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TSI/CHARLES KREBS

Every morning, when we wake up, we have twenty-four brand new hours to live. What a precious gift! We have the capacity to live in a way that these twenty-four hours will bring peace, joy, and happiness to ourselves and others.

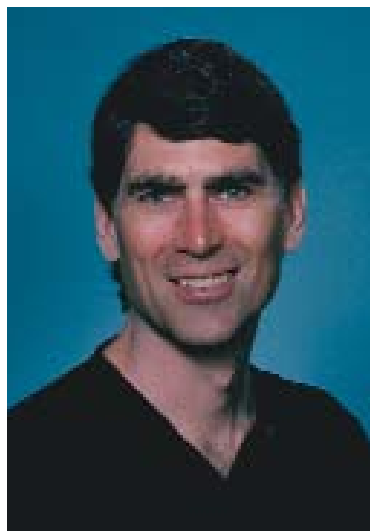
Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

COVER: TSI/CHARLES MAUZY
CONTENTS PAGE: JOHN MCANULTY

MAY—JULY 1996 • PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

From the Publisher



Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible.

—George Bernard Shaw

A life filled with passion and purpose is a life that burns brightly. Our yearning to live fully calls us to a transformational way of living. By consciously participating in our own evolution, we develop a deep appreciation for who we are and become fueled by an inner radiance. As we become our real selves—living our deepest values and ideals—our most profound dreams come true.

Transforming one's life requires an inward journey of heroic proportions. The heroic adventure is the search to understand our relationship with life. The journey requires that we not only free body, mind, and heart from the past, but that we connect with our deepest essence and fill our consciousness with truth and love and reason.

There is a natural tendency to resist change and to hold fast to the security and predictability of the status quo. This is reinforced by others who want us to remain as we are. Yet without internal change, our lives become narrow, our natural wonder hardens, and we experience a spiritual death.

We must fully realize the extraordinary power we have over our own personal and spiritual development. Knowledge of our power sustains us and reinvigorates us to begin anew again, to make changes, and to know ourselves more fully.

In our instant gratification society, we are often attracted to quick-fix solutions and promises. But any significant long-term change requires long-term practice, whether that change has to do with learning to play the piano or learning to be a more open, loving person.

We celebrate your commitment to personal transformation and encourage you to follow your deepest yearnings—to become your true self.

Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

Lotus Personal Transformation

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From the Editor...

“Over and over again, it seems to me, life comes along and says, ‘Choose!’ These are the decisions that shape our lives, which ultimately, are soul journeys.”—Jean Shinoda Bolen

Every day we live with the results of our past behaviors and choices. All waking moments contain choices and decisions that continually alter and adjust our course in life. Our possible futures are numerous, and we continually participate in selecting our own fate. In this issue, we explore the ways that taking self-responsibility allows us to become conscious creators or causal agents in our own lives.

In this issue’s interview, Nathaniel Branden (p. 44) describes the essence of self-responsibility as recognizing that we are the authors of our choices and actions and that we carry the task of preserving, protecting, and securing our own lives and well-being. He believes that self-responsibility entails a pro-active orientation toward life, which implies taking initiative in the pursuit of whatever values or goals are important to us, rather than passively waiting for someone else to do something. He states that the most fundamental expression of self-responsibility is the choice to think or to be conscious. Self-responsibility begins with the choice to think, to be aware, to look at reality and life, and to try to understand what one sees.

Susan Taylor (p. 29) says that while it is our divine birthright to be happy and healthy, we sometimes hinder ourselves by focusing our attention in the wrong direction. Too often we search for life’s answers in the external world, looking outside ourselves, abdicating self-responsibility.

Making our needs our first priority may seem difficult, but when we fail to nurture ourselves, our joy is depleted and our capacity to serve in life is diminished. Living in balance doesn’t just

happen. It’s a state of grace we create by staying connected to our thoughts and feelings and consciously measuring what we do. To live in grace we have to *choose* grace.

Richard Botelho (p. 38) believes that to choose to be responsible for our life is the most powerful choice we can make. If we choose responsibility, we must commit ourselves to learning more about the nature of reality, more about ourselves, and more about our place within that reality. He points out that survival for all other species is more or less devoid of choice because there is an inherent lack of reason. Our ability to reason and to tap into our own intuitive sense affords us the opportunity to change the path of evolution, to direct our part in it, and to create for ourselves a higher probability of success. Creation of options is truly a human possibility.

Becoming responsible is transformational, as Wayne Muller (p. 60) beautifully outlines. He tells us that while healing and clearing the ground of our past is necessary to prepare us to receive a better life, it is not enough. We must select and plant what we love in the garden of our life. When we plant new seeds and attend to what is loving and beautiful, we are brought forward into our most exquisite manifestation. This is the difference between a life repaired and a life well-lived.

Let us choose grace and a life well lived. Let us choose transformation.

Welcome to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor



Synthesis

Reflections



From Our Readers

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

I was reading through your Winter 1995 interview with George Jaidar, "Discover the Life of Fullness," when I came across his description of the "lifeboat experience." He credits religion as a "manufacturer" of the lifeboat experience, in which people seek bonding and loyalty via the group process. He goes on to say that this experience does not lead to fulfillment because it is based upon the assumption of separateness.

Indeed, this seems to ring true for religion in general as practiced in Western cultures. However, he seems to claim that all religion espouses the lifeboat experience, pointing out that, "the word 'religio,' on which the word 'religion' is based, is the Latin term that means to bind together. You can only bind things together that are conceived of as "separate."

While this is certainly one possible interpretation, I propose another, which, I believe, captures the positive core essence of religion. First, the actual Latin term which means to bind together is "ligare," which is the root of the word "ligament." Ligaments are tissues which connect or link certain parts of the body. So, the mission of "re-ligion" may be viewed as re-linking man with Spirit. But, as Mr. Jaidar points out, our perceived separation from Spirit is an illusion, so the re-linking occurs only from our individual points of view. Spirit never perceives us to be separate.

When you view religion in this way, there is no difference between religion and spirituality. It is only our cultures which make it so. As such, I believe religious or spiritual practice, at its best, serves both to heal our perceived separation from God and to provide a much needed spirit of community.—
Richard Jordan, Laguna Beach, California.

N O B U L L A P P R O A C H

It was with no amazement that the latest issue of (*LOTUS*) *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* (Spring 1996) has taken a stand as to its actual purpose—transformation that is spiritually-based.

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Reflections

I have been a subscriber to *LOTUS* about one and one-half years and slowly started noticing content change from the more conservative, within-bounds psychological approach to life to a psychologically spirit-based approach. I remember thinking, “I hope they don’t go New Age.” There are so many publications out there which offer many elementary quick-fix ideas about viewing life from a heart perspective. There are also some very solid, cohesive publications which deal with everyday experiences, suggesting practical tools and using insights gleaned from many perspectives. I hope that *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* goes this route.

I was both pleased and disturbed by Dan Millman’s article. He certainly gives some very basic aides to transformation, but the overall sense I received from the article was a bit fluffy and very general. I have read his book and found it helpful, again in a very fluffy, general way.

As a professional medical intuitive counselor, it is quite clear to me that generalities and happy-face solutions only prime the pump of transformation and very often do not address some very real and deep-seated cell memory issues.

What I am also finding through following personal stories is that a “no bull...” approach is starting to make itself known in transformation. We, as a society, as a nation, as a world, do not have the luxury of time to dabble in transformation. Perhaps that is why I was disturbed by Mr. Millman’s article—it was dated information which

Super Blue Color

Element Books

Atlantic
pickup from
page 26 Spring

Life by Design

could have used a keener contemporary edge. I would bet that over time Mr. Millman will condense and increase the potency of his transformation information.

My request to the magazine is this—please read other “New Age” publications and strive to be *not* like them. Please print articles that are on the cutting edge and not merely repetitions. Please don’t just give us “feel good” and warm snuggly information—it only goes so far. And, thank you for your recent risk-taking.—*Jo Chavez, Kirkland, Washington.*

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

With the price of magazine subscriptions being what they are today, I’m a bit fussy what I spend my money on. I’m glad to have found you! Or you found me?

For a semi-hermit such as I am, *LOTUS* keeps me interested and informed on the spiritual transformation that is happening in our culture and not reported on the nightly news. I’m wishing you good blessings and long life, for all our sakes. Thanks!—*Alice Jean Doricourt, Hearne, Texas.*

**N E E D
S U G G E S T I O N S**

I am an American recently married to a Kiwi. (New Zealanders still consider themselves Kiwis, despite any lack of resemblance to the bird on the shoeshine tin.)

Jan and I are very much interested in the Human Potential movement. We have been involved in various ways—directly and indirectly. Jan is trained in

herbal medicine and massage therapy. As for myself—well, I read and meditate.

We are looking to become more involved by working for a retreat, if possible. Whatever the work or responsibilities involved—from gardening, painting, or office work—we will be in the environment. A healing, spiritually-oriented environment.

However, we have no addresses for potential situations. Could someone suggest a half-dozen or so retreats that we might submit resumes to, especially on the West Coast?

I must point out that Jan and I are not interested in great monetary compensation. Just a quiet place to heal and learn in. Thank you for your help.—*John Coffman, #10 Baidon Road, Grey Lynn Auckland, New Zealand.*

S Y N C H R O N O U S L Y

LOTUS came into my life last spring quite synchronously through the office where I had just begun attending a weekly group therapy. I loved the two-year-old, half-torn-out issue and sent in my subscription immediately. I left the group a few weeks after, knowing it wasn't what I needed or had expected. My first *LOTUS* issue soon arrived with an article about finding the right group. Though the group didn't suit me, finding *LOTUS* has; each article serves me as a mini-therapy session in awareness.

I appreciate the inclusion of your readers in the Transformations section. The varied, personal accounts lend a voice to those of us working on our lives. It lends bal-

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 80

Omega From page 21 of Spring

Innovative



Spirituality in the Workplace

TINA RASMUSSEN

While it may be easy to see how spirituality relates to our personal development, our relationships with significant others and family, and even the quality of our general societal interactions, the workplace has often been overlooked or deemed “not relevant” for the application of spirituality. Many of us compartmentalize our “personal” life and our “work” life, leaving our hearts and souls at the door when we enter the workplace. However, this split in our psyche is more fabricated than real. We cannot neatly separate parts of ourselves, our emotions, and our values, hoping pieces will not “trickle over.” To do so creates a dangerous illusion which

prevents our full integration into self-actualized human beings.

Most North American adults now spend more than 50% of their waking lives at work. If we are not “being spiritual” at work, we are giving up a tremendous opportunity for growth, development, ego transcendence, productive collaboration, and interdependence with others. Spirituality, at its best, applies not only to ourselves—over whom we have (hopefully) some influence—but to our relationships with others in all aspects of our lives—even those over whom our influence is minimal. It applies not only when it’s convenient or obvious, but when we least want to “walk the talk” of our values. The workplace—with all its challenges,

frustrations, potential for conflict and pettiness—is the *perfect* place to “stretch our spiritual muscles.”

IS NON-MATERIALISM BECOMING MAINSTREAM?

As *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* readers, many of us are likely to include intangible factors as indicators of our own development and success. But what about the rest of society, the people we work and interact with every day?

The *Yankelovich Monitor* has tracked consumer social values since 1971 and has found that Americans’ attitudes are changing—a lot. In 1989, 89% of the people surveyed said “owning an expensive car” would signify success. Last year, the figure had dropped to 23%. In

every category—“having a successful investment strategy,” “staying at a luxury hotel,” “shopping at prestige stores,” “wearing designer clothing,” and “having a gold credit card”—the percentage fell 10% or more in five years. At the same time, the study indicated that other, sometimes unexpected values have become increasingly associated with personal accomplishment. In 1991, 63% of those surveyed said “being satisfied with life” was one measure. Last year, that number jumped to 81%. “Being in control of your life” and “being able to afford what’s important to me” rose from 57% to 78% and 74%, respectively. In one year, “having a good marriage” jumped—as a *success symbol*—from 62 to 74%. In



After five decades of nonstop consumerism, the values of many Americans are shifting, from tangibles to intangibles, from real estate to relationships. By some estimates, the number of people who are moving away from economic values and toward voluntary simplicity could *triple* by the year 2000. Is it possible that non-materialism is becoming mainstream? (Source: *The Dallas Morning News*)

“SPIRITUAL
UNFOLDMENT
SOCIETY” UNFOLDS
AT WORLD BANK

Acknowledgment and encouragement of spiri-

tuality in the workplace is gradually emerging, even in such surprising places as international finance and government. For example, in late 1995, the World Bank hosted its first conference on *Ethics and Spiritual Values and the Promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Development*. About 350 delegates attended the two-day event, held in Washington, D.C.

A recent article in *The New Leaders* newsletter quoted World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who described the conference as “melding economic assistance with spiritual, ethical, and moral con-

siderations.” Conference attendee Ambassador John McDonald said, “I was absolutely astonished and delighted when I heard the Bank was putting on this conference.” A recent article in *The World Times* quoted attendee Denis Coulet from the University of Notre Dame, who suggested that economists return to being “moral philosophers.” Chief Bisi from Nigeria remarked, “You only get genuine power when you give it away. It is the same as the economics of love.” Norman Rice, Seattle mayor and president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, said, “Social equality, eco-

nomnic opportunity, long-term stewardship, and restoring a sense of community are fundamental values that must be in place for sustainable development to take place.”

Richard Barrett, the World Bank manager who initiated and organized the event, is an inspiring example of how one courageous person *can* make a difference in an organization. He told *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* that he began by planting a seed within World Bank, which is now coming to fruition. Barrett said employees hold weekly “Spiritual Unfoldment Society” meetings which are

Penguin

Journey into Wholeness

Conscious Notes

sponsored and supported by the bank.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

From April 14 to 16, the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning held a national summit to launch a “nationwide campaign for a new societal ethos of caring and idealism.” The purpose of the summit was to explore the notion of a “politics of meaning” and its application to our work, society, and personal lives. The Washington, D.C., conference was slated to be attended by well-known figures such as Jim Hightower, Bernie Seigel, Marianne Williamson, Matthew Fox, Jesse Jackson, Larry Dossey, and Ben Kohen.

The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning’s stated purpose is as follows: “The politics of meaning seeks to change the bottom-line definition of productivity and efficiency in American society from one that assumes a primary objective of maximizing wealth and power, to one that promotes business, governmental, and societal practices that enhance our capacities to be ethically, spiritually, and ecologically responsible human beings capable of sustaining loving and compassionate relationships.” The foundation’s view is that the political Right has accurately noticed the pain that people face living in a selfish society, but has inappropriately blamed it on marginalized groups. The Left has focused on economic needs and individual rights while ignoring the inherent human longing for self-sufficiency and empowerment. The failure of both the Right and the Left creates a gap in American society. Therefore, the summit was held to issue a new progres-

sive “Contract with American Families,” which fills the gap and overcomes these negative societal forces—evidenced in consumerism, “hate radio,” and widespread cynicism—which are undermining loving relationships and sustainable ways of relating to our world.

The summit was endorsed by the Unitarian Universalist Association, *Tikkun* magazine, *Utne Reader*, the Sojourners, and other groups of progressive Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The April conference will be followed by regional conferences in Seattle, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Ann Arbor, Portland, and Chicago. For further information on the thinking behind the society, look for the forthcoming book, *The Politics of Meaning: Affirming Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism*, published by Addison-Wesley and written by therapist and *Tikkun* magazine editor Michael Lerner. For more information on The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning (a non-profit educational and research institution), call (212)665-1597. •

Mount Madonna
pickup from
page 21 Spring

HJ KRAMER

McClintock
pickup from
page 84 Winter

A Clear Voice Rising

NANCY PASTERNAK



For much of the past decade, the most difficult question anyone could ask me was, “And what do you do, Nancy?” It is a question that most in society answer by filling in the blank with their job title or career aspirations; it is what they do, and perhaps who they believe they are.

