

WINTER 1999

Contents

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 4

37

The Presence of Compassion

An Interview by
Mary NurrieStearns with
JOHN O'DONOHUE

43

Soul-Level Healing Proceeding on the path takes willingness & commitment

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF

45

Intimate Relationships as Training for Service

An Interview by
Melissa West with
EVELYN AND PAUL MOSCHETTA

49

Becoming Loving

My experience at the
Hoffman Institute
MARY NURRIESTEARNES

52

We Are Architects of Our Destiny

Faith, trust, surrender
help bring vision into action
RAMA VERNON

55

Compassion: A Way of Being in the World

An Interview by
David Elkins with
SHARON SALZBERG

80

The Nature of Compassion

Form and being: The two
aspects of compassion
ECKHART TOLLE



WINTER 1999

We are visitors on this planet. We are here for ninety, a hundred years at the very most. Try to be at peace with yourself and help others share that peace. If you contribute to others' happiness, you will find the true goal, the meaning of life.—The Dalai Lama

4
From the Publisher
 Learning to trust the flow of life

6
Contributors
 Feature contributors

7
From the Editor
 Becoming transmitters of
 compassion

8
From our Readers
 Letters from readers

11
Compassion in Action
 Working With Prison Inmates
 KALEO CHING
 WITH MELISSA WEST

COVER: IMAGE BANK/BOKELBERG
 CONTENTS PAGE: TONY STONE/JEREMY WALKER
 ABOVE: TONY STONE/JACK DYKINGA

13
Ask the Experts
 Leaders in the field answer
 transformation questions
 JIM ROSEMERGY, STEVEN HARRI-
 SON, CHARLOTTE SOPHIA KASL,
 CHERIE CARTER-SCOTT

17
Transformations
 Two stories of transformation
 SUZANNE EDMONDSON AND
 ANNE MARIE ELLIS

21
Readers On
 Relationship as Healer
 JEANNE KNAPE, PHYLLIS
 HAUGHTON, GAIL KROLL

24
**Transformational
 Practices**
 Putting Prayer in Action
 GUY FINLEY

26
From the Heart
 The Sufi Approach to
 Opening the Heart
 ROBERT FRAGER

30
Pathways to Wholeness
 Compassion: The Gift of Giving
 JOHN TARRANT

34
Conscious Healing
 Yoga: Listening to the Body
 STEPHEN COPE

60
Briefly Noted
 Reviews on interesting
 transformational books

Publisher's Note



Personal transformation is about learning to trust the flow of events in life without understanding their significance at the time they occur. This means being open to and accepting what comes our way.

In a recent radio interview, past President Jimmy Carter discussed the evolution of his spiritual faith.

He talked about feeling betrayed by God when he lost an election to a man who was openly racist. Disheartened, he consulted his evangelist sister who asserted that this was God working in his life. She encouraged him to accept forthcoming opportunities and before long he was helping to establish a new church. Years later, he understood how that period of his life helped to prepare him spiritually for his future political responsibilities.

Growing in trust includes letting ourselves be guided in decisions. In my life, seemingly unrelated difficult life choices come together in significant ways when they are looked at through the lens of time. As individual decisions, they didn't reveal much, but understood historically, I see how I was being moved along my life path. For instance, in the early 1980s, I turned down a lucrative job opportunity in Indiana. Accepting it would have meant moving up the corporate ladder. I didn't understand my inclination to not make the move other than it didn't feel like the right thing to do. My friends thought I was passing up the job of a lifetime as the practical considerations indicated that accepting the corporate challenge would accelerate my career. Declining the opportunity threw me into a time of financial and vocational uncertainty that, although difficult, helped me discover what matters most to me and deepened my faith in life.

It is challenging to trust what does not seem obvious, yet to be guided by our truer self requires that we do so. There are times we reach clarity but those moments are rare, and in the meantime, we have to trust that seemingly isolated events and hard-to-rationalize decisions are like musical notes that eventually form the melody that reveals the divinity of our lives.

As Rumi said, "We rarely hear the inward music, but we're all dancing to it nevertheless." May our magazine help you hear your inward music.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick NurrieStearns".

Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

Personal Transformation

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RAMA VERNON is the founder of Women of Vision and Action and president of the Center for International Dialogue, formerly known as the Center for Soviet-American Dialogue. She is a writer, educator, and lecturer in Asian philosophy and East-West psychology, which has inspired her approach to conflict resolution.



RAMA VERNON

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF is known for her work in feminist theory, psychology, and recovery. In the early 1980s, she gave up her work as a traditional psychotherapist and began traveling around the world to meet with indigenous spiritual leaders who have shared their wisdom with



ANNE WILSON SCHAEFER

her, and recognized and honored her as a spiritual teacher and healer. Today, she devotes her time to leading Living in Process extended residential trainings and writing.

SHARON SALZBERG is a cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, and author of "A Heart as Wide as the World" and "Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness." A student of Buddhism for more than 20 years, she travels throughout the world teaching Buddhist practice to others. She teaches both intensive awareness practice (vipassana or insight meditation) and the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion.

SHARON SALZBERG



ECKHART TOLLE graduated from the University of London and was a research scholar and supervisor at Cambridge University. At age 29, a spiritual transformation changed the course of his life. The next few years were devoted to understanding, integrating, and deepening that transformation, which marked the beginning of an intense inward journey. For the past 10 years, he has been a counselor and spiritual teacher working with individuals and small groups in Europe and North America.

ECKHART TOLLE



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Editor's Note

The theme of this issue is compassion, a subject at the heart of transformation. Compassion is the release of love that

embraces its givers and receivers. We naturally feel the suffering of others. Tragedy that befalls friends and family and large disasters bring forth an outpouring of support. Young and old, rich and poor, we all feel that ache in our hearts that calls us to help.

In our interview with John O'Donohue, he says, "Compassion is somehow innate to our nature." But he says that it also must be developed. The question then becomes how compassion is nurtured, brought to fruition. One way that compassion comes to life is through the experience of receiving compassion. Those who give us compassion are transmitters of compassion—people like my elementary school speech therapist. Irma not only taught me to say my "s" correctly and to enunciate words so others could understand me, she took me into her heart and her home.

When I was with Irma I felt special. I knew she befriended me because she was attracted to something about me. She saw my impoverished home environment and thought perhaps she could make a difference. More importantly, she saw underneath the circumstances that weighed heavy on me. A friend once said, "When you find a diamond in cow dung, pick it up, wash it off, and give thanks for the beauty you have found." Irma saw something precious inside me, and inside others.

Compassion is always about relationship. The stirring within one heart in response to another is what motivates compassionate involvement with the other. The strength of compassion occurs within relationship, where both its gentle and demanding sides can be utilized. Irma understood the power of relationship. Ultimately, she was willing to risk our relationship because she had faith that I cared enough for her to correct my speech. During the years she worked with me, she showed the soft side of compassion by sewing school clothes for

me, telling me stories, and spending weekends with me. She showed me the firm side of compassion one day when she said, "Mary, I will work with you

no longer if you don't show improvement by our next session." She had accurately sensed that I was stalling progress in order to continue seeing her. Her intervention was successful because I faithfully practiced my speech lessons and improved significantly.

Not only did she help me with my speech, she impacted me in many intangible ways. No more potent remedy exists for problems of the human mind and spirit than

compassion. Its alchemy is in the quality of heart that is present. Her attention was genuine and it told me I was significant. When compassion is present, people feel seen, and that which is essential in us awakens.

Irma watered the seeds of compassion in me. Her cinnamon rolls and late-night stories tended the inner soil in which lay my compassion seeds. She showed me how to listen to another, see human potential, accept others, and look beyond myself. Her connection with me enabled me to reach out to others.

The Dalai Lama has said, "Kindness to other people is the way we show love to God." This implies that within kindness is the recognition of the divinity of others. Imagine a world where we all saw the god spark in one another. That would be heaven on earth. The articles in this issue move us in that direction. Whether the perspective is Christian, Sufi, Celtic, Hindu, or Buddhist, the words are like sunlight to plants, urging compassion seeds to reach through the soil where they can flourish.

