to Angeles Arrien, human beings need to do only four things: show up, pay attention, tell the truth, and not be attached to the outcome. The first, showing up, is made difficult if we live in our heads rather than in our bodies.

Emotion is energy in motion in my body: embodied energy. This energy can become blocked or trapped in muscles gone tight from old-held patterns of unexpressed anger; fear, anxiety, rage, and deep grief. Our bodies manifest the energy patterns of our minds and hearts. When we begin to move through our bodies, giving physical expression to these held physical patterns, the blocks are broken apart and new energy is released. The old patterns are transformed into new ways of thinking, feeling, moving, and expressing.

When women begin the transformational process of conscious self-love and coming home to their bodies, fear often arises. Some fears come from the outside. In the past when women stepped outside patriarchy's boundaries, they were met with burnings, beatings, ridicule, and imprisonment in asylums. The revolutionary act of coming into our women's bodies is risky. Patriarchy hates women.

There are also fears that come from inside. There are voices inside our heads saying, "You're not good enough." "Don't be too beautiful,

too powerful, too successful because they won't like you anymore." "Don't change your ways because you'll be left all alone." Other voices add, "You can't help the way you are; you're just a weak, helpless woman." "Don't rock the boat." They can sabotage our desire for growth. But because these voices are expressions of facets of our inner selves, we must not destroy or repress them but rather find a way to transform their message.

In our bodies is our aliveness. Aliveness is allied with an area of consciousness called sentiment. We

usually associate this word with feelings, sentimentality, nostalgia, the remembering of good times gone by. But sentiment is much more than things past. Real sentiment means consciously connecting with the powerful, intense energy of the universe that flows through our bodies, minds, and spirits. It means being fully present with this energy now. Sentiment comes from the Latin word *sentire*—which means "to sense." Where are our senses? In our bodies.

Sentiment as consciousness has different levels. The first level is the powerful, intense life force which is present in the universe. This force or energy is experienced as our basic aliveness. This level gives rise to what can be called our felt sense of reality. One woman, commenting on the abusive language of her spouse said, "It doesn't sound good in my body!" That was her way of expressing how the words she heard were connected to a felt sense of herself.

Where is this felt sense? It is in the muscles of our bodies, in the flow of our blood, in the beating of our hearts, and in the flow of our breath. This energy gives rise to feeling or emotion. Sentiment is an energy which bubbles up within us. It's been called "enthusiasm" because it comes from the Latin

Kimberley Snow, Ph.D., the author of "Writing Yourself Home" and editor of "Gates to Buddhist Practices," taught women's studies and writing for ten years at U.C. Santa Barbara. Louise Pare is a writer and author. The first part of this article is excerpted from "The Spiral Path: Explorations in Women's Spirituality" edited by Theresa King. Printed with permission from Yes International Publishers, Saint Paul, Minnesota. The commentary is an excerpt from "Keys To An Open Gate" edited by Kimberley Snow. Printed with permission from Conari Press.

words for “divine energy within.” Calling sentiment an area of consciousness means that it is a way of knowing. Not only do our minds and hearts know reality, but our bodies also have a way of knowing that which is vital to our experience of being fully human. When we are split off from our bodies we are disconnected from this way of knowing who we are, and our experience of being fully alive is severely diminished.

Many of us don’t feel alive in our bodies. How can we connect with our basic aliveness? How can we transform energies of dullness, blockage, and deadness into the energies of new life? How can we experience the divine energies of our women’s spirits, the energies many women refer to as the goddess?

I dance! I awaken my aliveness by free-form dancing to music of many different rhythms; I move without music as I give physical expression to my emotions; I sing and chant as I play my drum, rattles, or violin; I dance as I sing and sing as I dance. Then I feel myself coming alive, waking up, becoming consciously connected with the fullness and beauty of my own unique self. I become aware of how wonderful and mysterious it is to be the woman that I am. I become aware of how good it is to be a woman. I become aware of how good it is to be in my woman’s body. I experience a new connectedness with all women, with all people, with the earth that grounds and supports my movements and with the air and sky that carry my singing and chanting. I become more conscious of the need to choose foods that will nurture and energize my body. As my body moves and stretches, I experience

new levels of my own consciousness revealing my connectedness with all life across all periods of time. Every day brings new movement and new experiences of the multidimensional person that I am.