I have felt terrorized by this question, as people tend to want to hear a short, non-threatening answer—not necessarily the truth. How could I explain in comfortable words that the healthy-looking person in front of them has been so desperately ill that she thought about suicide?

The difficulty in answering that question is reflective of the enormous challenge my life has been for the past eleven years. Answering it is my biggest lesson. What I do is heal.

In 1984, my life as I knew it began to disintegrate. I experienced pain and fatigue that would not go away, plus a host of other maladies not readily qualified. As a critical care nurse, I took care of others in seemingly

worse shape than I. Without an acceptable diagnosis to validate my decline, I pushed myself through daily existence, depleting my final reserves of strength and energy, onward into total physical collapse. I had plummeted downward into a dark, isolated, and silent place. I received vague diagnoses and various pills to take for a myriad of complaints. Coming from a conventional medical background, I was unprepared to know what type of help I needed, and in 1984 “alternative” health care was neither a buzzword, nor was it readily available. I became immobilized with a condition that eluded standard laboratory tests and appeared invisible, except for subjective symptoms.

It was two-or-three years before I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, a debilitating muscle condition, and nearly six years before hearing a diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). By that time, the physical symptoms and emotional traumas and patterns of chronic illness were deeply imbedded.

I sometimes wonder how I survived the confusion,

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 22

Health

Zen Mountain

ADI GAIA

Transformations

humiliation, and physical suffering of those very dark years. But I know now that I was well-honed to living in a survival mode; I had done it most of my childhood and believed that is how life was supposed to feel. I have come to see my illness as a healing of my false life; my conscious healing now involves uncovering my true self.

I lost myself a very long time ago, early in childhood. I did not live in a home with physical abuse, alcoholism, or incest, but I lived in numbed pain.

I lost my father at age six by way of divorce after which he ventured in and out of my life irregularly and swiftly, leaving no forwarding address. A hit and run father. My mother remarried and divorced the same man twice when I was ages ten and fourteen. This man emotionally abused my mother, my sister, and me with words and ambiguous violations of sexual boundaries. We moved five times in six years. There were many losses in my life of people, places, and dearly loved pets.

I learned to be good and to be quiet, never to make a fuss. I became my mother's emotional caretaker. I grew up responsible and sensible. The clear message I received was that there was no reason to feel whatever feelings I was experiencing, that it was not okay. Feelings were "explained away" to me or "swept under the rug," out of sight. I learned to say nothing and to hide or stuff all my emotions. I did this very well until as an adult my body began

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 25

Transformations

screaming with pain for me to listen to what it had been trying to tell me my whole life. Not allowing my feelings even to exist, it has taken me a long time to understand this new type of message.

The "House of Cards" I lived in looked respectable and secure. The damaging messages came disguised, subtle, and covert. Perhaps, if I had been bruised and beaten, I would have known something was wrong. So the little girl who loved music, loved to sing and dance and draw, and who organized plays and wrote poetry became very quiet, scared, and numbed by her life.

The ironies of my life are in the fallout of my illness. I was taught to be independent (I have been financially dependent on my husband), there's no reason to have feelings (my suppressed feelings scream out through physical pain), to pick myself up from all situations (I have been, at times, physically unable to sit in a chair or brush my teeth), to be quiet and say nothing (I have been too tired to speak and too emotionally confused to know my own voice).

Over the years, I have put myself in a bubble for long periods of healing and rest. A self-imposed "bubble" is necessary when the pain of uncovering your past is overwhelming, and your physical vulnerability exposed. I realize that I am in the midst of generational healing; I am transforming a legacy of noble suffering.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 81

Charles Sweeney

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Saving a Life

I H L A N A T I O N

I was digging through stacks and stacks of T-shirts with bright red, yellow, blue, pink, and green decorations on them. The lovely young black girl, who sounded like a native British Virgin Islander, was patient as I decided on the perfect shirt for my three-year-old granddaughter. When I stopped being fickle and bought one, she sweetly asked what happened, politely pointing to the large scar on my neck. It's hard to miss. It runs from under my left ear along the bottom of my jaw almost to my chin, all the way down the left side of my neck, diverging to the top of my shoulder and all along my collarbone to the right side. I am not offended when people ask about it, so I quietly replied, "I had cancer when I was sixteen." "Thank God for saving a life," she said with a wonderful Tortolan accent. And I walked away thinking, "Yes, thank God for saving a life."

It had been a long time since I paused and contemplated how a serious illness at such a young age had affected me. I was upset when my thyroid was removed because two growths had been found (one



benign, one malignant). Two major surgeries in eight days did not rank as a real good time. Waking up in intensive care was scary. Even worse when they were unable to resuscitate the old woman next to me. In my sixteen-year-old mind though, the real trauma was three weeks in the hospital, missing out on the fun of my high school sophomore year, and the bad scar. I was able to be grateful I was alive, since my sixteen-year-old hospital roommate had not been so lucky. But at that point, I was not "into" reflecting on the meaning of such events. I felt the victim of circumstances, fatalistic about life. I had coped with several major ordeals by then, so this was just another one.

It wasn't until I was studying for a master's degree in religious studies at the age of forty-one that I became aware of the significance of that illness on my view of life. I was taking a seminar on Shamanism (real shamanism as it occurred historically in cultures throughout the world, not the rip-off of Native American culture so prevalent today). Shamans experience a serious life and death struggle which trans-

Transformations

forms them into powerful leaders and healers. I reflected on my illness. My experience, I realized, had given me the constant motivating belief that I had some greater purpose in life. After all, why would God have spared me if there weren't something important for me to do. Perhaps not quite survivor's guilt, but something similar. It became an obsession to find out what that greater purpose might be. More than any other experience in my life, cancer, even though completely cured, impacted how I lived, affecting my choices and decisions in a subtle way. Even during my agnostic period (angernostic is more accurate, since I professed no belief in God but was really raging at and punishing Her/Him/It for my unfair lot in life), it guided my subconscious beliefs and spurred me constantly to question and seek answers to life's meaning. Married at nineteen, a son at twenty, a mother with Alzheimer's, divorced at twenty-one, a single parent for sixteen years, my mother's death when I was twenty-eight, my father's death when I was thirty-eight, a totally irresponsible ex-husband who neither paid support without a battle nor visited his son, constant financial struggles and stresses, a grandmother at forty-one. All these events affected me.

But none had the ongoing effect that a serious illness at a young age did. I have tremendous gratitude for this gift: the desire to see a bigger picture, to understand

TEACHING WITH SPIRIT

THE 1996 EMMANUEL RESIDENTIAL RETREAT

REINCARNATION IN THE SAME LIFETIME: BIRTHING INTO THE TRUE SELF

WITH PAT RODEGAST AND BARBARA COHEN
JULY 15-19, 1996. PHOENICIA, NEW YORK

The question becomes, how to blend the Holy Spirit with the Humanly Engaged self? What is the bridge? What are the steps to be taken? What, if anything, is the cost? Must one suffer more? Laugh or eat less? How to transform intellectual understanding into Divine and wondrous experience? That has been the quest. It still is.—Emmanuel

With the presence of Emmanuel and the useful clarity of the Pathwork Lectures we will build the bridge between self and Self. The retreat will offer lectures and homework from Emmanuel, visualizations and meditation. There will be individual and group process, Breath and Core energetics, Tai Chi, and massage to heal and integrate all levels of consciousness. Journal writing, dancing, laughing, and loving will celebrate the RE-BIRTHING of the true Self.

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Dream Time

Glade Mountain
from page 88
Spring

Transformations

life from a meaningful perspective, to know why we are really here. But that gratitude is recent. The gift often felt like a curse because I was never able to get up in the morning and just experience the day. There was a constant feeling of dissatisfaction, often hopelessness and sometimes despair in the need to try to find some answers for my existence. Not only did this make my life painful, it set me apart from others who were able to accept life as it comes, no explanation required. People not needing larger-than-life answers made me feel uncomfortable and separate.

I sought peace on paths many people of the sixties generation did. Through relationships

(mostly bad), therapy, estrangement from my family, isolation, “New Age” religions, and finally, turning within. Through meditation, eclectic spirituality, and reconnecting with a faith in something Greater Than Myself, I arrived at a peaceful place.

I do not have *the answer*. I am not yet sure what my “purpose” is. What I have discovered is living authentically. No, I am not 100% authentic in every interaction “24-7-365” as kids say today (for those of you without, that’s 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year). But with each passing day, I become more so. It is no longer acceptable to be inauthentic. I must do what feels right to me, to speak my mind, whether accept-

able to friends, family, bosses, neighbors, the hostess seating me in the restaurant. It no longer feels like a choice; it feels like a necessity. But before you conclude I have just become totally self-centered and rude, let me assure you I have not. Authentic is being true to yourself—not being false in your work, relationships, leisure activities. Learning what you *truly* want and need and finding ways of achieving it without harming others. It is an interesting cycle. The more committed I become to living in a genuine way, the less angry, hurt, and wounded I feel. The more authentic my daily life becomes, the more loving, compassionate, and forgiving I am. I no longer need to be on the de-

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pickup from
page 89 spring 96



JOHN MCANULTY

Our Birthright

S U S A N T A Y L O R

It is our divine birthright to live healthy, happy, prosperous lives. This is the balance that you and I are seeking. But we sometimes hinder ourselves by focusing our attention in the wrong direction. Too often we search for the answers to life's riddles in the external world. We are forever looking outside ourselves, seeking approval, and striving to impress others. But living to please others is a poor substitute for self-love, for no matter how family and friends may adore us, they can never satisfy our visceral need to love and honor ourselves.



Susan Taylor has been the editor-in-chief of Essence magazine since 1981. Through her column, "In the Spirit," her extensive travels, and her numerous public appearances, she has become an example and inspiration to millions of readers. She lives in New York City with her husband, Khepbra Burns. The following is from "Lessons in Living" by Susan Taylor. Copyright 1995 by Susan Taylor. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing.



Making our needs our first priority is difficult for all of us, but it is a particular challenge for women. Early on, we learn that we are born to serve, that the needs of others supersede our own. We are taught that sacrifice and selflessness are virtues that make us worthy and win us love. But though charity is an expression of divinity, it is a *human* virtue, not the reserve or obligation of women alone. Whether we are female or male, we must not allow the relentless demands of family and

work to override our critical need for self-nurturing. When we fail to nurture ourselves, our joy is depleted and our capacity to serve diminished. Giving from an empty vessel causes stress, anger, and resentment, seeds that sow disorder and disease. Attempting to meet the demands of the world without first attending to our own needs is an act of self-betrayal that can cause us to lose respect for our value and worth. It is not enough to be kind. We must learn to be kind *and* wise.

Living in balance is vital to our well-being. Without balance, much of the beauty and grandeur of our existence is lost. But a balanced life doesn't just happen. It is a state of grace we create by staying connected with our thoughts and feelings and consciously measuring what we do. Just as feeling fit and flexible demands physical exercise, just as expanding your mind requires intellectual effort, so bringing your life into balance and maintaining your spiritual equilibrium require focused awareness and daily retreat from the stresses of the world.

The wisdom and strength you seek await you in the silence within. Awakening to our deepest desires, to our needs, and to our truth requires reflection and inner listening. We must create the space in our lives where our physical self and our spiritual being can meet. The more we nourish our internal world, the more powerful we grow in the external world. Retreating doesn't free us from the concerns of the external world, but it delivers us from the pain of living in it.

Look to the light within yourself. It's awaiting your attention, longing for your return. You may have lost sight of your inner radiance as you turned to look outside yourself for validation and meaning. You may have forgotten it as you gave authority, not to your own inner voice, but to the dictates and opinions of others. Yet no matter how far you wander or how long you stay away, the divine light never flickers or dims. You are host to the eternal flame. It glows in the silence of your being to illuminate your life and light your way. The tempests of the world can never eclipse or snuff it out—just as you don't diminish the light of the sun by pulling

down the shades. The radiance within us is always shining, and solitude opens wide the way.

We would probably be more zealous about retreating from the world if it were a complicated task, requiring great effort. But, in fact, the task could not be simpler because there is nowhere to go, nothing to do. To retreat, you need only *be*. How? By giving yourself to yourself before you give yourself away. It's amazing how a simple fifteen minutes or more of quiet inner listening each day creates such abundant peace and joy.

Choose your place. Any place that's quiet and where you feel completely comfortable—your bed, an easy chair, a mat on the floor—will do. Stretch fully for a few seconds from head to toe before you settle in. Sitting or lying down, close your eyes gently. Allow yourself to breathe slowly, deeply, exhaling longer than you inhale. As you exhale, feel yourself letting go. Consciously relax each part of your body separately, starting with your feet. Tense and tighten them as you inhale; release and relax them as you exhale. Continue to breathe deeply and fully as you tense and tighten your calves, thighs, and buttocks, then your torso, your arms, your shoulders, and face. Is there any tightness in the areas where stress normally takes hold—your upper back and shoulders, your neck and jaw? Breathe deeply into each of these areas as you tighten and release those muscles again. Let go completely.

Stay with your breath, breathing slowly, deeply and rhythmically, consciously inhaling joy and peace and exhaling stress and strain. Feel yourself descending deeper and deeper into your breath. You are completely at ease, your body limp and relaxed. Listen to the rhythm of your breath, whispering in the stillness. This is the Holy Spirit, the breath of life in you. You are now in touch with your inner light. Feel the love, the peace at the center of your being. Feel its healing light caressing you, filling you, renewing you. Feel its glow enveloping you and radiating from you. This is your own loving-kindness, embracing and restoring you to wholeness.

Now is the time for asking questions of yourself—and for listening for your deepest, most intuitive responses. You need only attune your ear. There is no problem too trivial or concern too great to bring to the spirit within. In this place you can lay your burdens down. So surrender your worries and fears, releasing them into the care of your own inner wisdom.

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TS/LAURENCE DUTTON

A Journey in Integrity

E L L E N C L E P H A N E

Commitment is a strange concept, for it evokes strongly opposing emotions. On the dark side, the “C” word strikes some with utter terror, bringing up fear of being trapped, confined, bound, or stifled, like being committed to a mental ward. On the light side, commitment is relished as a promise which creates more trust, security, support, and depth of experience, a sacred pledge of love and caring for a lifetime.

Ellen J. Clephane, Ph.D., is a therapist specializing in interpersonal relations. She counsels individuals, couples, and families, facilitates women's groups, and conducts relationship workshops. She is also the Director of the Mental Health Resources and Education Network in Ashland, Oregon, and is an instructor at Southern Oregon State College.



The word, “commit” comes from the Latin “com mittere,” meaning “to send together.” Therefore, although commitment is often viewed as a fixed agreement, it actually refers to a shared journey. In this sense of forward movement, exploration in unison along a path of growth, commitment takes on a new meaning.

Integrity is a wonderful word, for which the dictionary offers three definitions: wholeness, soundness, and honesty. Wholeness means that all parts of ourselves are present, connected, and aligned with each other. When this is the case, we are strong, sound, and healthy. Wholeness also implies honesty, where outer expression lines up with thoughts and feelings within.

Commitment to integrity means a commitment to embrace our wholeness and the wholeness of our partner. It is the intent to accept unconditionally all parts of ourselves, to communicate freely and truthfully, and to build upon the strengths of each person and of the relationship. It is a recognition of the wholeness, the interconnectedness, of all life, which allows us to live in the center of the paradox between individuality and union.

In recognizing the integrity, the oneness, of life itself, we see that the greatest good for the individual and the greatest good for the relationship are the same, however much they may seem to be at odds from the limited perspective of ego-based personality. I find that it is perspective, or internal positioning, which determines our experience of life, rather than the events that happen. Commitment to integrity implies a willingness to shift into a perspective of seeing the oneness while seeking resolution of differences. It also implies a willingness to honor the integrity of both individuals, without attempts at manipulating one to satisfy the other.

Integrity is based in love, which is naturally expansive and uniting. When we experience love, our bodies and our beings feel light, relaxed, open, receptive, giving. This au-

It takes courage to keep seeking a resolution for a conflict that seems to have none, short of one person giving in to the other.