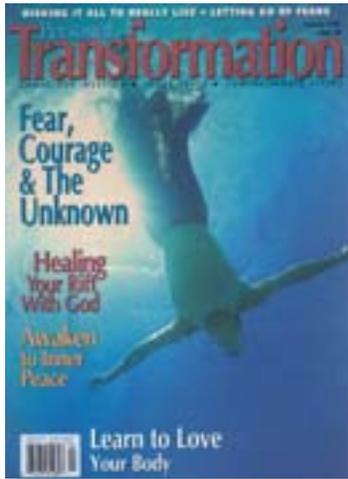
May we become transmitters of compassion.
Welcome to PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor



Letters From Readers



ANOTHER VIEW

I submit this letter to the editor as a 65-year-old white male, raised as a Methodist and now for many years in the spiritual search. This is in regards to your Summer 1999, Issue 35, concerning the article "Transforming Suffering" by Basil Pennington.

I hope this will be an encouragement for contemplative practices and the Centering Prayer movement, and it is also a diatribe.

As a starter, Jesus is a late Latin word. That is not what he was called in his time. His name means "Yahweh is salvation;" his name is Joshua.

The words from the cross you spoke of are sorely misused, "My god, my God, why have you forsaken me?" If you read the entire 22nd Psalm (21st for the Catholics) you will have a much better understanding what was truly transpiring, and why this New Testament

Joshua was saying these words at the crucifixion.

The notion that God willed his son be killed is noxious. That ... "His Father, wanted Him to go through this as a sign of love for us..." It would be much more correct to say that you and I, and our fears, killed Him. One lesson of the crucifixion is that we can persecute, we can beat, we can destroy the body, but you cannot destroy who and what we are. That is the important lesson of the crucifixion.

You speak of the "explicit commandments" and I'm sure you are *not* referring to the two commandments that Joshua son of Joseph gave us. Or to the one commandment he gave his apostles. You are still focused on the Old Testament rather than the gospels.

"There is always political action." And I would suggest that with the issue you bring up of "full equality of men and women and the full integration of the masculine and feminine dimensions of our being," that *you* be more in "political action" with the Pope and the Church fathers on this issue.

... "Seeking peace, we can become an instrument of peace." Exactly! Now you're talking!

"Although love itself can cause suffering." No way. Perhaps in the way our times and culture think love is, but suffering is not a quality of love.

Love doesn't cause suffering, fear does.

As Yoda said, "You have too

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 68

READERS ON...

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

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Working With Prison Inmates

KALEO CHING
BY MELISSA WEST

Kaleo Ching walks, catlike, into the San Bruno jail conference room. With a relaxed body but fiercely intent gaze, he welcomes the fifteen inmates sitting in the bare gray room: men and women, Asian, white, Hispanic, Native American, black. Making eye contact with each one, he says, “Come on, guys, let’s move a little bit.”

Getting the inmates to push back their chairs, ignoring their grumbles, Kaleo leads them in a series of Tai Chi moves—horse, tiger, dragon, bear—telling stories about the movements and animals as they go. The men and women are quiet now, concentrating on following Kaleo’s powerfully fluid movements, focusing on Kaleo and their own bodies rather than each other.

Kaleo, an artist, teacher, and Tai Chi and Qi Gong master, has begun another round of classes in one of the two jails in which he teaches. He has developed his own unique synthesis of movement, meditation, and art which he brings to both general populations in the jails and maximum security inmates in the psychiatric units.

“It has been a real eye-opener for me, working in the jails,” says Kaleo. “It’s been such a challenge to learn to be compassionate with someone who has murdered and raped. I had to learn to just see the person as a human being who is really wounded. The big challenge has been to find and feel their love, and to give it back to them.”

Kaleo begins his classes in the morning with Tai Chi

KALEO CHING



followed by meditation. The rest of the day is spent in painting or maskmaking. Kaleo deliberately starts with movement: telling inmates stories about the animal movements conjures up images in their own heads, getting their imagination involved.

Given the pace of the class, and Kaleo’s encouraging intensity, inmates can’t pick on each other.

“Then, after their bodies—skin, joints, organs—are open, they’re ready to sit and receive,” says Kaleo. “I introduce meditation for them to go into their own inner landscape, their own minds and hearts. After that, when their inner space has been opened, they’re ready to let out their discoveries. That’s where the art comes in.”