Each time I begin to move into my transformational life-dance work I experience again my fear of the unknown, the unknown of who I am, the unknown of what may come forth in me. I experience my fear of being foolish, of not being enough, my fear that it does not really make any difference that I am here because it’s all been done before perfectly by someone else. My inner voices can get very loud. Doing my life-dance is my commitment to physicalize my fear instead of letting it freeze my creativity and block my growth. It is a way of experiencing these fears as part of my aliveness.

Giving physical expression to my fears teaches me that energy is connected to other emotions that are also waiting for me to reconnect them. I need to give physical expression to my emotional self, not just talk about my feelings. As I flow in movement from one piece of my story to another I begin to experience the contractions and expansions of my own birthing process. I remember the words of a poster that says, “I am a woman giving birth to myself.” I experience through my body the sacredness of my own life. I find myself pushing through dark inner tunnels of shame, perfectionism, and insecurity. It is messy work giving birth to new life whether it is the life of another human person or new expressions of one’s own life. As I move through those dark tunnels, I begin to discover light coming forth within me. At times it is experienced

as deep forgiveness and nurturance that makes my body feel crystal clear.

At other times I have experienced myself as a beautiful eagle soaring high and grounded in her flight. With each breakthrough I encounter and recognize the mystery of the Goddess within my own being. The words of Arisika Razak echo through me, “...Remember the beauty and sacredness of your woman body. And remember that no matter how your personal body is shaped, whether it is abundant or slight, somewhere in the world a goddess is venerated who looks just like you.”

The essence of the Divine is mystery. The encounter with mystery is found for me in entering the movement of life. Since the movement is in my body, body-movement work is my spiritual path. On this path the mystery is hidden not in a golden tabernacle or behind a veiled cloth. It is hidden in my muscles, my blood, my breath. Body-movement work brings new meaning to the words, “This is my body. This is my blood given for the life of all.”

Walking this path involves choosing to love my woman’s body, my woman’s mind, my woman’s spirit in all their parts. Walking this path involves healing for myself, for others, and for our Mother Earth. Walking this path is transformative work. It involves experiencing that I am a Woman of the Universe being born anew each moment.

To experience a bit of what Louise M. Pare is writing about in “The Spiral Path,” try this dance meditation. Go into your room by yourself, dim the lights, and close the door. Put on your favorite music and listen until you sink into it and can feel its beat in your body.

TURN TO PAGE 94



Twelve Directions for Soul Work Living

B E T T Y C L A R E M O F F A T T

Betty Clare Moffatt, M.A., is a prominent writer and public speaker in the fields of AIDS, death and dying, grief recovery, and women's spirituality. She is the author of "When Someone You Love Has AIDS" and several other books. She divides her time between Texas, New Mexico, and California.



1. Begin to think of yourself as a spiritual being encased in a human body, instead of a human being with a lost or forgotten soul.

2. Honor the temple of your body by treating it with courtesy and kindness and filling it with healthy food and pure water. Clear

your body of whatever poisons, toxins, and stimulants you may have choked it with for years. Search out the nutrition, the herbs, and the natural remedies that can help you on this quest. Move your body, whatever its age and condition. Go toward health, not atrophy.

3. Create a nurturing environment for yourself. Whether you're in a one-room apartment or a mansion, whether you work outdoors in nature or in a stressful situation, throw out the ugliness and begin to create beauty in your life. A coat of paint or a vase of flowers adds color, light, warmth, and space and creates a safe haven. Whatever your soul longs for, begin to create it now. Beauty multiplies.

4. Spend some time alone each day to replenish your soul. Whether it's a walk in the park or a formal meditation spot or a sacred space you have created for yourself, spend some time alone, wherever and however you can. Get to know yourself gently and quietly without noise or chatter or TV or freeways.

5. Clear your mind of toxic thoughts. Search out your core beliefs about yourself and the world. Clear your mind of blame. A caring therapist can help. Fast from victim-hood. Feast on clarity.

6. Honor your emotions and be willing to work through resentments, fears, worries, guilt, and grief. This is an ongoing process that gets easier as you release years



of hurt and anger. Be gentle with yourself. Ask for help as you need it. Emotions are neither negative nor positive in themselves; they are an expression of your deepest feelings. Face, embrace, release, erase.

7. Love and accept yourself, no matter what it takes to come to that love. Love your body, mind, emotions, and spirit, whether they fit an ideal or not. Love your unique self. Love where you are now in your life and where you have been and

where you are going. Then love and accept others. This is the second part of the process. One seldom works without the other. You begin by forgiving everyone and every experience in your life that has brought you to this day. Forgive yourself. Forgive fate and circumstances. Forgive God. Continue the process daily.