Manipulating ourselves out of fear, to appease another person, almost always leads to resentment.

Moving freely from an impulse of love, to please someone else, has very different results.



AUTHOR ELLEN CLEPHANE

tomatically supports fulfilling relationships. Lack of integrity is based in fear, the opposite of love, a force which causes us to contract, condense, limit, and separate, automatically damaging our relationships.

Without a strong commitment, our fears easily pull us out of integrity. How often, in large and small ways, do we agree to things that we don't want to do? How often do we lie about our feelings or behavior, for fear of rejection, anger, loss, pain, or hurting someone's feelings? And how often are we able to maintain our integrity in the face of those fears? These are questions worth exploring. What we discover reflects our development as human beings, as well as our current ability to create truly satisfying relationships.

One man whom I interviewed commented that the relationship path is not for everyone. Those who do not want to be committed, he said, should not make themselves wrong. Those who do want to be committed should not deny it. It is important to

recognize, said another gentleman, that commitment is a conscious choice.

MANY SELVES: THE CHALLENGE TO INTEGRITY

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to being in integrity is the fact we all have many conflicting "selves." These are energy patterns or sub-personalities within ourselves. Psychologists Hal Stone and Sidra Winkelman Stone have written several excellent books describing these selves, how they affect our lives and relationships, and how to embrace them in an integrated way.

Their method, called "Voice Dialogue," enables people to recognize their various inner selves: the pusher, pleaser, controller critic, vulnerable child, rebel, good parent, and many more. Giving the various selves a voice helps us discover what each one feels and thinks, what it needs, and what it has to offer. Some of these selves are *primary selves*, those which we most value and identify with as who we are. Opposite each primary self is a *disowned self*, one which we judge as bad, or deny exists.

For example, a man who has a primary self that is very responsible and organized disowns the part of himself that wants to be lazy and careless. A woman who strongly identifies with her generous self disowns her selfishness. One who sees himself as strong in all circumstances disowns his vulnerability.

When some selves take exclusive control and others are shut away, inaccessible, we are automatically out of integrity. All aspects of our wholeness want to be recognized, accepted, and integrated in some way. Interestingly, our intimate partners, or our children, or others close to us, will often embody the selves which we disown. A thrifty man has a wife who loves to spend money; a woman who never gets angry marries a man who often loses his temper; a sacrificing mother has a very self-centered child; a super-reasonable man has a highly emotional wife; a woman who denies her sensuality has a daughter who flaunts it.

This can be a source of great conflict for couples, or else they can come to appreciate that each partner holds an energy that the couple needs to

Without a strong commitment, our fears easily pull us out of integrity. How often, in large and small ways, do we agree to things that we don't want to do? How often do we lie about our feelings or behavior, for fear of rejection, anger, loss, pain, or hurting someone's feelings?

develop. Every energetic pattern has a positive aspect which comes out only when the opposite energy is also available within us. Many of the couples I interviewed spoke of their complementary characteristics as contributing to the success of the relationship, in that each partner brought balance and new ways of being for the other to integrate.

One woman, for example, said that her husband was sloppy and liked to have fun, while she was compulsively neat and needed to have more fun. Another said that her husband taught her to be vulnerable, and she taught him to take more time to smell the roses. In another couple, the man was very outgoing and social, while the woman was introverted and loved to read. In another case, the wife said she was a fast mover, and her husband took things slowly. What allowed these opposites to get along so well? Many couples spoke of the key: allowance, appreciation, and agreeing to disagree at times.

As we develop what the Stones call an *aware ego*, the people we love will not need to carry disowned energies for us. The aware ego is the central aspect of personality which recognizes and honors all the many selves, consciously choosing which energies to bring into expression at a given time. It can be likened to the conductor of an orchestra, who includes all the varied instruments and directs them into a harmonious symphony. Some instruments may have more primary parts to play than others, but all are valued and bring added richness to the music.

In my personal life, and in my counseling and group work, I have found that developing an awareness and acceptance of the myriad of selves within

each of us is invaluable in strengthening our ability to live in integrity, as individuals and as intimate partners. The story of a couple with whom I worked on and off over several years provides a good example.

ONE COUPLE'S JOURNEY

This couple, Gina and Sam, had a clear commitment to integrity in themselves and in their relationship. That doesn't mean they were *always* in integrity—I doubt that anybody is! But they made integrity a focus and intent, a primary value, in their lives. They were learning to honor each other as individuals on a journey of self-actualization and to encourage each other toward greater awareness, self-expression, receptivity, and flexibility. They were also working on releasing the destructive patterns in their interactions, realigning themselves in the spirit of love. In many respects, they had an excellent relationship, which is the reason I find their story valuable and inspiring.

Sam and Gina had a major difficulty with the issue of monogamy, however, which they didn't know how to resolve. From the start, Gina was very clear that she wanted a monogamous relationship with her partner. Her two previous partners had been dishonest about sexual affairs, and she wanted to leave that past behind her.

Sam loved Gina very much and had no conscious desire to leave the relationship, yet he was unclear about monogamy. He was a man who easily spoke about his feelings, enjoyed emotional intimacy and physical affection, and tended to have close women friends. At times, however, a strong emotional connection with a woman friend had led into some sort

of sexual expression (not necessarily intercourse), which seemed very natural to Sam in the moment. He felt that, within himself, it in no way detracted from his relationship with Gina.

Although Sam was committed to being fully honest about these situations, he found it quite difficult because he feared Gina's disapproval. Despite their attempts to communicate effectively and with understanding, Gina felt hurt and rejected, Sam felt judged and self-judging, and both often wound up angry and in pain. The conflict was not only *with* each other but *within*, as their various inner selves engaged in battle. The vulnerable child in each of them, which needs to be present for real intimacy, often withdrew.

They experimented with periods in which Sam agreed to avoid all sexual expression outside of their relationship and periods in which Gina agreed to allow him the space to move without boundaries. There were stretches of time during which the issue seemed to have disappeared, much to Gina's delight, but then it would arise again most unexpectedly.

This couple was excited to note that each time this difficult issue reappeared, they dealt with it at a new level, with new insights. Instead of coming full circle and rerunning the pattern the same way each time, they moved together in an upward spiral, meeting the issue again with greater awareness. Despite the uncomfortable intensity of feelings involved, there were breakthroughs in understanding and shifts in emotional patterns.

In the early years of their relationship, Sam gradually realized that his seemingly unplanned and innocent sexual interactions with others tended to occur right after he and Gina had reached a new level of intimacy with each other. He saw parts of himself that feared getting lost in the relationship, that resisted being told what to do, and that held back from full self-expression.

Gina recognized that parts of herself feared rejection and frequently led her either to compromise herself or subtly manipulate her partner in order to maintain a relationship. She became determined to stay more connected with the loving and allowing selves, while still honoring the fearful one

and the one with strong beliefs about monogamy. Without acting as the controlling or judging mother, she struggled also to allow Sam to follow his own path of self-discovery.

On two occasions before their marriage, they were on the verge of separating over this issue, not out of anger but out of the commitment to respect their differing needs. Both times though, as Gina became freer from her fears of loss and urges to control, Sam recognized at a deeper level that the boundaries on his sexual behavior were his choice, rather than a demand upon him. He chose to accept these boundaries, rather than to end the relationship that was very dear to him.

The last spiral round of this pattern was a couple of years after their marriage. Sam had a very strong attraction and some sexual interactions with a woman with whom he felt a strong spiritual bond. Although the inner emotional turmoil he and Gina experienced over this was very distressing, the way they perceived and dealt with the situation was quite different than it had been before.

This time, Gina was clear about staying in the relationship, about the opportunity this repeated pattern gave her to heal deeper levels of her fear of abandonment, of not being good enough, and of the power of her sexuality—all of which she knew helped create the pattern. She felt more fully the depth of her husband's love for her, his pain at the hurt his behavior triggered, and his struggle to be true to himself, to find his own clarity about directing his energy.

Gina also stopped hoping that this issue would never again raise its ugly head. She realized that it was an evolutionary process which, despite the intense feelings, repeatedly brought them greater insight and personal power, freedom from limiting patterns within, and ultimately greater intimacy.

For a period of a week or so, Gina found it necessary to create some physical and emotional distance between Sam and herself, while they each did some internal processing. Throughout this difficult period, however, their communication was more understanding and accepting of themselves and each other than ever before.

Gina also met with the other woman involved.

The two of them experienced a deep heart connection and respect for each other's feelings, wisdom, and integrity. Strangely enough in the circumstances, they found in each other a friend and a teacher. Both felt that there was a movement of spirit guiding all three players in this situation for mutual healing of personal patterns, and perhaps even for some larger purpose.

In the "Voice Dialogue" work in the weeks that followed, Sam discovered that he had a disowned self who was terribly upset by Sam's extramarital sexual behavior and frightened by the possibility of losing Gina. And Gina found a disowned part of herself that could easily relate to being sexual with other men, as well as a self that was afraid that Gina might leave the relationship if she were allowed to get involved with others.

In recognizing that they were each playing out the disowned selves of each other, it became easier for both Sam and Gina to take responsibility for the struggle they had created together. Rather than feeling like opponents, they found themselves working as a team to embrace all of their selves with greater compassion, understanding, and appreciation for each other.

Gina and Sam's story exemplifies a journey together, with commitment to integrity, in dealing with a difficult, but not uncommon, issue. The common emotions of fear, hurt, jealousy, and anger were there, sometimes with such force that they controlled behavior, as so often happens. As a result, they would find themselves out of integrity and in confusion.

Since they knew that suppressing the emotions, the selves which were part of their wholeness, would also violate their integrity, they struggled to find ways to keep the energy moving, to express and release their feelings constructively. They practiced listening to each other with open hearts which, with emotions churning, wasn't always easy, and they genuinely attempted to understand each other.

It takes courage to keep seeking a resolution for a conflict that seems to have none, short of one person giving in to the other. Manipulating ourselves out of fear, to appease another person, almost

always leads to resentment. Moving freely from an impulse of love, to please someone else, has very different results.

When Sam agreed to monogamy because he feared displeasing or losing Gina, or because he was afraid that there was something wrong with himself, he would see Gina as very controlling, and he reacted with anger and resistance. When Gina agreed to release all expectations of monogamy because she feared Sam's anger or losing the relationship, her self-esteem suffered greatly.

On the other hand, each time Sam owned his need for more sexual freedom, or each time he freely chose to return to monogamy, he experienced greater empowerment and sense of self. Gina had a similar experience at the times when she agreed, from a place of loving support for their growth rather than from fear, to relax her insistence on monogamy. She felt equally empowered at other times when, in her integrity, she declared that she could not continue being sexually involved with Sam outside of monogamous boundaries.

As they progressed on this journey, they became more clear in their commitment to integrity because when they stepped out of it, things got worse. Within the crucible of their relationship, some of their fears and limitations were burned away. As they gained awareness of their disowned selves and recognized that their disagreement actually reflected an inner battle, they took huge steps forward in their journey. Integrity exists when all the inner selves are accepted, and decisions are made from an awareness of the whole.

This couple discovered that following their inner knowing, rather than unchanging rules, sometimes led them on an adventure into unfamiliar territory. As they gradually moved through the discomfort of the unknown, they found themselves connecting with greater depth and intimacy. And they enjoyed the sense that perhaps their journey would somehow support others in the dance of relationship. •

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TSU/RANDY WELLS

The Power of Understanding

R I C H A R D B O T E L H O

What then is understanding? More than anything else, understanding is a process. It is the process of learning more about the nature of reality, more about ourselves, and more about our place within that reality. Understanding requires an acceptance of our limitations and a belief that our wisdom must be a Socratic wisdom, which recognizes that we are wise only in the recognition of our ignorance. Understanding knows that an acceptance of our limitations can occur only when we live without fear and eliminate the need to protect against our ignorance. Understanding also knows that personal insecurity limits wisdom and that a lack of confidence confines us only to that knowledge which can be found within a comfort zone delimited by our own fear.

Richard Botelho earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees in Government at California State University, Sacramento. He is employed as a marketing consultant in northern California, where he has worked with a variety of innovative and visionary companies that emphasize the role of personal responsibility in an improved business environment. In addition to writing, he is active in public speaking.



To accept that understanding is a process which is essentially diametrical to our familiar beginning-end frame of reference can be a difficult realization indeed. To pursue understanding requires a mental paradigm shift toward the awareness of a forward motion without culmination and toward a belief in a continuum that we can progress along, but that we never reach a destination. Until we accept that understanding is a process, we cannot begin to understand.

This is not to imply that the process of understanding is driftless. On the contrary, it is most purposeful and directed. Although we cannot be sure of what we will learn and thus understand, we can be confident that we will know more than we knew before we started and that we are progressing further toward our own potential, but only if we can accept that knowledge without understand-

The fundamental tenet of the new individualism must be that people have the responsibility to choose what is best for them, and that through this choice, people answer the call of self-preservation. If we fail to facilitate this responsibility, we are saying that people are not capable of making choices and determining their own futures.

ing is useless. Once we know this, we have direction, purposeful and meaningful, and we also know that this process is evolutionary and therefore natural. Moreover we can see, given the evolutionary relevance, that both people and societies are dynamic organisms that evolve over time and that a key to survival is to recognize the importance of understanding.

One can make a strong case that people and nations often fail because they do not understand what is happening to them. For all other species, survival is more or less devoid of choice because there is an inherent lack of reason. But people are different. Our ability to reason and to tap into our intuitive sense affords us the opportunity to change the path of evolution, to direct our part in it and hopefully to create for ourselves a higher probability of success. This is why the elimination of fear and the illusory influences that often result from it are so critical to our prospects for survival. If we can eliminate fear, then what remains is understanding, and the process of understanding is the way we can best safeguard our futures.

It is only because of our previous frame of reference, i.e. we must have a destination in order to start a journey, that we fail to be more fully appreciative of our path of progress and the way this path can increase understanding. When we can appreciate, as part of our heightened sense of reality, that the journey

can be directed and meaningful, then we can begin to benefit from the liberation that this recognition allows. Moreover, we will be, for the first time, in a better position to realize the merits of process versus destination and how process invariably leads to better choices.

Understanding then is the recognition that the path is the way toward further understanding. We must also accept that our nation is on a path, as is the entire world, and that we hope it will be the path of understanding and not the path of a hubris that leads to our extinction. We must know that humans form and create that path, and that understanding is thus the termination of any form of pre-determinism and external directedness.

Understanding must also be the process of liberation from expectations, for the path of understanding is not predetermined but remains forever changing. The path of understanding can be who we are, and it is the road that we can travel. The greater our ability to reduce fears, illusory influences, and our insecurities, the greater will be the level of our self-awareness and our comprehension of reality. At any point along this path, we are certain of not only more understanding, but also of an improved quality of life that a life of choices naturally produces.

UNDERSTANDING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

When we increase our understanding, we begin to see that the creation of options is a truly human possibility and applicable to everyone. As a result, understanding disposes us toward an awareness of the inter-relatedness of people and of the intricate connections that form the full panoply of the humanly possible. Once we see this, we become respectful of everyone's right to choose, and we encourage the self-responsibility inherent in such choices because such behavior is self-rewarding. In short, the support of human choice works to our personal advantage because such support ensures that we will safeguard our right to choose over time. Through this understanding, it becomes evident that the full spectrum of human choice increases the probability of an enhanced life for everyone since everyone benefits through a collec-

tive promotion of individual freedom and responsibility.

To increase our quality of life, we must first understand the significance of every life, our own and that of others as well. Why? The connection is simple: quality of life increases proportionally to the degree of responsibility that we individually assume because within an environment of increased self-responsibility, the collective becomes less of a burden through its increased self-corrective abilities. When people act responsibly and if society develops "training" vehicles to teach people how, then there will be less people that must be "taken care of." If everyone acts more responsibly, the aggregate level of responsibility increases and becomes a sociological improvement mechanism that rewards responsible behavior and discourages irresponsibility.

UNDERSTANDING, POWERLESSNESS, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for one's own life is the most powerful choice we can make, and this choice opposes in a very fundamental way.