Some afternoons are spent making plaster of Paris masks and decorating the masks with paint, paper, feathers, fabric. Other afternoons Kaleo brings paper for inmates to paint. However, Kaleo encourages them to tear the paper and reglue it into new forms, spread clay on it, decorate it with herbs and grasses, and to interact with their creation with all of their bodies and souls, not just their minds. Kaleo moves around the room as they create, encouraging them, watching to see who’s ready to go deeper, and offering suggestions.

“Art is messages from the ancestors,” says Kaleo, a native Hawaiian. “Art is inner truth coming out. It’s healing and transformative, especially when it’s from the body and soul, when it doesn’t have to ‘look like’

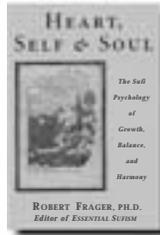
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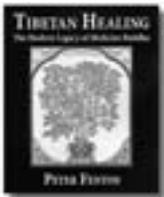
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anything. It's letting the inner soul speak directly to you. It's like following a coyote's tracks straight to the den."

Kaleo, who also teaches movement, meditation, and art at John F. Kennedy University, the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, and Naropa-Oakland, understands how he was led to teaching in the jails. Growing up in Hawaii, he remembers how the rough kids liked him and watched out for him in school.

When he moved to the Bay area and heard about others doing art in the jails, he became excited about the challenge. Kaleo applied for an Arts Council grant and began working in two county jails.

"This work has made me stronger," Kaleo admits. "I had to learn to be honest and sincere all the time. Inmates can smell dishonesty and will call you on it right away. If you don't live what you're saying, they'll let you know. I have to speak from the heart, and speak right from my body, to get their respect. I had to look for what was good in them, and respect them, in order to get it back.

"I had to learn to go into these classrooms filled with violent and psychiatrically unstable people with an open heart, not afraid to be open—open and strong at the same time. This kind of strength is not physical strength, it's an inner strength, a deep core of strength and stubbornness in me. They knew they could only push me so far. I've suffered, and I've done my time, and they feel that. My life hasn't exactly been rosy. The inmates know I draw my strength from my own suffering."

For Kaleo, working in the jails is deeply spiritual service. He feels that service is really all there is in life. After almost drowning twice

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LEADERS IN THE TRANSFORMATIONAL FIELD ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

ASK THE EXPERTS

Diverging Paths

My husband of many years and I have been long-term spiritual seekers. In recent years, our paths have separated. I have serious reservations about the direction he is taking. Although I know I must remain faithful to my own spiritual journey, I find it difficult to pursue my own course because he is critical of any path other than his. I love him, yet life together is increasingly painful. I am in my 50s and fear that we are headed for divorce. Can you offer any guidance?

JIM ROSEMERGY: One of the great joys of life is sharing the spiritual journey with someone we love. It seems you and your husband have experienced the joy of the journey. Undoubtedly, your common beliefs have helped you face life's challenges. Can you remember a time when you talked late into the night? Your loving attention to one another made time stand still, and your souls were more deeply joined together. This experience can be yours again. In fact, as you move through this challenging time, your relationship can become stronger than ever before.

I remember years ago when my family gathered for my uncle's funeral. The evening after the service, my cousin and I sat on the living room floor and talked into the night. Our spiritual paths were different, very different. I don't remember what we said, not a single word, but I will always remember the time we shared. Out of our grief, we found common ground that allowed something divine to emerge from within each of us.

You can find this common ground. From what you have written, it appears you do have something in common—neither of you accepts the other's path. The truth is we do not know what is best

EXPLAINS THE STEPS TO CHANGING UNDESIRED BEHAVIOR

Cherie Carter-Scott, Ph.D., is a motivational speaker, trainer, coach, seminar leader, and author. She has done extensive work in personal growth training and helped thousands of people make life-changing choices and decisions.



REVEALS A PATH FOR FINDING THE WAY BACK TO A MARRIAGE



Jim Rosemergy is an author, speaker, and workshop and retreat facilitator. He is an ordained Unity minister and vice president of the Unity School of Christianity. He and his wife, Nancy, have been married twenty-nine years.

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Charlotte Sophia Kasl, Ph.D., has been a practicing psychotherapist, workshop leader, Quaker, and Reiki healer for twenty years. Her books include "Women, Sex, and Addiction: A Search for Love and Power."