8. Find something or someone to believe in. God, Jesus Christ, Buddha, a higher power, angels, the

Great Mother, the divine. This belief may or may not require attendance at a church or synagogue or temple. But attend to that spiritual part of your life daily, as best you can, whether in prayer or meditation, meeting with others or alone. Deepen your spiritual life.

9. Work with passion. Find something that moves you and practice and learn and study and perfect your craft. Refuse to measure your worth by a paycheck. Serve the world with your work.

10. Be willing to grow, to learn, to start over. Be flexible. Everything in life is change. There are no failures, just experiences. Be curious about life. Never stop learning. See yourself at the end of your life, active, vital, wise, creative, compassionate. Go toward that goal with zest and enthusiasm.

11. Give. Give to others. Give to yourself. Give to the environment. Give to your families. Give to your friends. Give with your work, your time, your energy, and whatever support seems to be called for. Never be afraid to give. What you give comes back to you tenfold. And if by chance you do not feel this in your life and soul at this time, do it anyway. Watch the results.

12. Receive. Learn from everything and everyone in your world. Allow others to give to you as well. Receive the gifts of the spirit in your prayer and meditation. Receive the gifts of joy and companionship. Receive the gift of a job well done. Receive the gift of books that teach and entertain and inspire. Receive the gift of breath, of life, of moving your body and your mind and your emotions and your spirit. Receive the gift of love. Accept the gifts as they are offered, without judgment. Open your hands, your

DAVID YOUNG-WOLFE/PHOTO EDIT

heart, your soul to receive. Then comes Grace.

At a time in my life when despair seemed the order of the day and my teeth ground in frustration at every passing sling and arrow, I talked to a friend of mine who had weathered, with grace and courage, some of the same challenges that I was going through. I asked her what to do.

"Throw stones," she advised me.

"What?"

"It's an exercise, a ritual, an exorcism if you will," she said. Since my friend is practical, tough, and clearheaded, I swallowed my skepticism and asked for details.

"It's called the resentment exercise," she explained, "and I'll share it with you but you must promise to do all the steps involved. Just thinking about it isn't enough."

"Why?" I asked again.

"Because the mind needs concrete evidence to rearrange its patterns and the emotions need motion in order to do the same."

I dutifully promised.

It was like a recipe. It went like this:

Write down on a piece of paper all—*all* the frustrations and resentments you are filled with, past and present trivial or catastrophic.

"All?" I inquired again in disbelief.

"Well" she said "the first time I did this exercise, I couldn't bear to write down my feelings about my father's stroke, my mother's violent, uncontrollable Alzheimer's, or the book project that fell through after months of work." (She is a writer too.) "Write down most of your resentments," she said. "You can tackle the major issues later, in a month or two, after you lighten the load."

It definitely needed lightening.

But in my curious, stubborn fashion, my essential nature got the better of me and I included everything on my list. I counted twenty-one hurts, angers, fears. How could anyone hold twenty-one resentments over the years? I told you I included everything.

"Number the resentments," advised my friend, "and then go to the store and buy a marking pen."

I did as I was told.

"Now," she said, "gather stones."

"What?"

"Gather stones. Go out to the country or a park and gather stones." I didn't need to ask how many.

"Yes," she affirmed. "One stone for each numbered resentment on your list. Mark each stone with a corresponding number. Then," she said, "you'll be ready. You'll be ready to throw your stones."

The day was stormy when I began to gather my stones, my list and marking pen clutched in my hand. I gathered them by color, weight, size, configuration. Not unlike, I reflected, the individual resentments on my list. I felt both foolish and mysterious. I was an ancient priestess gathering gifts to assuage the fates. The situation portended good.

Here was a rock for heart-break-sharp and jagged with gray-blue veins running through it. Here was a heavy, slimy, misshapen stone. I knew what number I would write on it. Here were small stones of triviality. Here were stones of dark and deep. I gathered them all, twenty-one stones, each one discrete and different, each one a problem unresolved, each one an emotional universe.

I sat on the curb above the park, there where the sere and wintry

grass hugged a ravine full of brush. I sorted my stones. I marked my stones, white ink on dark rock. I consulted my list. I looked everywhere around me. There was no one watching. Only me and my stones.


Then, slowly, carefully, ceremoniously, I began to throw my stones into the ravine, whispering their messages after them as they skidded down the hill. When I was finished, even the wind was still. There was only the echo of my voice on the air and the sound of my breath, gritty as gravel, in my throat. I tore up the written list and scattered its strips into the ravine as well.