Understanding, then, is also partly the realization of the linkage between our responsibility and our conception of ourselves. We will not have a full self-concept until we accept our individual responsibility toward ourselves and toward our society. When we make this association, we increase our internal-directedness and make ourselves more powerful than we were before.

Understanding inexorably increases self-confidence because understanding allows us to know ourselves, and people who know themselves feel more secure. We might say that these people are more powerful, for indeed they are.

Whether we are the exceptionally gifted person or the average one, we have a responsibility to develop our own power to its fullest extent. Again, if everyone strives to maximize his potential through individual understanding, everyone benefits since the sum of understanding increases and so does the resulting power of both people and their societies.

UNDERSTANDING AND THE NEW INDIVIDUALISM

To understand, or more correctly to possess a framework of understanding, we must first empathize with the entire human condition and fully comprehend the preciousness of each individual life. We must also recognize the tragedy of lives that are dominated by fear. We must be responsible for our own being, understanding that our courage to live without fear, in a state of freedom is an example for others to follow. Moreover, we do this knowing that living such an existence is both simultaneously individually self-interested and socially beneficial.

To really understand is to reject as many illusory influences as possible and to recognize the ways our misconceptions limit the scope of human freedom and choice. We must accept without fail that our lives are existential and that they are what we make of them. Progress and the march of human freedom, the essence of a really meaningful existence, is ours to determine and ours alone.

Understanding is thus the creation of meaning and is a creation of our own choosing. The responsibility inferred here is more than awesome; it is reality exposed. In the final analysis, this is the depth of understanding, that we are what we make of ourselves and that reality and truth are ours to behold. When we attempt to define understanding, really to know what it

All of our human successes are created by us. We are responsible for their creation, and the future course of our development, in all of its forms, will be ours to determine as well. Fundamentally, we are creators. Understanding also involves that process whereby we differentiate and select, through our responsibility, the future course of our species.

is to be aware, what we are actually referring to is the responsibility for oneself. We must possess the knowledge that the progression of humanity and the results of our labors, such as our cities, our artworks, our languages, our technology, our literature, our knowledge, and our dreams for the future are all by-products of our responsibility and our drive to succeed.

All of our human successes are created by us. We are responsible for their creation, and the future course of our development, in all of its forms, will be ours to determine as well. Fundamentally, we are creators. Understanding also involves that process whereby we differentiate and select, through our responsibility, the future course of our species. Could there be a higher form of creation? No other living organism that we know of has this power. And through this power, we not only determine individual outcomes, but collective ones as well. A society, after all, is simply a collection of individual wills, and the responsibility for ourselves is a responsibility for all.

THE THREAT TO AN ADVANCED UNDERSTANDING

Irresponsibility and ignorance will extinguish the species, so the quest for understanding is not only a goal but an imperative. If we cannot understand reality, if we cannot accept the tremendous responsibility that we have toward ourselves and

our planet, and if we cannot contemplate the relation between present action and future course to its fullest extent, then there is an excellent chance that the human family will not survive. Many would argue that this is over-reactive at best, paranoid at worst. These critics however fail to understand the full extent of the span of time and how relatively limited is the human experience. We are incredibly vulnerable as a species, with the forces of history, time itself, working against our preservation, as it has for the vast majority of all living things. Over 99 percent of the world's species throughout time have become extinct. To understand our limits and the constraints of our knowledge and technological progress is vital if we are to survive. To know that there are no teleologics, and thus no pre-determined favorable outcomes, is to accept that technology may not always remedy our destructive actions and tendencies. For those who would argue that technology will inevitably save us, we can counter this argument because so far no one has devised a method of replacing the ozone layer or curing AIDS or preventing war. Can we really afford to proceed with the assumption that we can always bail ourselves out? To make this assumption is to live in peril, with no guarantee that tomorrow will provide a solution for the problems created today. Such an attitude is a rejection of our responsibility and a vote for the limitation and constraint of the human potential through our own ignorance.

We have already established that the one constant in life is change. For better or for worse, the future will bring dramatic changes for which we must be prepared. The most constructive preparation is a realistic world view, one which seeks understanding through acceptance of our limitations and the value of every individual life.

How do we accommodate our humanity juxtaposed with the forces of change? How does the human remain human in the face of greater psychological demands? What if the biological evolutionary engine fails to converge and meet our challenges?

Actually, the gap between what we need to know and our capabilities has reached crisis proportions, with the need to develop a realistic understanding absolutely critical to our future survivability. This is why we need a new individualism that emphasizes reason and possibility. We must face up to our responsibility, embrace it, and make it universal if we

are successfully to meet the challenges ahead, and we must accept that it will require all to participate. We cannot afford to let a segment of our society lag in this endeavor, for their sheer numbers could destroy all that those who accept their responsibility try to create.

If we do not develop this capability soon, on a wide scale, then the gulf between the capable and the incapable may prove unbridgeable. The ranks of the incapable will swell, and their mass will prove to be unmanageable by those who understand. Another important, indeed vital, component of understanding must be the realization that the numbers of aware people must increase if humanity is successfully to incorporate all of its members. The push for understanding must extend to the collective; it must be more than a realization of the enlightened few. For if it is not, we cannot succeed.

This is why it appears that the new individualism is a social necessity and must be implemented if the human family is to survive. Society is moving at a blistering pace, and we must adapt, and quickly, with a new understanding of how our species can meet these and other challenges.

Lastly, the fundamental tenet of the new individualism must be that people have the responsibility to choose what is best for them, and that through this choice, people answer the call of self-preservation. If we fail to facilitate this responsibility, we are saying that people are not capable of making choices and determining their own futures. We are condemning the majority of humanity to subservience, toward a master who thinks and makes choices for us. Through our reluctance to be powerful, we are resigning ourselves to an external directedness that every day threatens our very survival. We deserve more than that, for it is we who have forged the path that brought us here, through a will and a spirit, however fearful and underdeveloped, that longed for something better than we had. And it is we who will move forward toward that place of our own creation that is more of who we want ourselves to be. •

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TSI/SUE ANN MILLER

Declaration of Interdependence

R O K E L L E L E R N E R

We human beings are not solitary creatures; we have powerful needs for affiliation and belonging. Recognizing this, we commit ourselves to cultivate a sense of community. This means that we will set goals and work together to accomplish those goals that inspire the highest potential in all human beings. We will encourage freedom, protection, and right use of power so that all individuals can use their creativity and wisdom to fulfill a higher purpose: to make our world a better place to live in.

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The Path of Self-Reliance



AN INTERVIEW WITH
NATHANIEL BRANDEN
BY MARY NURRIESTEARN S

Nathaniel Branden has a Ph.D. in psychology and a background in philosophy. He is a practicing clinician in Los Angeles and is the author of "The Psychology of Self-Esteem," "The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem," and "Taking Responsibility." This interview is based upon his latest book, "Taking Responsibility."

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: Congratulations on your new book, "Taking Responsibility." It not only motivates us to become fully self-responsible, but also instructs us how to do so. Let's begin by defining independence.

NATHANIEL BRANDEN: The essence of independence is being materially and spiritually self-supporting. Independence means taking responsibility for your own well-being, looking at the world through your own eyes, forming your own conclusions, as well as developing the values by which you live through independent thought and judgment.

And what is the essence of self-responsibility?

The essence of self-responsibility is realizing that we are the author of our choices and actions and that we carry the task of preserving, protecting, and securing our own life and well-being. By extension, it is recognizing that no one else is born to live for us, or to fill our needs. We are basically responsible for the fulfillment of our own needs. That doesn't mean absolute self-sufficiency. Many of our goals require the cooperation and participation of other human beings. Self-responsibility consists of recognizing that if I want other people to cooperate or participate with me in the pursuit of particular goals, I have to offer them some values in exchange that are meaningful to them. The mere fact that I need or want is not a claim on another person. I don't own them.

How is happiness linked to self-responsibility?

Self-responsibility entails a pro-active orientation toward life. It implies an orientation, not of passively waiting for someone else to do something, but of taking initiative in the pursuit of whatever values or goals are important to one. Happy people typically are pro-active. They do not wait for the world or someone else to "make" them happy, which they know is impossible. They are oriented to what they can do to improve the quality of their lives and to bring more joy into their lives. There is an intimate connection between personal happiness and willingness to take serious adult responsibility for one's own life. As a psychotherapist, I often deal with people who wait for and dream of a rescuer. One of my messages to therapy clients is that, "No one is coming." No one is coming to spare you the necessity of thought, effort, or struggle. No one is coming to solve life's problems for you. If you do not do something different, nothing is going to get better.

I'm quoting you, "We create ourselves, we shape our

Only by taking responsibility for ourselves can we have any real power over our lives. Only a culture of personal accountability can sustain and preserve a civilized society. Our basic choice—to think or not to think, and to live responsibly or irresponsibly—reflects the essence of what it means to be human. Our freedom to choose is our burden, our challenge, our glory.

If I take the position that my happiness is primarily in my own hands, I give myself enormous power. I am not waiting for events or other people to make me happy. I am not trapped by blame, alibis, or self-pity. I am free to look at the options available in any situation and respond in the wisest way I can. If something is wrong, my response is not, “Someone’s got to do something!” but “What can I do? What needs to be done?”

identity, through what we are willing to be responsible for.” Would you elaborate on that?

Think of how a child develops. A child wants to move on his own. He learns first to crawl, then to walk, and then to move by more sophisticated means, like bicycles and automobiles. He wants to master some task and initiates the activity of doing whatever it entails to master it. Competency and an increasing capacity for self-responsibility grow as a person develops. We are born in a condition of helplessness and dependency. We grow into self-responsibility. It is not something we start out with. Through what we take responsibility for learning and doing, we gradually shape an identity, a sense of self.

What is the basic act of self-responsibility?

The most fundamental expression of self-responsibility is the choice to think or to be conscious. Consciousness, of course, exists on a continuum of very dim to very bright. Our responsibility lies in the fact that we control the switch. We have the choice to raise the degree of consciousness in order to see something more clearly, and we have the power to lower the level of consciousness in order to avoid seeing it at all. Self-responsibility begins with the choice to be aware, to look at reality and life, and to try to understand and make sense out of what one sees. Non-self-responsibility, in contrast, consists of mental passivity and unthinkingly absorbing the opinions, values, and judgments of other people with no independent process of analysis or of simply being guided by feelings and emotions one does not understand, with no serious effort to think and understand.

You use questions to help people develop self-responsibility. What kind of inquiry can assist us in becoming more conscious about responsibility?

I work with a sentence completion process where people complete a sentence stem several times. Here are some introductory sentence stems that seem to illuminate a great deal for people. If I operate five percent more self-responsibly at work, I _____. If I operate five percent more self-responsibly in my important relationships, I _____. If I take five percent more self-responsibility for my personal happiness, I _____. These start to raise awareness. When people produce six to ten endings for each of these stems, they begin to see that it is possible to operate at a higher level of self-responsibility than they do, and they begin to see the advantages that will come to them if and when they elect to do so.

*“Self-responsibility is both an expression of successfully achieving adulthood and our means of attaining it.”
Again, I am quoting you. Please discuss that.*

One of the ways we measure increasing maturity is by observing young people operate self-responsibly in more areas. In effect, through the learning that occurs as we operate more self-responsibly, we give ourselves higher levels of competence or mastery, which moves us toward full adulthood. Look from the other end of the telescope. When we see well-functioning adults—people in their thirties or beyond—we recognize maturity by the fact that they operate at a high level of personal responsibility. They are not into blaming, self-pity, or alibiing. They are not into waiting for somebody else to rescue them.

What is the peak or the climax of individuation?

Just about everybody learns how to clothe themselves, walk, and drive a car, and most people learn how to earn their own living. Material self-responsibility comes easiest for most people. What is much rarer are higher levels of intellectual self-responsibility where you live by the independent exercise of your own mind and experience your own ability to think as your source of security in the world. The climax of individuation or adulthood comes when you have matured to a level where you have a well-functioning mind that you trust and experience as the ultimate source of your security.

How do you link individuation to moral development?

The average person more or less accepts the moral standards of the family or the subculture in which he or she lives. Whatever the prevailing viewpoint declares moral or immoral is what most people accept. The precepts involved may or may not be reasonable. There is no real effort at independent thinking about the precepts. There is no thinking about whether these rules make sense, what they are based on, or whether they reflect how you look at life. Those questions don't occur to a mind that has not achieved a fairly high level of independence. One of the ways you can gauge independence is whether the person questions and thinks for himself or herself, rather than accepting codes of ethics ready-made. We can accept certain issues without question, and it doesn't matter much. Let's take dress codes, for example. It's no big deal if we go along, because the issue is not important. Some issues are very important, and it would be ideal if people were raised to recognize issues

When we take responsibility for the words coming out of our mouths, we don't say cruel and hurtful things to people we love. I'm often horrified at the way husbands and wives talk to each other, yet I know they love each other. Sometimes, I hear parents talking in ways that are terrible to children, and yet I know that they'd give their life for those children. They are not aware of what they are saying or how the children are likely to be affected by what they are saying.

that need to be thought about as individuals, and not absorbed uncritically.

Let's discuss responsibility as a causal agent. I am the cause of my decisions, choices, and actions.

Yes, this is very important. When I talk about responsibility, there is no implication of blame or fault-finding. Responsibility is realizing I am the cause of my choices, I am the cause of my actions. That I may or may not have perfectly good reasons for what I did is a separate question. The first question is, "Did I do it?" When children do something wrong, whatever the reason, when questioned, their first response is usually denial or an alibi. "It wasn't my fault; Johnny pushed me." In answer to the question, "Did you do this?" adults learn to say, "Yes." Then, they may explain.

Let's move to social metaphysics. Define what you mean by social metaphysics.

Social metaphysics names the psychological state of a person who does not have an independent concept of reality. All he or she has are ideas of reality and the world as perceived by other people. In this person's mind, the question is not "What is true?" It is, "What do people think is true?" It is not, "What is right?" It is, "What do people believe is right?" Everything is filtered through some fantasy about what is going on inside other people's minds. There is little independent contact with reality. Intellectually, it's all second-hand. As a teenager, I met many people who exhibited these characteristics, and I was utterly baffled by it. When I was twelve or thirteen, there was a boy across the street

Our responsibility lies in the fact that we control consciousness. We have the choice to raise the degree of consciousness in order to see something more clearly, and we have the power to lower the level of consciousness in order to avoid seeing it at all.

named Lloyd, whose uncle was a traveling salesman. The uncle brought labels from expensive New York stores, which Lloyd had his mother sew into his Toronto clothes. I couldn't make sense out of that; it all struck me as so unreal. Lloyd's clothes were bought at ordinary stores in Toronto, but he fantasized that people believed his clothes were purchased in expensive New York stores. For him, that fantasy was a reality superior to his own knowledge of the truth. I remember trying to figure out where this kid was coming from. I realized as I grew older that his psychology wasn't that uncommon. This example may be a bit extreme; however, most people live in that weird place which is called "what-do-other-people-think." My desire to understand that led me to the theory of social metaphysics.

When we participate in social metaphysics, we sacrifice our own intellectual independence. You said that "As a species, our mind is the tool of survival. When we choose to avoid intellectual independence, our policy is one of self-abdication." That was so poignantly said.

If we don't think for ourselves, we create a void. We have to be guided by something. If we don't think for ourselves, basically two options are left. One, we live off the beliefs or thinking of somebody else, and two, we are run by our feelings or emotions. People do a mixture of both, more often than not. This is why it is so important for parents to teach and encourage thinking in young people. One of the great disgraces of our school system is that clear thinking is not taught from an early age

on. Nobody should graduate from high school without being trained to understand logical fallacies.

Why are we tempted to give up this quest for autonomy? Social metaphysics is so rampant in our society.

It's frightening, it's work, it's effort. We are not infallible and may make mistakes. People may disagree with us. We want to be loved, we want to belong. We figure that if we go along with what other people are thinking or believing, they will have to love us.

You stated that the problem is not that we want to be liked; the problem is where this desire stands in the hierarchy of our values.

Exactly. It's no sin to want to be liked. But it is tragic to place approval from others ahead of our self-respect and ahead of our own judgment. Who would not rather be liked than not liked? The problem is that sometimes we are willing to pay much too high a price for it.

If we choose to engage in this quest for autonomy, what can we look forward to? Describe what a self-responsible life is like.

It's a very active life, and a pro-active life. It's a life in which we show initiative to get what we want and therefore optimize the chances of getting it. We don't ask, "Who's to blame?" We ask, "What needs to be done?" It's a life in which we don't wait for other people to make us happy; we look for ways to make ourselves happy. If we act on the basis of some feeling, like anger, we don't say, "Somebody else made me do it." We take responsibility for what we do about our feelings or emotions. It's a life in which we take responsibility for the words coming out of our mouth, and therefore are less likely to say cruel or foolish things. Here's a story to illustrate what I mean. One weekend, a man was working on his car, trying to repair something. He could not get it to run properly, and he was becoming more frustrated. His five-year-old son walked over, and the father, without thinking whether it was realistic to ask this of a five-year-old, asked the boy to do something which the boy could not do. In exasperation the father said to the little

boy, "You can't do anything right." To his horror, he saw the little boy walk away, muttering to himself, "You can't do anything right, you can't do anything right." The father, very upset, dropped his tools, ran over to the little boy, picked him up, apologized, and explained that he didn't mean what he said, that he had been upset. Later he said to me, "You know, Nathaniel, in this particular case I caught what I had said. Who knows how many times I didn't?"

When we take responsibility for the words coming out of our mouths, we don't say cruel and hurtful things to people we love. I'm often horrified at the way husbands and wives talk to each other, yet I know they love each other. Sometimes, I hear parents talking in ways that are terrible to children, and yet I know that they'd give their life for those children. They are not aware of what they are saying or how the children are likely to be affected by what they are saying.

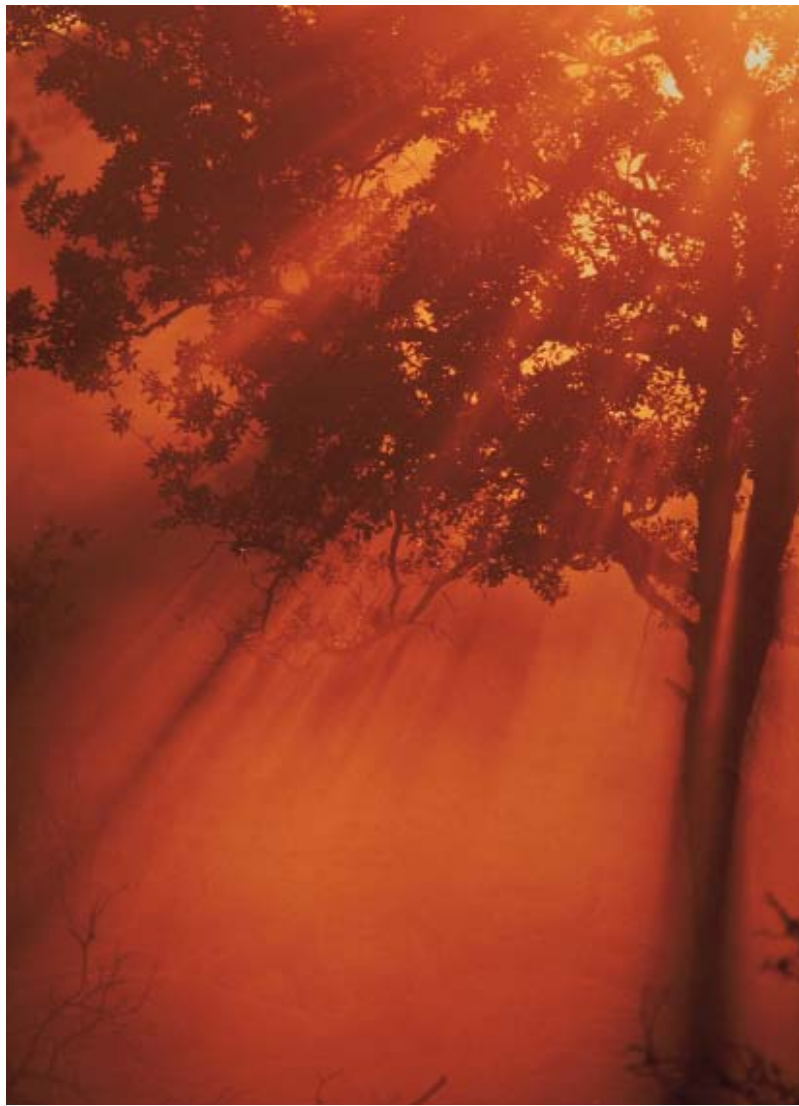
If we embrace self-responsibility, not merely as personal preference, but as a philosophical principle, we commit ourselves to an important moral idea. What's the moral idea?

That nobody else exists to service me. I have no right to treat another human being merely as a means to my end. I cannot demand that people sacrifice their self-interest to mine. If I want something from other people, I have a moral obligation to speak to their legitimate self-interest, and to offer values which are meaningful to them in exchange for whatever it is I'm asking of them. A human being is an end in herself or himself and needs to be treated as such.

We have two prevalent attitudes in our culture, the attitude of entitlement and the attitude of victimhood. How is the self-responsible way-of-being a cure for these disempowering attitudes?

During this century, we moved away from the idea that individuals are responsible for themselves and that families take responsibility for helping one another. The new doctrine is that the state or the government is increasingly responsible for the well-being of its citizens. Social aid programs, which were intended to reduce poverty, crime, and

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TSJ/TIM DAVIS

Soul Quest

ANN TREMAINE LINTHORST

What is this “soul” that has captured the best-seller charts in our day? I am going to hazard a definition that I think hints at what is so important to us. It is “sacred identity.” Soul is the individual sense of being more than what we know of ourselves humanly and of being better than our human selves often can actualize. This “more and better” sense of ourselves points to our sacred identity, made “in the image and likeness of God.”



Ann Tremaine Lintborst is a marriage and family counselor and spiritual director in Orange, California. She received her degree from Union Theological Seminary, and is the author of three books, including "Mothering as a Spiritual Journey."



I think that the current surge of interest in soul points to a recognition that we must seek our security and well-being within. The word "soul" awakens a voice within us that has been too long ignored or relegated to the bottom of our mental agendas. The attempt to find wholeness and satisfaction, safety and abundance by looking to others is bankrupting us, big-time. We are barraged with evidences of that bankruptcy via every form of national and global communication, every moment. Even while we rail at the inability of elected officials, police, the media, and health care professionals to take care of us properly, there is an increasing recognition that the solution to our predicament lies within or nowhere at all. We must find spiritual identity and dominion, or we will be swamped by

the demons, within and without, that we seem helpless to control.

And so we quest for soul. The quest arises not because soul is absent, but because it is present. As our external dependencies fail us, soul identity makes itself known to us. Books about soul, spiritual values, life after death, and consciousness factors in healing represent the truth of our sacred identity, revealing itself more clearly as we become more willing to look beyond self for our salvation.

I make a clear distinction between our *humanness* and our *soulness*. In traditional Judeo-Christian thinking, this has not been the case. The sense in the *Old Testament*, especially in the *Psalms*, is of soul being the equivalent of "heart," that is the center of our deepest feelings. But the soul can be "cast down" and must "hope" in God. In this usage, soul keeps the sense of being separate from God and from other souls as well. It is expressive of human emotions and is, like a human being, "in process."

I think that the power of Soul is undermined by seeing it as some sort of blend of human and divine characteristics. I capitalize the word "Soul" to indicate Its absolute, universal nature, which transcends separate identity. For myself, transformation of feelings and experience has occurred as I have come to see Soul as that place within where the fullness of pure divine Life floods into expression. It appears first as awareness, and then that awareness takes form as experience. Soul does not separate me from others, because Soul is a state of consciousness within which all sense of separation from the one Life dissolves.

In contrast, human identity is the sense of personhood, which is established by separation, location, and limitation. Ask yourself who you are, and the details that come to mind will all be statements of location and limitation. "I am male or female, born there, to that father and mother, living here, in this house, with these people, doing this, having that." This kind of self-identification, which I call "ego," automatically excludes all other possibilities. Being here we cannot be anywhere else. Having what we have and doing what we do means that we don't have or do other things. Personal identity is determined precisely by separation, location, and

The quest for soul arises not because soul is absent, but because it is present. As our external dependencies fail us, soul identity makes itself known to us. Books about soul, spiritual values, life after death, and consciousness factors in healing represent the truth of our sacred identity, revealing itself more clearly as we become more willing to look beyond self.

distinction from others. I know that I am Ann, and not Mary or George, by the differences that distinguish and separate us.

THE SOUL YARDSTICK

Soul helps us see through and not settle for the inadequate and depriving beliefs about ourselves and others and life into which we were all born. We must have a standard apart from the ego lens if we are to escape its poverty and imprisonment. While Soul is something we can discover only individually within, we can clearly define the nature of Soul and its seeing with the help of bliss reports. Then we have a fixed and reliable yardstick with which to distinguish the misconceptions of the human lens from the substance of divine Life.

The Soul yardstick is *spiritual quality*. Soul sees quality Life. It sees a wholeness of love, harmony, beauty, vitality, intelligence, innocence, purity, and all the other qualities of Spirit. Qualities, we may notice, are non-dimensional, that is, not material, therefore not located, and consequently they are universal. Consciousness that is quality-oriented is lifted out of the locatedness of human sense. The more we pay attention to quality, the more we are living and seeing out from Soul. The more we pay attention to persons, places, and things as separate, substantial realities, the more the ego lens is running our show.

For our own well-being, it is important to understand that the more emphasis there is on material and personal levels of thought, the less we will be aware of quality Life. The principle of consciousness involved here was stated by Jesus as, "You cannot serve two masters... you cannot serve God and mammon." This is not a religious injunction, but a law of consciousness.

The popular media invite our preoccupation with the lowest, grossest levels of the ego lens. The level of seeing that dominates popular entertainment and news reports focuses on bodies and the most grotesque bodily and personal experiences. As a nation, we are beginning to rebel against the garbage bombardment of daily media fare and seek a healthier mental diet. But most of us are relatively unfamiliar and even uncomfortable with quality consciousness. It may seem vague and unstructured. This points to the great value of studying reports of quality awareness, so that we begin to feel at home with Soul's sense of things. Soul-seeing does not take away the tangibility of our world. It infuses it with light and warmth. Soul sense is the sunlight of our lives.

RECOGNIZING SOUL

Most of us, when we attempt to look within, run into personal feelings, thoughts, memories, and fantasies. We don't know how to get beyond the barrier of the personal ego lens, with its mental and emotional stuff. I spent five and a half years in analytical psychotherapy without getting even a whiff of Soul. But many years later, I made a discovery that changed my sense of what lies *within* me.

My discovery came quite spontaneously one day as I took my daily walk in a park. Looking at a familiar scene, the thought came, "How beautiful!" Then a question. "How do I know that that is beautiful?" The answer came, "It must be beauty itself, seeing itself." And I thought then of the times I read a statement and find myself mentally exclaiming, "How true!" Again the question raised itself, "How do I know it is true?" Again the reply, "It must be truth itself, seeing itself." I pondered how these moments are clearly recognitions—re-cognitions—implying that something has already been cognized, or known. Otherwise, instead of finding the thought, "How beautiful" or "How true" springing to mind, I could only peer blankly, thinking, "What is this?" or I would simply pass it by unseen.

This discovery gave me a wonderful sense that spiritual qualities, such as beauty and truth, are already present in and as my consciousness. Not only is "beauty in the eye of the beholder," but also harmony, truth, order, innocence, purity, and all the other qualities of the spiritual realm. This was a beginning recognition—that word, again—of Soul as my identity and of Soul-seeing taking place all the time, even when ego seems to obscure it. This recognition has very much enhanced my appreciation of bliss reports.

Bliss testimonies teach us how to Soul-see rather than ego-see, because they show us how to whole-see rather than parts-see. Nothing written from a human standpoint can communicate the perception of wholeness in the way that bliss reports consistently do. I call these reports "Soul maps," because they provide us with ways of reading our everyday experience so that we can increasingly see and identify, right here, right now the voice and vision of

Soul. Then we notice more and more the moments of simple peace, joy, gratitude, playfulness, and satisfaction that are our common fare but that personal sense is likely to dismiss in its pursuit of the humanly exciting and dramatic.

SHIFT OF VISION, NOT EXTERNALS

From a human point of view, change means a shift in the externals. In the following passage, Margaret Montague, in the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in 1916, under the title, "Twenty Minutes of Reality," emphasizes that the change is not in things, but in the way "the usual things" are seen. Soul eyes discern not just beauty, but "the beauty of holiness," that is, beauty as an aspect of the wholeness of universal Life. Each "thing" is seen, not in its separate-thingness, but as a transparency to the wholeness of quality Life.

I cannot now recall whether the revelation came suddenly or gradually; I only remember finding myself in the very midst of those wonderful moments, beholding life for the first time in all its young intoxication of loveliness, in its unspeakable joy, beauty, and importance... I saw no new thing, but I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light—in what I believe is their true light. I saw for the first time how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole of life. Every human being moving across that porch, every sparrow that flew, every branch tossing in the wind, was caught in and was part of the whole mad ecstasy of loveliness, of joy, of importance, of intoxication of life.

As you read, take time to relish every adjective and noun, sinking into the quality flavor of the vision. This practice works wonders in cultivating quality sense. Montague continues,

It was not that for a few keyed-up moments I *imagined* all existence as beautiful, but that my inner vision was cleared to the truth so that I *saw* the actual loveliness

which is always there but which we so rarely perceive; and I knew that every man, woman, bird, and tree, every living thing before me was extravagantly beautiful, and extravagantly important. And as I beheld, my heart melted out of me in a rapture of love and delight. A nurse was walking past, the wind caught a strand of her hair and blew it out in a momentary gleam of sunshine, and never in my life before had I seen how beautiful beyond all belief is a woman's hair. Nor had I ever guessed how marvelous it is for a human being to walk. As for the internes in their white suits, I had never realized before the whiteness of white linen; but much more than that, I had never so much as dreamed of the mad beauty of young manhood. A little sparrow chirped and flew to a nearby branch, and I honestly believe that only "the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy" can in the least express the ecstasy of a bird's flight.

THE KEY AND THREE STEPS TO SOUL-SEEING

"The actual loveliness which is always there, but which we so rarely perceive." In this sentence, Montague gives us, not as a concept but as something experienced, a key to Soul-seeing. *Soul's seeing is what is always taking place no matter what our human sense of things may be declaring at any given moment.* With this key, we may substantially increase our capacity to see *from* and *as* Soul, even though we may never have a moment of such spontaneous liberation as hers.

One very practical way of reminding ourselves of Soul's presence and operation is to think about the room we are sitting in at the moment. Right now that room is filled with music. Symphonies and rock groups are playing, choirs and soloists singing, every conceivable variety of music is being performed. If we have a radio and if it is plugged in, tuned to the proper frequency and turned on, we will be able to hear the music. If not, then we will

hear nothing and will think that the room is empty of music.

Likewise to see and experience the love, harmony, beauty, intelligence, creativity, and vitality of Life, we will need to have our receiver, which is consciousness, (A) plugged in, (B) tuned to the right frequency, and (C) turned on.

(A) We plug in by acknowledging Soul's presence and operation as our own seeing, here and now, no matter what the ego reports. (B) Understanding that it is a quality frequency, we tune in by directing our attention to quality. We deliberately lay aside the sensual/emotional frequency of perception. This is akin to Jesus' advice to "enter into our closet and shut the door" when we pray. (C) We celebrate and enjoy the universal, quality viewpoint in whatever forms may be most meaningful to us. We let Soul "turn us on" instead of ego, using meditation, artistic activities, nature walks—whatever best helps us to get beyond the confines of ego-seeing.