"No more," I said. "Done." I might have said more. But I noticed then that the gravel in my throat was gone. As was the heaviness in my gut. As was the pain in my right side that had plagued me with its insistent, incessant throbbing. As was the stone that had heretofore pierced my heart. I was lighter. I was clear. I was empty.

I called my friend. I told her about throwing stones. "I may have to repeat the experience in a few months," I told her, "There may be more."

"Of course," she said. "There's bound to be more." Her mother had just died, without recognizing the face of the daughter who had cared for her.

I offered to come to her area of the country to be with her. "We could," I ventured. "throw stones together."

She began to cry. "Hurry," she said to me. "Bring stones. Bring lots and lots of stones." 

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From the book "Soul Work" by Betty
Clare Moffatt. Printed with permission
from the publisher Wildcat Canyon Press.*

Lotus Resources For Growth


Healing Rituals

Continued from page 64

Hines; some meditated, some prayed, some concentrated, and some just sat outside and looked at the trees and thought about Aldie. The pile of stones grew as the perplexed postman delivered lumpy envelopes from more than two hundred people and from all over the world.

The five-week radiation, Hine writes, was “marvelously successful... The radiologists were surprised at the rate of tumor-reduction and at the complete lack of side effects but they were acutely uncomfortable when we made the mistake of mentioning the network.”

Aldie went into a temporary remission and for three months felt “nine feet tall,” reveling in a sense of well-being and thrilled to be alive. He fully believed that the period of remission had been a gift from the Pebble People network. He felt that the power of their consensus had strengthened his will and that without it he could not have gone on to the next major events, which included the return of the disease and ultimately moving with great clarity into death, embracing it as a necessary part of love.

A few final thoughts on why rituals work. Ritual ushers us into a welcome and comforting rhythm of thoughts and activities. It unclutters our minds by providing structure and boundaries during times of change. The order imposed by meaningful ritual allows us to reflect our values and convey messages to self and the community about who we are and what we are experiencing. Ritual helps us face together those things that are too painful, confusing, or awesome to face alone. Because rituals both come from and create dreams, they encourage the deeper wisdom coming from these visionary levels. 

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Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time

Matthew Fox

San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994 \$22.00 Cloth

As director of the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality (based in Oakland, California), Matthew Fox is a living exemplar of the potent and passionate message he presents in *The Reinvention of Work* that humanity needs to move from a Newtonian “machine era” (reflected in soul-deadening *jobs*) to a “green era” (reflected in *work* that draws deeply from our inner selves).

To avoid what Studs Terkel calls “a Monday through Friday sort of dying,” Fox recommends “a change of heart, a change of ways” (called in the Bible, *metanoia*) that will evolve into “The Great Work.”

He writes, “A cosmology teaches us that there is only one work going on in the universe, the ‘Great Work’ of creation itself—the work of creation unfolding, the work of evolution or creativity in the universe.”

But Fox, also a very practical man, seeks a balance between mystical wisdom and bread-and-butter economics. He envisions a transformation of the bottom-line, profit-driven individual to the heartwork and value-informed ways of “*homo economicus* as person-in-community.” His vision is clear and is motivated by deep compassion. It is a joy to read him and to share and participate in a life and livelihood that, as he puts it, “flow from the same source, which is Spirit, for both life and livelihood are about Spirit.”

For what he calls *via transformativa* to occur, though,

he teaches that one must, in a sense, reinvent (or rediscover) one’s truest nature through means of *via negativa*, *via positiva*, and *via creativa*. One must encounter “the shadow side of work,” as well as experience fully the joys of work. This all-important process, Fox points out, corresponds to what Thomas Aquinas calls “interior work”—that is, “paying attention to the inner truth of what we experience.” All of life must be faced—good and bad, neat and messy, dry and juicy.

“Instead of a burden with a paycheck at the end of it,” Fox writes, “work *can* become a holy space where burdens get recycled and the Spirit moves.”

Via creativa, the third path of Creation Spirituality, becomes important as a natural extension of *via negativa* and *via positiva*. As Fox perceives the three-fold process, “It is when our creativity has an opportunity to manifest itself in our work that we do indeed become real.