STRETCHING CONSCIOUSNESS

I cannot overstate the value and importance of a practice of stretching one's consciousness by grateful, devoted immersion in the vision of Soul reports. Ask yourself, "How many times a day, normally, does my thought even touch upon such words/ideas as 'loveliness, beauty, ecstasy, joy,' the 'extravagant importance' of 'every living thing' and so on?" Most of us, I think, would find that such qualities, values, and images rarely register in the midst of the repetitive thought and fantasy patterns with which our minds are normally filled.

Consciousness is where God is; God's kingdom is a consciousness kingdom. Allowing our thinking to be fogged up with images from the "sea of mental garbage" makes no sense. A devoted Christian friend recently confessed her anger at the fact that God reveals Himself so rarely, when our need for His revelations is so great. But God's revelation is continuous. What is rare is an ability and willingness to look beyond the captivating, self-centered dramas of personal sense. We must honor quality Life, or we will not see it. We honor it by loving to notice the good that is already in our experience

Montague's description of "being in love with every thing before me" stands in stark contrast to our usual human experiences of love. We begin to see that ego love is utilitarian, based upon the self's perceived needs, which it looks to the "beloved" to fill. Being focused on getting its needs met, it cannot help being self-centered and possessive.

and by longing to see more evidence of its presence.

Nothing that any ego can dream up for itself can begin to approximate in quality the wonders of God's spiritual universe. Laying aside the ego's instances, fantasies, and even personal prayers daily, in order to frolic in transpersonal visions of bliss, is a spiritual exercise of not only great value but of unspeakable joy as well. How I have enjoyed seeing in my young adult sons, "the mad beauty of young manhood" to which Montague's report awakened me. How much more I enjoy watching the birds outside my window and the tree branches "tossing in the wind" now that I see them as illustrations of "the whole mad ecstasy of loveliness, of joy, of importance, of intoxication of life." For Valentine's Day, my husband bought me a bird feeder to hang outside my window. Each morning he puts seed in it, and the delighted dances of the feeding birds enhance my spiritual study time. Montague pauses to summarize her experience.

Once out of all the gray days of my life I have looked into the heart of reality, I have witnessed the truth; I have seen life as it really is—ravishingly, ecstatically, madly beautiful, filled to overflowing with a wild joy and a value unspeakable. For those glorified moments I was in love with every living thing before me—the trees in the wind, the little birds flying, the nurses, the internes, the people who came and went. There was nothing that was alive that was not a miracle. Just to be alive was in itself a miracle. My very soul flowed out of me in a great joy.

Here as in the beginning, the juxtaposition of

"gray" with the reported beauty of reality heightens our sense of the shift, like a black-and-white movie that suddenly explodes into vivid Technicolor. And then the thundering waterfall of descriptive words, "ravishingly, ecstatically, madly beautiful, and filled to overflowing with a wild joy and a value unspeakable." All three of the initial adjectives point to the effect in consciousness of the vision: the mind is ravished, driven crazy with ecstasy. Nothing ordinary, pedestrian, or boring here! The joy of the experience is wild; consciousness floods, overflows, and the sense of value surpasses language. Such a description goes a long way toward effecting that very change in the consciousness of the reader if it is lovingly, attentively read.

Since I first heard this passage quoted, I have been a grateful devotee of this definition of Life "as it really is": "ravishingly, ecstatically, madly beautiful, and filled to overflowing with a wild joy, and a value unspeakable." I consider it a priceless gift of grace and goodness just to have encountered this description of Life. I have lived with and cherished and repeated these words, and looked to see everywhere that mad beauty and that unspeakable value and to feel that wild joy. I don't wait any more for ego-Ann to grant me permission to notice goodness. I hold these words up before my inner eyes and challenge the gray slop of ego complaints to venture into their laser beam. The fruits of that devotion are a greatly enhanced capacity to experience and express beauty, abundance, forthrightness, and love in my daily life. •

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The Night Watch

DAVID STEINDL - RAST
AND SHARON LEBELL

Vigils is the womb of silence, the longest hour.

Walking to the oratory under the predawn starry sky is an awe-inspiring experience and a fitting beginning for the monastic day as the monks gather for Vigils.

They enter the monastery's heart, the oratory, while it is still dark. The oratory is a place dedicated to only one purpose: prayer. At this hour, the only light will often be that of the cantor's lectern. The choir sits rapt in darkness. All details are hidden.

Out of this womb of darkness and silence emerges the chant.

David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk and the author of "A Listening Heart," "Gratefulness," and "Belonging to the Universe," which he co-wrote with Fritjof Capra. Sharon Lebell is a musician and writer. The following is from "The Music of Silence" by David Steindl-Rast. Copyright 1995 by David Steindl-Rast. Printed by arrangement with Harper San Francisco Publishers. To order this book, or others in this magazine, please see the resource section on page 70.



Vigils—also known as Matins—is the night watch hour, the time for learning to trust the darkness. Looking up to the night sky, we are reminded of the immense mystery in which we are immersed.

The root meaning of the word "mystery" is to shut one's eyes and ears. Mystery is silence, darkness. Rilke speaks in his *Book of Hours* of turning inward, of looking deep into himself, and he reports what he finds, "My God is dark." He sees a thousand theologians plunging like divers into the night of God's name.

The poet prays, "You darkness from which I come, I love you more than the flame that sets boundaries." The shining flame lights up the things around it, but outside of this arbitrary circle of light lies deep darkness, which is limitless. That darkness is symbol and image for the divine mystery, the nothingness (the no-thing-ness) of the divine realm. Everyday reality, the world of things we learn to manage, is inherently finite, bounded, lit up, and delimited.

But darkness holds everything, embraces everything, including you and me. "And maybe in this darkness a great energy stirs right near me," the poet says and then expresses his deepest conviction, "I trust in night."

Vigils is an invitation to learn to "trust in night," to trust the darkness despite the immense fear it triggers. We have to learn to meet mystery with the courage that opens itself to life. Then we discover, as the *Gospel of John* puts it right in the pro-

logue, "The light shines in the darkness." This doesn't mean that light shines *into* the darkness, like a flashlight shining into a dark tent. No, the good news that the *Gospel of John* proclaims is that the light shines right in the midst of darkness. A great revelation: the very darkness shines.

This is why the psalmist sings, "I will say to that darkness, 'be my light.'" To recognize the darkness itself as light can be a great consolation. When we find ourselves in inner darkness, we cry out with the prophet, "Watchman, what of the night?" When is it going to be over?

The challenge is to look deeply enough to discover that this darkness is all that we need and to find in it what we are looking for. Listening deeply to chant, we will hear a darkness turned into sound, a darkness that shines.

The night wind is the natural voice of Vigils. Wind is a symbol for spirit, which comes from the same word as breath or breathe. The Holy Spirit is that life breath that blows in the darkness. Chant is the spirit made audible. It's a symbol for the wind that blows in the mind, and we cannot tell "whence it cometh and whither it goeth." It is a total surprise, total creativity.

To sing chant, monks learn to breathe correctly; by learning to breathe, one learns to be centered and to be more present where one is. In one of his poems, Robert Frost whimsically speaks of the wind that didn't yet know how to blow until we humans took it in and gave it voice. Chant, like poetry, is the wind the wind was meant to be. "The aim was song."

We all struggle with dark periods, like Jacob wrestling in the night with the Divine Presence in the form of a dark angel, beautiful and yet terrifying. At the end of the night, the angel says, "Let me go." But Jacob replies, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." As dawn breaks, the angel blesses him but also injures him by touching his thigh. From that day on, Jacob limps. There is a mysterious woundedness that somehow goes with great blessing.

When we truly encounter the night in all its beauty and terror, we have no assurance whatsoever that we are going to come out unscathed. If

you come out injured, it might just be a sign of the blessing that you have received there.

The hour of the vigils is also a symbol of the waking up we have to do in the midst of our lives. The kind of world in which we live is really a benighted world. This watching in the night and waiting for the light, this wakefulness is a forceful reminder to wake up throughout the day from the world of sleep to another reality. A daydream, a chance remark overheard, a fleeting thought that crosses our mind as we wait in the express lane at the supermarket may be the message of an angel, passing as swiftly as a shooting star in the night sky. Time to wake up.

The angel for vigils wears a dark scarlet garment and holds his horn as if he were ready to blow, but he is not yet blowing. His left hand makes a strange gesture that signals, "Wait; not yet." His eyes are turned upward. He waits in that reverent silence out of which every genuine sound must come. This angel personifies the expectant listening attitude that must precede genuine word or song.

Vigils calls us to a loving listening. Because we have so much restlessness and noise in us, we find it hard to nurture a listening attitude. So even the very listening to chant begins cultivating that listening. It is an attentiveness that begins with our sense of hearing but leads much further and much deeper. Monks are encouraged to listen with their hearts so that in the end they may perceive "what eye has not seen, nor ear heard."

Rising well before dawn for Vigils allows monks to add a whole extra dimension to their day. Not a few men and women outside the monastic life have discovered that they too can bring the spirit of Vigils into their lives by setting aside a certain time

Vigils is the hour that calls us to set aside time outside the practical demands of the day and to connect with that dark but grace-filled mystery in which we are immersed.

and space for nothing but spiritual pursuit: meditation, prayer, silence, listening to music—whatever suits them.

If we add a little time to the beginning of our day, even if it means getting up fifteen minutes earlier, this contemplative moment in the early morning can enrich our whole day. Don't worry, you're not wasting time. Don't think that you are taking time away from something that needs to be done. Without the contemplative dimension, the whole day can slip away into a mad chase, but those few minutes can give it meaning and joy. And if you can set aside a little corner in your home, however modest, as a sanctuary, that space can readily conduct you each day back into the contemplative mode.

If you get up fifteen minutes earlier, you have this extra bit of time that doesn't have to be put to some practical purpose. The useful fits into your normal routine. You can delight in this extra time, savoring it in any way you wish. Many play music in the morning. Not a few these days listen to chant, the music that monks chant at this hour, music in which the great silence of mystery becomes sound. If you make time for this, it may change the whole character of your day.

Vigils, then, is the hour that calls us to set aside time outside the practical demands of the day and to connect with that dark but grace-filled mystery in which we are immersed. Once the bright light of day dawns and the demands of the day begin, it is easy to forget the sacred, timeless dimension of our lives. The angel of Vigils challenges us to carry through the rest of the day the mystery of a darkness that gives light, to carry it with wonder and joy, like a melody we cannot forget. •

Self-Reliance

Continued from page 49

teenage pregnancy, had logical goals, but the longer those programs have been in existence, the worse the conditions they were designed to solve have become. Scholars have produced a mountain of evidence which shows that our policies have increased the problem of dependency among people. We have a society in which, according to one *Time* magazine writer, we have produced this mindset, "If I want it, I need it. If I need it, I have a right to it. If I have a right to it, somebody owes it to me, or else I'll sue." This didn't happen spontaneously. This mindset is the result of intellectuals, editorialists, and politicians advocating the belief that people can't help who they are and shouldn't be expected to, and it's the job of the government to rescue or save them. They are undeterred by the fact that the very conditions they aim to ameliorate have grown dramatically worse with every decade.

How does self-responsibility and accountability fit into the work-place? Specifically, how can organizations inspire self-responsibility and autonomy?

First of all, senior executives have to exemplify it in their own behavior. They have to send clear messages that this is expected, valued, and appreciated. When self-responsibility is manifested, it has to be rewarded loudly and conspicuously. It needs to be celebrated. People need to become aware of precisely what they are accountable for. Sometimes, problems occur because there is no clear definition of who is responsible for what.

Can you highlight behaviors that reflect avoidance of self-responsibility on the job?

One of the most common mistakes people make is summarized in the statement, "That's not in my job description." Nobody is going anywhere very important who confines activities to what's in the job description. Successful, pro-active people always look to go beyond the job description; they always look to do more. It is an escape from responsibility never to be willing to step outside of the technical language of your job description. Another way that we avoid responsibility is by pretending to be confused or to produce confusion to justify inactivity. People also pretend not to know,

not to notice, or not to be aware of things that, in fact, they did notice or are aware of. But if they admitted it, they would have to take action. They don't want to take action. I often ask people what they pretend not to know.

So that this doesn't sound like drudgery and hard work, what is the benefit? Why engage in self-responsibility?

The benefits are that your life works better: you get more success; you have a better marriage; you have happier, more self-confident children; you have more self-esteem; and life is easier, not harder. To avoid responsibility is a drag. It's a very frustrating way to live. It isn't highly self-responsible people who typically come to therapy; it's people who have been avoiding responsibility for a lifetime and are now struggling with the consequences.

You open the book by saying that your life focus is personal happiness. Comment on happiness being the quest of life.

I was approaching my sixty-first birthday and began thinking about the subject of happiness. In my essence, I've always been a happy person, but I've known some difficult struggles, as we all have, and I felt there were times when some of the suffering could have been avoided or shortened. I was aware that I had never consciously made it my assignment or purpose to be happy in a very focused way. I wondered what would I do if I made it my focus to be happy. I realized that I have choices about what to focus on and have choices about what to give my attention to. I discovered that the only value in focusing on negatives is for deciding what action to take to improve the situation. I am far better off if I focus as much as I can on the positives in my life and deal with the negatives when and as I see opportunities to correct something. This led me to what I call *the two basic rules of a happy life*. Begin each day with two questions: "What is good in my life? What needs to be done?" The purpose of the first question is to keep us oriented toward the positive, toward appreciation. The purpose of the second question is to direct our efforts to the troublesome areas, so that we do whatever we can do to make whatever is wrong right. •

Plant What You Love in the Garden of Your Life

WAYNE MULLER

Your home is the garden. Carry its odor, hidden in yourself, into the city. Suddenly your enemies will buy seed packets and fall to their knees to plant flowers in the dirt by the road. They'll call you Friend and honor your passing among them. When asked, "Who was that?" they will say, "Oh, that one has been beloved by us since before time began." This from people who would have trampled over you to maintain their advantage. Give everything away except your garden, your worry, your fear, your small-mindedness. Your garden can never be taken from you.—Lynn Park

TSI/ART WOLFE





Wayne Muller is a therapist and graduate of the Harvard Divinity School. He is the founder of Bread for the Journey, an organization serving families and communities in northern New Mexico. He is the author of "Legacy of the Heart." The following is from "How Then Shall We Live?" by Wayne Muller. Copyright 1996 by Wayne Muller. Printed with permission of Bantam Books, division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.



When we plant a garden, we must first prepare the soil. We must take great care to clear the ground of rocks, twigs, and weeds, removing anything that will prevent healthy growth. We work the soil, sifting the hard clumps, digging in essential nutrients. Then we might build a fence, an enclosure to keep out predatory animals—rabbits, deer, gophers—so that the garden will be safe from harm.

But what if we stop there? What if we spend all our time preparing the soil, moving rocks, pulling weeds, and building fences? At the end of our work, what will we have? Only a clear, empty patch of ground. There will be no harvest, no flowers, no nourishment from this garden.

The second, indispensable question we must answer is this. What shall we plant in this garden? What harvest, when it comes, will bring us great joy? What seeds, when they blossom, will provide us with delight? It is not enough to keep clearing, sifting, removing obstacles, securing boundaries. While it is essential that we prepare the soil, this will not in itself produce a harvest.

In the same way, our various healing methods, our psychologies and therapies can help us clear the ground of our past and prepare us to receive a better life. But it is not enough simply to clear the debris of the past. We must plant what we love in the garden of our life. As the Tao Te Ching insists, our center will heal us. When we attend to what is loving and beautiful, we are brought forward into our most exquisite manifestation. "Correct handling of flowers," suggests Bokuyo Takeda, "redefines the personality."

This is the difference between a life repaired and a life well-lived. When we spend all our time clearing the ground of our life story, we are seeking only to repair what is broken, to fix what is defective. But even when we are successful, the best we can hope for is to climb all the way up to ground level, to "recover" some imagined state of being "normal." But what if we imagine something beyond a life repaired?

Our work in therapy, telling old stories and healing the old wounds, is necessary and important. This is the work of clearing the ground of our lives. But then there are seeds to plant. Thich Nhat Hanh writes:

There are many kinds of seeds in us, both good and bad. Some were planted during our lifetime, and some were transmitted by our parents, our ancestors, and our society. Our ancestors and our parents have given us seeds of joy, peace, and happiness, as well as seeds of sorrow, anger, and so on.

Every time we practice mindful living, we plant healthy seeds and strengthen the healthy seeds already in us. Healthy seeds function similarly to antibodies. When a virus enters our bloodstream, our body reacts and antibodies come and surround it, take care of it, and transform it. This is true with our psychological seeds as well. If we plant wholesome, healing, refreshing seeds, they will take care of the negative seeds, even without our asking them. To succeed, we must cultivate a good reserve of refreshing seeds.

Anne grew up with an alcoholic father. Now, with five children and a demanding career, she often feels overwhelmed and exhausted by her life. She is always taking care of something or someone, and she resents that she has to work so hard for so little emotional reward. Just as she did with her alcoholic father, she is always watching for what needs to be done, what tasks are required, how to make sure everything and everyone is taken care of.

Anne and I worked together for some time on her childhood and how the pain of her family alcoholism gave birth to her compulsions and her weariness. At the same time, I could see that Anne was also a very playful, creative woman who rarely allowed herself to nurture her artistic spirit. “My

What is at the center of your life? Carefully examine where you spend your attention, your time. Look at your appointment book, your daily schedule. These things—these meetings, errands, responsibilities—this is where you dedicate your precious days, hours, and moments. This is what receives your care and attention—and, by definition, your love.

father was the artist in the family,” she reported to me one day. “It was my job to clean up the messes he left behind.” We discussed the possibility of her listening more closely to her creative impulses. She said she would try, but it would be hard. Where would she find the time?

A few weeks later, Anne proudly announced she had begun taking a watercolor class two evenings a week at the community college. When she told me about her painting, her eyes were bright and her face shone. She brought me some of her paintings. They were bright and playful, rich with passionate colors. “When I’m painting, I feel something deep in my body, a joy, a happiness. These may not be great paintings—I just love doing them so much. I lock myself in my room for hours, and no one is allowed to bother me. I’m just letting myself go. I’m having so much fun.”

The more Anne painted, the more she shifted her awareness. She no longer watched like the child of an alcoholic. Now she saw with the eyes of a painter. Instead of always watching for responsibilities, now she also watched for colors, lines, textures, and shapes. She had shifted her inner language; she was now seeking what she loved.

Her family, her children, and her marriage were still the same. But Anne could now see with eyes

that were more in balance, eyes that could also uncover what was beautiful and rich in her daily, ordinary life. •

To order this book, or others in this magazine, please see the resource section on page 70.



TSI/CHUCK KEELER

Loneliness

PHIL NUERNBERGER

Most of us think of loneliness as being apart from loved ones, having no one with whom to share our feelings, hopes and dreams, our fears and concerns, and our experiences. The more unable we are to communicate our inner thoughts and feelings, the more lonely we feel. To solve this problem, we gather loved ones, build friendships, even join clubs and organizations. We think that if we have friends and family, people around us who love and care for us, we will never be lonely.

Phil Nuernberger, Ph.D., is founder and president of Mind Resource Technologies. For the past twenty-six years, Phil has studied and lived with a Tantra Yoga Master, both in the United States and in the Himalayan mountains of India and Nepal. He is internationally recognized for his work in leadership training, stress management, and personal effectiveness.



But it doesn't work. As rewarding as family and friends are, they do not keep us from being lonely; they only distract us from our loneliness. In fact, the more we depend on our loved ones to keep us from being lonely, the more lonely we become. Think about it for a moment. Are you ever lonely for your enemies? Do you miss having unpleasant people around you? No, we are lonely for our friends and family, for those people to whom we feel close. It is the absence of our loved ones that makes us lonely.

We think that loneliness involves our relationship with others, but it really involves our relationship with ourselves. It arises out of our sense of individuality. Our life experiences seem to confirm that we are truly alone. We are born into this world alone, we die alone. No one feels our pain or our joy, nor do they digest our food, breathe for us, or feel what we feel. Even though we may communicate and share these experiences, it is still "me," the ego-sense of individuality, that tells me I am alone. We don't experience any "self" that is connected to, or a part of, any other self. As a consequence, we fail to understand the fundamental connection we have with each other and with the universe at large.

Yet there are times when we experience a sense of wholeness, of completeness, of kinship with the universe at large. It may happen when we look up at the starry heavens, or watch the birth of a child, or participate with others in working through a crisis situation. It doesn't happen because we have expectations or make demands; we simply experience a strong sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves. At this moment, we lose our ego-sense of self and experience being part of a greater identity, a greater "Self," and all loneliness vanishes. Unfortunately, these experiences are fleeting, easily lost in the shuffle of our day-to-day distractions, pressures, and reactions.

The mystical experience is powerful and undeniable. In just one experience, our loneliness, our fear, and our self-hatred are diminished by half. As we become more skilled in our ability to have this awareness, we gradually lose all sense of loneliness, all fears are vanquished, and all self-hatred is eliminated. Our ego-sense of individuality now becomes an instrument by which we express in a unique way our thoughts, our love, our joy, and our strength.



PHIL NUERNBERGER

When we are genuinely loving, we also break free from our ego-sense of self. But we confuse “loving” with “being loved.” Most of us engage in a desperate search for someone to love us, but we confuse the issue by saying that we need someone to love. We say we want someone to share with, someone we can love, but what we are really saying is that we need someone to love us, someone who will make us feel important and keep us from feeling lonely. This is not love, but emotional attachment which leads us into dependency. We believe that we need this person to be happy, to be content, to be fulfilled. So our loving becomes distorted by our emotional needs. When they don’t love us back, we feel miserable and unloved. When they aren’t around, we feel lonely.

We all have a remarkable, unlimited capacity to love one another. There is a wide range of expression of our love, from brotherly and sisterly love to romantic, sexual love. But as long as we continue to confuse love and emotional attachment, we will continue to be lonely, even when we have someone to love.

We can conquer this dragon of loneliness, but we must turn to our deepest resource to do so, our core spiritual Self. The great spiritual sages of all traditions say that our loneliness lies in the ignorance of our spirit, the core of our being. When we become aware of this Self, we experience the mys-

tery of life, the unbroken and unending connection we have with each other and with the universe. We become fully conscious of the universal Spirit that flows within and through us.

Picture life like a large oak tree filled with leaves, twigs, and branches. Our ego-sense of self makes us feel like we are a leaf on this tree. When the winds blow, the leaves rub against each other. Sometimes this is a pleasant experience, and sometimes it is very unpleasant. As leaves, we feel isolated and apart from one another, even though we can see that we all belong to the same tree. When we become conscious of our spiritual Self, we realize that we are far more than just the expression of a single leaf. We are more than even the branch and the trunk. We are the life force within the tree.

We cannot realize the power of this experience by analyzing it. Intellectual understanding is not the experience of wholeness, nor does it put an end to loneliness. Those experiences of wholeness gained by watching a birth or gazing at the stars are not intellectual, logical events. We must go beyond the intellect and become directly conscious of the human spirit. This is the heart of the meditative traditions of self-mastery—to calm the mind so completely, to be so focused, that we experience this spiritual Self directly. In Tantra, this experience is called *samadhi*, while in Western meditative-spiritual traditions, it is referred to as a “mystical experience” because it takes us beyond our thoughts and emotions, beyond even our beliefs.

The mystical experience is powerful and undeniable. In just one experience, our loneliness, our fear, and our self-hatred are diminished by half. As we become more skilled in our ability to have this awareness, we gradually lose all sense of loneliness, all fears are vanquished, and all self-hatred is eliminated. Our ego-sense of individuality now becomes an instrument by which we express in a unique way our thoughts, our love, our joy, and our strength. We do not lose our identity. We polish and refine our identity until our spiritual Self shines through like a bright light, and we experience the real joy and freedom that are our true heritage. •

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Seven Words of Well-Being

RACHEL SNYDER

MOVE

Your address, your bed, your body, your bookshelf. Take a walk, take a hike, take a step away from stagnating jobs, relationships, and life patterns. Change perspective. Move closer to people who meet you with authenticity and nourish your wildest dreams. You don't have to move mountains; shifting a single pebble can work wonders.

TOUCH

Touch the part of your own body that you love. Embrace in the bakery, in the parking lot, in the doorways all over town. Kiss people on the cheek. Stroke your cat more, pet your dog more. Savor the sensation of a silky scarf, of a well-sanded piece of wood, of the triad of textures in an Almond Joy. Moss, bark, rocks, and water work, too. The more you do it, the less you bump up against the ouch in touch.

LISTEN

Sit in silence and see how much there is to hear. Listen to people. What are they really saying? Listen to the very last notes of every song. Listen to your own inner voice—the one you can hear only when the din of every day is diminished. Hear the rustle of a leaf, the call of a bullfrog, the pop and crackle of your wood stove. Listen with your toes, listen with your heart, and always listen to that which is never spoken.

FEEL

Feel the pain, feel the joy, until you feel you'll surely evaporate. Stop holding back from laughing with your belly, loving from the deepest places of your heart, swooning with the sensuality of life itself. When another's disregard or arrogance enrages you, feel the anger rise up and roar! If you're not truly feeling, you're not truly alive—you're just going through the motions (which, by the way, does not qualify for #1 above).

TRUST

Stop second-guessing yourself. You know what you know, you know? That inner tickling is your highest truth. It will serve you well; the backfire comes when you deny or discount it. Take in information, from all sides, yet trust, in the end, that you—and you alone—know what's best for you. If all day you pine to paint, then that is what you must do. If you ache to walk beside the ocean, find a way to get there. Without complete trust, you are left only to rust.

GATHER

Gather together with women and men you love. Sip tea together, walk in the woods together, talk and talk and talk, read aloud to each other, do absolutely nothing together. Revel in how your hair and your skin and your bodies and your stories are so different—and so utterly alike. Cook and eat together, stand beside the washing machine and cry and hug and wail together. And most assuredly, laugh together until your sides ache and your pants are wet.

RECEIVE

For once, stop giving, giving, giving to everyone but yourself. Accept a compliment with grace. Voice what you need—be it a hug, a moment of talk, food for your table, a loan of money—and know that it will be provided. Loosen your white-knuckled, stressed-out grasp on life, and then let the palms of your hands fill to overflowing. Know that you deserve all you receive, and remember to show your gratitude for the sheer magnificence of a life lived well. •



Living the Mythic Life

J E A N H O U S T O N

Because of the acceleration of human experience in our time, each of us, in his or her own way, is becoming a mythic being. We have undergone as many unusual experiences and suffered as many woundings as any mythic character. As in the traditional model of stages along the hero's journey of transformation, we have heard and answered many calls, discovered remarkable allies, crossed and recrossed many thresholds of experience, found ourselves swallowed and regested in the belly of the whale, entered upon a road of trials and high adventures, died many times to outworn and restrictive aspects of ourselves, and been chronically resurrected.



Jean Houston is the author of "The Possible Human" and "Search for the Beloved." She is co-director of the Foundation for Mind Research and the founder and director of the Mystery School, a program of spiritual study and sacred psychology based on the principles of ancient mystery traditions. Her intensive workshops blend lectures and presentations on myth, history, and psychology with music, meditations, and dance.



We have fought monsters of our own and others' making, tried to right wrongs or enhance the condition of life wherever we have found it, and have even discovered a path to the beloved and marriage to the spiritual partner within. Our lives could hardly be called humdrum, but any time they seemed dull, we went out and did something about it. Or perhaps some archetypal force entered in and livened things up for us.

In my travels, I have discovered this phenomenon occurring worldwide. We are all engaged in a mythic experiencing of the life of the soul and, by extension, of the Soul of the World. Indeed marriage to the soul may be the preeminent occurrence in the life of the psyche today. But what is unique about our time is that our lives are not amplified by reflection in the cultural mythic hero or heroine. Our lives are as mythic as theirs. We are direct participants in the story of the Soul of the World. We catch the evolutionary resonance much more directly than we once did, which explains all the new emphasis on personal mythology.

Despite the media dominance of economic and political forms, I feel that the most important event in the present whole system transition is the radical incorporation of mythical and archetypal qualities in our lives. Whenever we study myth, we open the gate to this disclosure. And we can begin to examine our own lives as mythic events—events that tell of the unfolding and uncoding of the Soul of the World.

At this point, the tension between soul and world, inner and outer, public and private begins to disappear as we discover ourselves to be characters in the drama of the world soul, the anima mundi. In this mode, ego structures are seen as only one aspect among multiple aspects of the self. Indeed the most accurate model of human existence reveals innate diversity, both within each individual and among individuals.

The polyphrenic or multiminded self is the healthy self. Spiritually, however, as the psychologist James Hillman reminded us, "the soul's inherent multiplicity demands a theological fantasy of equal differentiation." This means that now those psychospiritual potencies whom we call gods—with the neters of ancient Egypt—need to be seen as polyphrenic, multifaceted images of the One.

In the state of partnership that blends into union, we are digested by God and re-formed by God. And in some sense, God becomes human for us. Meister Eckhart, one of the most powerful con-

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Mythic Life

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ceptual and experiential Christian theologians of the Middle Ages, believed that the mystical union is not the privilege of the few but the very vocation and ultimate realization of humanity. Eckhart, the writer, has God speak to us, saying, "I became man for you. If you do not become God for me, you do me wrong."

In such a statement, our notions of substance and essence begin to shift and vibrate, moving across transpersonal domains. Spirit is infused with matter and matter with spirit. Eckhart believed this entirely because he believed that God is immanent in us all, is in fact our very being. Eckhart said, "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely God, and God I; so that this God and this I become one I."

The "archetype of partnership" is our very reason for being. Marriage to the soul is our *raison d'être*. Our fears and our limited self-concept keep reducing the sense of the reality and vitality of this union. The quality of our selfhood depends on the presence of that divine image in us, on our communion with this soul, this God-self that we contain. Following from that, it depends on the degree of our own immanence in the archetype of soul or God-self. This relationship can be experienced as the soul's union with its beloved. By becoming immersed in the archetypal and profoundly loving relationship, we can grow toward our true identity in God. •

From "The Passion of Isis and Osiris" by Jean Houston. Copyright 1995 by Jean Houston. Printed by permission from Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc. To order this book, or others in this magazine, please see the resource section on page 70.

Birthright

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Continually questioning ourselves is essential to making wise and conscious choices throughout the many stages of our life's journey. We should periodically pause in silence to ask, *What is my purpose here?* We must answer this to stay true to our path. And there are other questions *Who am I? Do I feel happy, healthy, and whole? How can I expand the promise of my life? Have I erected defenses and barriers that are limiting my vision? Am I making choices that encourage my growth? Am I kind to myself? Am I loving to myself? Am I living my truth?* Some of the answers to your questions and challenges will come swiftly; others are revealed over time. Have faith and don't try to hurry spirit. The answers always come at the right time.

When you are ready, open your eyes. Remain still for a moment and experience how at peace you feel. You may feel a smile from your very center. Try to hold onto the tranquil point of light glowing within as you move through the day.

Soon you'll discover the lasting faith and understanding that result from the simple act of listening to yourself in silence each day. It may even seem miraculous. As you honor your need for an intimate relationship with your spirit, you learn to trust in yourself and your inner wholeness. You gain clarity and insight into the people and things that enhance or hamper you. You learn to use your gifts wisely, to set your own standards. You begin to see how life works, how it is always deconstructing and reconstructing itself, and always for our

Interdependence

Continued from page 43

Through the course of our lives, we have demonstrated that our actions have impact that reaches far beyond ourselves. We realize that we will benefit individually by contributing to the quality of life in our communities and in our world.

We value diversity and are aware of the richness this brings to our lives. Moreover, we have a responsibility to encourage all people to join us in this effort, regardless of race, gender, sexual preference, age, beliefs, or personal appearance.