Work has been desacralized, Fox contends, hence he sees a pressing need for the development of a “post-modern systematic theology” that accords with the paradigm shift from the machine to the green era. At the core of all the inner and outer work that must be done, he says, is “compassion.” Perhaps one of his most pivotal insights in the book is this one: “If compassion is essentially about interdependence, and if compassion is the origin of the universe’s Great Work, then our participation in that work requires a work world that honors interdependence. This is the teaching of today’s science, that our world is radically, even primordially, interdependent. It is also the teaching of our greatest mystics.”

One can almost hear Fox—like a mystical Karl Marx—sounding the call, “Spiritual networkers of the world, unite!” Indeed, he is that refreshing voice who wishes fervently to ritualize the new cosmology that

mirrors the emergent paradigm and to work at all levels—from the everyday to the metaphysical—for a global spiritual revival.

Yes, he also makes practical recommendations, many of them concern vegetarianism, recycling, bicycling, public transportation, “creating sustainable energy alternatives,” organic farming, planting trees, gardening, studying, community organizing, “stabilizing the population,” and making waves politically.

All of these outer concerns are important but as important, if not more so, is his message that humans need to, as E.F. Schumacher said, “put our inner houses in order.”

The Reinvention of Work is a wonderful reminder that work can be more meaningful in both an everyday and a cosmic context. Matthew Fox has taken the advice (which he

passes on to you) of the Sufi mystic Rumi: “Work in the invisible world at least as hard as you do in the visible.”

Sound advice which all of us need to take.

Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine

Larry Dossey, M.D.
San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993
\$22.00 Cloth

Larry Dossey demonstrates once again that he is a key figure during the ongoing transition to bridge the gap between science and spirituality.

Envisioning possibilities, he writes that “the choice between science and spirituality appears increasingly artificial today, even from a scientific perspective. It is now possible to tell a new story, one that allows science and spirituality to stand side by side in a complementary way, neither trying to usurp or eliminate the other.”

In *Healing Words*, Dr. Dossey contributes another important passage to this “new story” by exploring in depth what prayer is, its mysteries, possible dynamics, meanings, and diverse manifestations. Tapping into one hundred thirty-one controlled experiments, he presents strong, if not over-

whelming, evidence that prayer *works*, at least “some of the time.” The data from these experiments, he concludes, “are so impressive that I have come to regard them as among the best-kept secrets in medical science.”

Secrets or not, he reveals them in many particulars in this well-written and -researched book. But a subtle and very important message emerges amidst the scientific controversies surrounding prayer and its possible functions in healing—a message that challenges and will hopefully diminish the shallow position of “a type of person in whose mind God is always mixed up with vitamins.”

Dossey has also written a myth-shattering book, in that he questions deeply and vigorously the Western exteriorization of God and “the resulting devaluation of humankind’s innate nature”—a view that Joseph Campbell rightfully called a “pathological mythology.”

Prayer, Dossey argues, is mysterious and paradoxical and cannot be defined. Apply all the labels you want—whether referring to prayers of *petition, intercession, confession, lamentation, adoration, invocation, or thanksgiving* (among others)—and the mystery and paradox remain. And Dossey makes a telling point

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that might not be popular, but nevertheless should be aired: "The fact that we invariably prefer prayer to eradicate illness suggests, unfortunately, that we are *not wise enough to use prayer that works 100 percent of the time.*"

So what does he recommend? Prayers come in many forms, as religious traditions indicate; but more important to Dossey's spiritual thesis is the deeply meaningful concept of "prayerfulness," "a sense of simply being attuned or aligned with 'something higher.'" It is mirrored in the attitude "Let go and Let God"; it is more non directed than directed; it is a balancing of extro and introverted tendencies; and it is an acknowledgment of the nonlocal relationship of body, mind, and time.

"Prayerfulness," he continues, "is accepting without being passive, is graceful without giving up. It is more willing to stand in the mystery, to tolerate ambiguity and the unknown. It honors the rightness of whatever happens..."

Whatever happens, even the most tragic terminal diseases.

Although Dossey refers to Bell's theorem as a likely scientific explanation for *why* prayer often works, he is unhesitant in admitting that no one knows *how* prayer effects healing, whether locally or nonlocally (at a distance). A tolerance of this mystery can prevent one's lapsing into "prayer neurosis" (the consequence of demands, not acceptance, of what is).

Healing Words should appeal to sincere individuals who have always intuited that prayer and prayerfulness can be effective, but who have also yearned for some scientific validation of their inner sensing.

Larry Dossey writes, "A new

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picture of human consciousness will emerge.”

Thanks to his latest book, the power of prayer and healing should be recognized as an important dimension of this phenomenon.

The Commanding Self

Idries Shah

London: The Octagon Press, 1994

\$7.00 Cloth

Since the 1964 publication of the widely-praised and seminal book, *The Sufis*, Idries Shah, the leading exponent of Sufism in the West, has written nearly thirty books, several of them award-winning and all of them mirroring what might appropriately be thought of as enlightened common sense.

The Commanding Self is an outstanding addition to the corpus of Sufi teaching materials that provides, on one level, valuable information about Sufism; on another level, relates stories and real-world anecdotes demonstrating the superficial and myopic tendencies of minds strait-jacketed by assumptions; and on yet another level, opens a path that enables one to make the transition from the “heroic’ mode” (“attempting something with insufficient knowledge”) to the “self-evolution’ mode” (“fitting oneself to perceive that which is to be perceived”).

Sufis are exemplars of ongoing self-observation that leads to balanced and perceptive behaviors. To them conscious evolution is to be practiced in everyday milieus, not belabored as a concept that leads to endless scholastic overview and hairsplitting.

Shah immediately makes this important point, “The Sufis refer to the action of the mixture of primitive emotionality and irrele-

vant associations which bedevil outside would-be observers as that of *The Commanding Self*.”

In relation to personality, he writes, “The Commanding Self... can be seen as a sort of parasite, which first complements the personality, then takes over certain parts of it, and masquerades as the personality itself.”

Having read (and continuing to read) the Sufi literature made available by Shah, I am strongly inclined to agree with his claim that what the Sufis have done (and continue to do) is “beyond the formal limits of a psychology as generally understood at the moment.” In particular, it can be seen that Shah is laying out a vast framework for an advanced psychology meant at this time to educate people more than recruit them into the Sufi ranks. For it should become obvious to readers with discerning intelligence that Sufism can only be taught by Sufis who decide on the correct alignment of people, place, and conditions. They are the doctors who are skilled at prescribing the right medications and exercises.

But the Commanding Self, Shah notes throughout this important book, often rules and overrules—rules the mind through assumptions and overrules its occasional breakthroughs into clear thinking and perception because of cultural constraints imposed by “hope, fear, and repetition.” Shah seems to be saying that the Commanding Self is its own best defense against developmental possibilities. He demonstrates the power of the Commanding Self by telling Sufi stories, answering questions (which often reflect the workings of the Commanding Self in the questioner), and highlighting personal expe-

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riences, many quite humorous, yet jolting in a mind-opening way.

One anecdote Shah tells is a blatant example of the Commanding Self in operation. It seems that among people who, as he puts it, “purport to ‘give out my teachings,’ but get everything wrong,” there were especially a man and a woman who indulged to no end in misleading people. Shah met with them to make them aware of their random distortions of Sufi materials and exploitation of unsuspecting people. He continues,

“They listened carefully to everything that I said—and then carried on exactly as before: with one difference.

“The difference is that they now claim to be ‘personally instructed by Idries Shah!’”

To deal with such “invincible ignorance” is of course not easy, Shah acknowledges. Assumptions that lead to beliefs, he teaches, will usually result in unregenerate behaviors. A pivotal point he makes in this connection follows: “Real belief comes after understanding. Once a thing is understood, it must be believed, because it now has the status of a fact. If, however, we are talking about ‘belief’ as something which can take place without understanding or knowledge, this is really only a synonym for obsession, and belongs to a medical, rather than a spiritual or psychological, area.”

Shah presents a startling picture of this obsessiveness of the Commanding Self when answering someone’s question about “the accumulation of facts and arguments” as surely being to some extent useful in the understanding of Sufism. Shah responds by asking the questioner “how thick a sheet of paper becomes if it starts at a thou-

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sandth of an inch thick and is then doubled over fifty times.” The questioner guesses with answers of one inch, twenty inches, and “I give up.” Shah informs him that, if possible, such a doubling-up process would result in a seventeen-million mile thickness of paper, a point driven home further by his illuminative observation that “‘Doubling’ inert facts only increases the dead weight of them.”

I know of no better orientation to Sufism than the books of Idries Shah, and one can certainly do no better than starting (or continuing if that is the case), with *The Commanding Self*. Various concepts and terms become understandable through his clear exposition—e.g., dervish, Sufi, imitation, truth, evolution, knowing, work, indoctrination, conditioning, idealism, belief, materialism, spirituality, and so on. Moreover, the very reading of a book like this might prepare one to develop a flexibility of mind that can result in more perceptive responses to the Sufi framework of knowledge.