We are willing to share our successes and failures, our hopes and fears, and our joys and sorrows with others in our life. Our ability to instill a clear sense of interdependence is dependent on our efforts to communicate clearly, honestly, and compassionately.

Conducting our lives with conscience and dignity, we will not stand by and tolerate violations to ourselves or those around us. We honor the sacredness in all living things, and we are mindful of this in all our relationships, including our relationship with Mother Earth. •

Rokelle Lerner is a consultant and lecturer on relationships and dysfunctional family systems. She has pioneered the development of services for children and adults from chemically-dependent families. From her base in Minneapolis, Lerner wrote the books, "Daily Affirmations for Adult Children of Alcoholics" and "Affirmations for the Inner Child." To order this book, or others in this magazine, please see the resource section on page 70. From "Living in the Comfort Zone" by Rokelle Lerner. Copyright 1995 by Rokelle Lerner. Printed with permission from Health Communications, Inc.

Calendar of Upcoming Workshops, Seminars, and Events



J U N E

JUNE 4-11 HOLISTIC HEALTH AND HEALING CONFERENCE

This is a spiritual and physical healing cruise from Anchorage to Vancouver travelling the lush, tranquil Inside Passage. Alternative therapies, women's health issues, and non-surgical facelifts. Call Dreamtime Cruises. (800)787-8785.

JUNE 7-9 THE RITUAL OF RAKU

Create your own personal artifacts with Raku, an ancient art of firing pottery from the Far East. No experience necessary. All tools and materials are provided. To join Ray Prestegard, AA Reiki Master, call Breitenbush, Hot Springs, at (503)854-3314.

JUNE 14-16 CANCER AND HEALING WITH ANDY SHERBINE

This powerful workshop leads you to discover your own healing abilities. Andy will use his unique personal experience as a two-time survivor of cancer to teach the methods he has found most helpful. This event is presented as a community service for people who have life-terminating disease. There are no costs beyond Breitenbush Community costs. For more information on Cancer and Healing call (503)854-3314.

Dare to be
what you are
meant to be
and do what
you are
meant to do,
and life will
provide you
the means to
do it and
be it.

—James Dillet Freeman

JUNE 21-23 A TIME FOR COUPLES: TEMAGAMI VISION QUEST

A unique program combining the understandings of modern depth psychology with the ancient rituals of the Sweat Lodge, the Vision Quest, and shamanistic teachings. To begin your "Journey

into Wholeness," call (704)877-4809.

JUNE 24-28 INTUITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Tap into your higher levels. Join Rev. Dr. Carol Parrish as she helps students uncover and enhance intuitive capabilities, the "gifts of the spirit." Many other workshops offered. Contact Sancta Sophia Seminary at (918)456-3421.

JUNE 6-9 THE HAPPINESS OPTION

A powerful weekend program with Barry Kaufman. Learn to let go of judgments and learn building blocks to happiness. Develop ways to choose happiness any time, anywhere. Contact the Option Institute, (413)229-2100.

JUNE 10-15 CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMATION

Taught by Kathlyn Hendricks. Explore in depth the concepts and tools that allow people in close relationship to reveal essence and live in an evolving play of harmony, creativity, and integrity. This training is designed for professionals, committed couples, and singles who are interested in the power of close relationship to catalyze creativity. Workshop location, Bear Mountain, New York. Contact (800)688-0772.

Calendar

JUNE 24-29 BODY-CENTERED TRANSFORMATION

Taught by Kathlyn Hendricks. The quickest path to psychological and spiritual growth is through deeply honoring the body and all of its experiences. This training is designed for professionals and others who want to explore the potential of organic processes to create harmony and fulfillment. Workshop location, Colorado Springs. (800)688-0772.

JUNE 24-JULY 4 VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Join pioneer Vipassana (Insight) meditation teacher Ruth Denison who will lead you in quieting the mind and observing the senses. Sitting, walking, movement, and eating meditation as well as Dharma talks and personal guidance will be included in this ten-day silent workshop. To register for this workshop, contact Breitenbush Reservations (503)854-3314.

J U L Y

JULY 15-18 IMPROVISING ON THE EDGE

Access the vulnerability and openness from which UMO Ensemble speaks truth. Exercises are physically and personally challenging and offer opportunities to deepen and explore stage presence and ease with improvisation. To experience the UMO Ensemble, a professional theater company based on Vashon Island, Washington, call (503)854-3314.

JULY 20-25 TRAINING FOR ENNEAGRAM TRANSFORMATION

A five-day program in Denver, resulting in certification to teach Enneagram seminars, with special focus on the personal transformation of participants. Contact En-

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Give the gift that
lasts a lifetime. Give
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TRANSFORMATION.

Earth Spirit

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Mary NurrieStearns LCSW

Psychotherapist, consultant, workshop leader, and editor of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. Mary has extensive continuing education and over twenty-two years' experience helping people overcome personal problems and make positive changes for a more meaningful and joy-filled life. She is committed to providing safe and experiential context for personal growth and healing that integrate body, mind, and spirit.

Mary offers a unique union of traditional psychotherapy with transpersonal psychology. She is on the leading edge in dealing with issues of personal transformation.

Mary offers telephone consultations and therapy for psychological healing and personal transformation.

**To schedule an appointment call:
(800)775-6887**

Calendar

Reiki Plus

Silver Mountain

1/12 pg

ENNEAGRAM

Hurley Dobson

Back

neagram Resources, 12262 W. New Mexico Ave., Lakewood, CO. 80228-3928; (303)985-1889; E-mail: er1802282aol.com.

JULY 21-26 LIVING FROM THE HEART

Join Joyce and Barry Vissell with music by Charley Thweatt, as families are united and children open to their natural selves. Children will adventure to self-discovery. Adult programs include yoga, meditation, and more. The adult and children programs dovetail, enhancing the experience for all. Call Breitenbush (503)854-3314.

JULY 21-AUG 4 PERU'S INCA MEDICINE WHEEL

Explore Peru's psycho-spiritual reality on a tour led by American Bonita Luz. Experience the sacred sites of Cuzco, Macho Picchu, Lake Titicaca where Bonita and Peruvian shamans lead ceremony and ritual for personal transformation. Contact John Buzenberg, Harmony Tours (704)299-0396.

JULY 27-28 A PATH TO SOPHIA

Through gentle movements of eurythmy, discover the mysteries of Christ (love) and Sophia (wisdom) that unveil the divine feminine, the holy Trinosophia for the new era. Reservations for this and many other workshops. (918)456-3421.

AUGUST

AUGUST 1-4 MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS

Calling all musicians! Bring instruments, voices, and enthusiasm to join us for a fun week of music making. All levels. Come and "pick and grin" and celebrate summer in the mountains. Call the Breitenbush Community for details. (503)854-3314.

AUGUST 11-15 INSTITUTE FOR ENGAGED SPIRITUALITY

Join Wayne Muller at St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico to explore and deepen your understanding of this simple question: What is Engaged Spirituality? Using stories and case studies by selected presenters—highlighting specific dilemmas and opportunities, problems and resources—you will collectively explore the question itself, rather than rely upon experts giving answers. For more information, contact Wayne Muller's office at (505)988-1118.

AUGUST 31-SEPT. 7 INTUITION CRUISE

This "event" of the Intuitive Community will cruise throughout the Hawaiian islands. Specially formulated shore excursions will include lunch meetings with Shakti Gawain and Alan Cohen. Conference activities while on board the ship. Contact: Dreamtime Cruises & Tours (800)787-8785.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 8-13 REVITALIZE YOUR SPIRIT

A small group retreat at the Option Institute. Rekindle the simple joys of living. Combine the privacy of an individual program with the benefits of learning as part of a group where you work with various tools and methods to help create more happiness in your life. Contact the Option Institute at (413)229-2100.

SEPTEMBER 15-29 SPIRITUALITY CONFERENCE IN PERU

Join others at a three-day Andean spirituality conference featuring presenters from across Latin America. Attending the conference is part of an Inca Medicine Wheel tour of Peru's Cuzco and Machu

Picchu led by American Bonita Luz. Contact John Buzenberg, Harmony Tours (704)299-0396.

SEPT 20-OCT 6 EGYPT

Join Lynn Gardner for her 11th Egyptian Journey of Transformation. Walk in the footsteps of the ancient Egyptians and experience the energies, symbolisms, spiritual rituals, architecture, artistic creativity and ecology of this 5000 year-old plus civilization. For details: contact Lynn Gardner at 317-283-7638.

O C T O B E R

OCTOBER 19-25 DOLPHINS IN THE BAHAMAS

Has swimming with the dolphins been a life-long dream? Come and swim in the beautiful crystal blue waters of the Caribbean with a wild pod of 25-30 spotted dolphins. Six days of dolphins, sunshine, snorkeling, great food, and new friends are waiting. Call (303)337-7974.

N O V E M B E R

NOVEMBER 15-24 EXPLORATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

A ten-day foundational conference in Sedona, Arizona. Conference activities focus on meditation, body work, energy work and psychological understanding, with Richard Moss. Call (209) 642-4090. •

Stars Edge

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Dreamwalker

1/12 pg

sonal, prompt. Introductory copy US \$5 ppd. (discreet). Free information: Box 713090, Santee, CA 92072-3090. Or call (619)443-4818.

Singles Network

Meet Singles who value personal growth, spirituality, peace and environment. Free details. At The Gate, Box 09506-L, Columbus, OH 43209.

Astrological Dating Service. Meet others on a spiritual path who are compatible with you! Free sample newsletter: Stargazers, (800)782-7497; (505)466-6244.

Single Booklovers—National. Getting people together since 1970. P.O. Box 117, Gradyville, PA, 19039-0117. (610)358-5049.

Travel

Spiritual Heritage Travel. Explore Scotland's sacred places while exploring the sacred within. Write today: Joyce Bell Bunton, 73 Colonsay Road, Paisley PA28HJ, Scotland.

Nurture in Nature: Colorado boundless beauty. This unique retreat includes meals, yoga, massage, and inner-directed programs. Near Estes Park. 1544-9 Mainsail, Naples, FL 33961. (941)436-7766.

Reflections

Continued from page 79

ance to the published works of the many exceptional authors walking the path of transformation with us (though I sometimes feel I can only see their trail dust and want to yell, "Hey, wait up, I'm moving a little slow back here!")—*Nancy Pasternack, Duncanville, Texas.*

F A T W A S N O T B A D

Thank you for including the ar-

ticle, "Fat Was Not Bad," by Carol Munter and Jane Hirschman in the winter issue.

I look back in history and gaze upon the rounded bodies of women's portraits (many painted nude). These portraits show "The Natural Woman." The bodies that most women of today despise.

The obsession to have a stomach you can "bounce a dime off of" had not yet entered into the psyche of womanhood. Womanhood was still pure—a place where women were happy with being in the body of a woman—women's bodies were as God created them, natural.

I spent many years dieting only to lose it and gain it back. Ironically, women are the last ones to comment to another woman that they have lost weight. However, they are often the first to comment on the weight return. Almost as if saying, "See, you are no better than me."

I am a natural. I am happy with myself. I came to a point in my life where I decided that it did not make me unhappy to be the size I am. I enjoy eating, and, as long as I am eating a healthy diet, it will not harm me. I am one of the fortunate women who has a spouse who would not change the contour or shape of my body. I attribute this to the spirituality of our relationship.

The article, "Fat Was Not Bad," should be read by every woman. Within these few pages, women can see within themselves and realize *fat is not bad.*

Thank you for your wonderful magazine!—*Ettaline Skorinowski, Dayton, Ohio.* •

Transformation

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fense or hostile offense because I know that I know. I know who I am now, and I know I have the courage to do what is necessary to express that real self. And through that comes peace, satisfaction, and less unconscious action (from where most hurtful behavior comes). It is not easy. It has required ending friendships, breaking off love relationships, changing careers (three times), re-establishing some family connections while ending others, and acceptance of isolation resulting from realizing I see the world differently from the majority of the people with whom I have contact.

The gift of my illness led me to what I believe is the real meaning of life—to love all others whether or not we deem them lovable, to trust in a Higher Power that is both loving and good and live each day in that trust, and to accept the fact that the wiser we become, the more we know that we don't know. I am not loving all the time. I still get angry, judgmental, and aggressively outspoken. But I am working toward living the meaning of my life to greater degrees for longer periods of time. I am getting better at speaking "my truth" in gentle, loving ways. I am beginning to find work suited to me and a life that is satisfying and void of frustration and discontent. My life has not been easy. Many peoples' lives are filled with struggle. But I am thankful that a life-threatening illness at an early time motivated me to find meaning and authenticity in my struggles. And finally peace. •

Transformation

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Over the last several years of illness, I have had sparks of awareness that healing could be found in that creative child who never expected anyone to hurt her. I began to gain glimpses into that soul, but had no tools or strength or will to try.

In the spring of 1993, there came a turning point that stays with me still. I “found” a group of persons with CFS led by a therapist who had CFS. She used Expressive Art Therapy. When I walked in the building, I knew I was “home.” After being ill for nine years, I finally met other women with CFS! I began to tap back into the creative side to access my “voice.” I began to allow myself to do the things I loved as a child, to express in all ways. That expression has come out in violent floods of tears, and in drawings and written words, by dancing about the living room, and lately in scenic design for the theater. The creation of my artistic work in the theater has flowed, joyful and easy, showing me how life can feel when freed from painful emotional attachments.

Perhaps, more important than any type of therapy I have used is the finding of my own voice. Keeping silent seems painful for me now, for it drives my soul, my true self, back into darkness. I am learning to listen to my body messages. I make choices by how I feel, and by

what that still, small voice whispers to me.

I actively seek my spiritual connection to God and the energy of the universe. What a revelation when I found validation that spirituality has nothing necessarily to do with religion! It’s something I’ve always known, as I am much more comfortable in the quiet of nature than in a building full of people.

I do not believe illness or disease is random, but rather crafted to bring our attention to whatever aspect of our soul needs attending to, and thus healing. I believe my illness and its particular qualities and symptoms are reflective of my lies—core beliefs and patterns that are untrue for me. Lies manifest.

Truth and lies cannot live together comfortably. Reactive emotions now tell me that a truth is pushing through, and a lie is being exposed. But that lie fights hard for control—knowing that its adversary has the real power.

The poet, Anne Sexton, wrote, “There is nothing in your body that lies. All that is new is telling the truth.” There is particular meaning for me here, as my body has so tenaciously dramatized the struggle of my soul. So it’s time to come clean, to tell the truth.

My long-ago necessary survival mode is breaking down. The armor is cracking and falling away. I am healing. It is

the most difficult, painful, amazing, and joyful thing I have ever done. And absolutely necessary.

Some people experience amazing miracles—I seem to have every stepping stone to feel. My miracle is to be where I am, just now, freeing myself from my numbed existence and happier and more at peace than I have ever been. I am usually able to make no judgments or comparisons concerning my own transformation, my own path and process.

Recently I was saddened to hear someone whom I care about say that her life has been wasted. She is only 42 years old. If I were able to award myself a Medal of Honor for some particular aspect of my own transformation, it would be for honoring my pathway and knowing my life. My steps have not been wasted. They are just what they have been—my life, my steps, my path of transformation. There is no right or wrong way to heal and no timetable.

Perhaps I can tell my story and say there wasn’t one life-changing “miracle” therapy; there were many little turning points. There wasn’t one path, but many. I feel certain that it’s okay to be where and who I am: a Transformation in Progress.

These days, if someone asks me what I do, I easily say, “I’m remodeling my life.” It feels good to say—it’s the truth. •



Choose to Live

J E A N S H I N O D A B O L E N

“To be vulnerable and fallible, to have a shadow and a soul, to make our way through life determining who we become by the choices we make is what we do here. Over and over again, it seems to me, life comes along and says, ‘Choose!’ The small and large moments of truth that shape what goes into or is left out of a book, find parallels in the small and large moments of truth that go into the choices we make in life about what to add or delete. These are the decisions that shape our lives, which ultimately are soul journeys.”