Such a book can loosen the anchors that keep one in servitude to fixated assumptions and mechanical behaviors (governed by the Commanding Self) and possibly, if “essential prerequisites” are met as determined by Sufis, reorient us towards a path that includes shedding irrelevancies in our lives and serving Truth experientially in everyday settings.


A beginning in this direction is, as Shah teaches, to “Examine your assumptions; avoid mechanicality; distinguish faith from fixation.” Or as he also says, “Learn how to learn.”

This book is a directional signpost, to be sure, but considerable effort is required in order to answer

this question about the Commanding Self—“Does it command you or do you command it?” 

Success Story


Continued from page 10

my dad and was sad, but I felt no need to cry—only the need to say good-bye. I liked to think that with me in his life, Irving lived for one extra year with a friend who loved him dearly. It made me feel that I had some significance in life, that my actions could positively affect others. Irving wasn’t a great man in the sense that he didn’t guide me through any troubles and he didn’t leave me with any meaningful maxims. All he did was let me realize my importance on earth and let me experience another side of life—death. 

Success Story

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ask myself, “Why me?” I was a good wife to him. I now realize that he could never change. He came from an abusive family background. He always had affairs, even before we were married, and he will always have affairs. It really hurts deep down when your husband has other women. I also realized that I deserve better treatment from a man.

Now I have a wonderful life. I have confidence in myself. I have lost a total of ninety two pounds, have a whole new view of life and a wonderful man who loves me. We are two mature adults in a loving, mature, and caring relationship. I really appreciate my new husband and I thank God for every new day, without mental abuse. 

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Aliveness

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Sway at first to the music, then begin to move in any way that your body seems to want to. Don't think; listen to the music; let your body talk. Let it jerk or sway or repeat a motion over and over. Allow your arms to flail about or to move in graceful arcs. Move your hips—do a dirty boogie or a sedate elephant sway. Pull your shoulders up and out of your body, roll them around to relax the muscles, then let the arms and shoulders shift as they

will. Forget everything; listen to the music and move. Your body knows what to do. Your body knows where tension is knotted and where the blocks are obstructing your energy. Let your body dance out its kinks and knots. Keep your consciousness in your body as you twist, turn, dance.

When you feel totally in your body, let yourself be danced. Let energy flow through you, move you. Feel the dynamic energy of the world around you, the force of the music, the response of your muscles. Visualize the world dancing with you: the flowers swaying in the meadow, the leaves on the trees twisting and turning, the wind sweeping this way and that. See people the earth over in joyous movement: women rocking their babies, children hugging, men and women making love. Let all of that energy flow through you as you dance. 🌿

Femininity

Continued from page 51

In olden days these elements were nicely sorted out for us by tradition and law. There was a right way to do everything in life. Usually a man depended on his wife to make decisions in the feminine department; she deferred to him in masculine things. There is much to be said for this manner of living, but evolution has taken us past this simple solution. Man demands freedom in his inner world and especially these days, women demand their own masculine self-determination. The old days of authority are gone. There was little freedom but much safety; authority informed our lives and made most decisions for us. We have abandoned authority as the center of our lives, so we must rely on differentiation and clarity to make intelligent decisions in our modern world. 🌿

Question Authority

Continued from page 43

ened masters, perfect gurus, reincarnated teachers, and therapists who claim to have discovered the only valid therapy.

Avoid authorities who offer a universal blueprint for salvation or a map of your spiritual pilgrimage. Be suspicious of anyone who claims to have esoteric knowledge of the hidden truth, God's will, the outcome of history, or why we should bomb Iraq back into the Stone Age. The great spiritual secrets, like the Purloined Letter, are hidden in plain sight (although you may have to turn yourself inside-out to find them).

By all means, make use of the spiritual wisdom of teachers, therapists, friends, and pathfinders—the more the better. But follow Rumi's advice: "Learn about your inner self from those who know such things, but don't repeat verbatim what they say."

Beware of anyone who fascinates, captivates, overwhelms. When you can't tear your eyes away from someone, you probably have begun to look at your life through another's eyes rather than your own.

Avoid anyone who demands obedience. Obedience is a virtue for children and a civic obligation, but not a good way to spiritual maturity.

Look carefully at a spiritual teacher's personal life. Does he or she deal with money, power, and sex in an open and admirable manner? Spiritual leaders should be held accountable. No double standards. A great deal of mischief is excused under the guise of "crazy wisdom."

Check to see if a spiritual leader has friends, peer relationships, and

a community of equals, or only disciples. I distrust anyone who claims to have achieved universal compassion but lacks the capacity for simple friendship. Friends keep us honest. When a leader has only disciples and devotees, he or she gets very little honest feedback or criticism. The ability to deal with others as equals is a necessary element in any authentic spirituality.

Observe whether difference of opinion, challenge, criticism, and discussion are encouraged or discouraged. Can those in charge acknowledge they don't know the answers to important questions? Does the leader ever admit that he (it is almost always a he) can be wrong and his critics right? A spiritual community should be open to whatever truth comes knocking on its door.

Do not commit yourself to any leader or group that demands that you place loyalty to them higher than your loyalty to your mate, your family, or your friends. Appeals to "a higher loyalty" to a church, a corporation, or a nation are suspect. It is much better to concentrate on learning to love those who are near to you than to commit yourself to a remote organization or future utopia. Charity begins at home. If a belief-system doesn't encourage us to strengthen our bonds with family and friends and to seek a wider community, it is a form of paranoia, not of good faith. If a group demands that you withdraw from the world at large, pack your bags and leave on the midnight train.

Reject immediately any leader or religion that identifies the homeland with the holy land, the folk with the people of God, the enemy with the evil empire. If narcissism

is micro-idolatry, then nationalism is macro-idolatry.

Test how much humor and poking of fun about beliefs, slogans, and dogmas is permissible. The absence of humor is an almost certain sign of psychological rigidity, fanaticism, and impending spiritual and political tyranny. The first thing deadly serious leaders and organizations do is forbid satire, repress the clowns, silence the jesters, and kill levity. By contrast, the deepest spiritual traditions have always recognized that the sacred and the profane, like wisdom and folly, walk arm in arm, and therefore true piety must be seasoned with irreverent laughter. In sacred ceremonies in Bhutan, a disreputable clown with a wooden phallus held aloft shadows and parodies the actions of the "serious" dancers. Among the Pueblo people of the Southwest, the Koshares, the sacred clowns, accompany the kachina dancers and seem to interrupt the ceremony by making fun of serious matters. Mirth and merriment save us from taking ourselves too seriously and protect us from the idolatry of assuming that our churches, rituals, and formulas are themselves sacred rather than symbols that point beyond themselves to the unknown God.

As you make your way through the hazardous paradigm wars of this era, through the chaos of competing myths and belief-systems, keep your sense of humor intact, your heart open, and your wits about you. And every morning before you set out on your journey, check the batteries on your spiritual bullshit detector to make certain it is in good working order. 🍄



Canine Classroom

C H E R J O Y T R U L E N

I believe that the world is our classroom, and everyone and everything is our teacher. I had also gradually come to see nature as my teacher. Watching birds, seeing trees grow, and gazing at lakes, all added to my understanding of who I am in the universe. Because of an intense fear however I was unable to learn from big dogs. I was unable to learn until the memorable camping weekend.

My friend knew someone who had a tipi and twelve sled dogs in the northern part of Minnesota. I managed to survive the night sleeping in a tipi, but I was not looking forward to hiking the Superior Trail with four sled dogs. I tried to talk the owner out of taking them along, but she insisted that they were gentle and loving.

Her words proved true. The four dogs followed in our footsteps, sometimes nudging us affectionately but never overstepping their bounds.

As I watched the dogs—Al, Twister, Omni, and Narpa—I saw that they were not just hunks of canine

flesh but had distinct personalities. Al was the oldest and therefore a leader. Omni was the pregnant female. Narpa and Twister were pups, displaying all the playfulness of their young age group.

Of all the dogs, though, it was Narpa, which means seal, who was my greatest teacher. When we got to a brook, all the other dogs crossed over the bridge. Narpa was different. Despite urging from the four of us, he continued to hesitate and then charged through the water. I laughed and said, “He is just like me—afraid to cross over.”

My wise friend said, “That is one way of looking at it but maybe Narpa is just displaying his own unique way of doing things.” I thought about that statement later, and it made sense. I, too, have my own unique way of doing things. I may not follow the world but what I have done has nurtured my body, mind, and spirit.

In retrospect, the dogs that I had once feared taught me a great deal. I found that I learned more from the dogs than I had in many workshops. Sometimes the “canine classroom” can be the most effective of all.

KIM HEACOV/ALLSTOCK