Steven Harrison has traveled extensively and studied a wide variety of meditation and spiritual practices. He is the author of "Being One: Finding Our Self in Relationship," and his latest, "Getting To Where You Are: A Life of Meditation."

REMINDS US OF THE ROLE OF HONESTY IN RELATIONSHIPS

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Ask The Experts

for another person's spiritual unfoldment. It is challenging enough to determine the steps we are to take on our closer walk with God. And besides, all paths ultimately lead to the same divine center.

A good next step would be to look for what brings you together. Any two people on the spiritual journey can find positive, common ground because it is there. Here's a suggestion: Quit trying to probe one another's spiritual beliefs or to discuss spiritual concepts. Instead, begin to share your spiritual journeys with each other. I have found that my beliefs are not that important because they change. My spiritual practices are not the true jewel of my quest. However, mystical experiences, sacred moments, crossroads, and life-changing decisions are the heart and soul of the journey. These are where we are wed to one another. Share with your husband a time when you felt close to God. Ask him to share a similar experience. What part of your spiritual journey challenges you? Tell him, and ask if you can help him with his doubts and fears.

Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Buddhists—in fact, all the people of the world—have different beliefs and rituals, but there is a great likeness in what we experience. We all ask, “How do I know when I'm divinely guided? How do I forgive? If God loves me, why don't I feel this love? Does life have meaning?”

Can you see the common ground? Can you feel it beneath your feet? Dear friend, forget the path you are currently on and experience the passion of the journey. Beliefs are overrated. Living and sharing the journey causes us to fall in love with one another.

Finally, one of you needs to take the first step back by accepting the

other. This is love's first action—acceptance. Accept your husband as he is and don't ask that he change. You may find that suddenly he is accepting you as well, but if he does not, be true to your journey by accepting him. Share the heart of the journey, and you may find yourselves sharing your hearts with one another again.

Wandering Eyes

Please give me some guidance. I'm a 45-year-old married man and deeply committed to my spiritual life. I've got a problem I can't resolve. As the years go by I find myself more attracted to the youthful beauty of women in their 20s and less satisfied with my middle-aged wife's physique. I remain faithful to my wife but this is creating serious problems in me and with my marriage.

STEVEN HARRISON: If we are truly committed to a spiritual life,



then we must also be committed to honesty, wherever it leads. A relationship to another human

being is a tremendous opportunity for discovery, but it can also be used to avoid contact with the rest of life.

Most relationships are built upon mutual security. I'll love you, if you love me. They become complex codes of behavior in which we tend to lose the essence of our contact with each other. Then along comes a young woman or man, vital, fresh, not encumbered by the labyrinth behavioral codes we have with our spouse.

We want this fresh quality, we want the youth, we want the sex. We could have a secret affair. We could divorce and remarry. Or, we

could repress our feelings and live the resulting quiet desperation of an unfulfilled life. But none of these responses are satisfactory.

Why don't we stand absolutely still in the middle of all of this and discover what is actually occurring? What happens if we don't act or repress? Why don't we reveal all that is happening in our lives to all of those in our lives? This is a radically direct relationship to ourselves, our spouses and to the object of our new attraction, which demands total integrity and communication.

Is our current relationship based in honesty and spiritual transformation? Can our current relationship absorb the fact that we are experiencing attractions to others? Do we live in a relationship of freedom, responsibility and transparency with each other, or do we have a treaty based on security? If we throw out all of our agreements, is there love? Is there fear? If we met each other now, as if for the first time, how would we construct our relationship and why?

And how would we enter into an honest relationship with a new person to whom we find ourselves attracted? Would we encounter this new person in a new way or would we again begin to construct agreements of security? Would we flirt by hiding our flaws? Would we court by hiding our wife or husband? What happens to the magical charge of the new relationship if it is openly exposed to the old relationship? What if the whole game is made transparent; do we still want to play the game?

My response to your question is this: Honesty will challenge your marriage. Honesty may deepen your marriage. Honesty may destroy your marriage. But honesty

will reveal precisely the fact of your life. This honesty applies not just to your communication with others, where the idea of radical honesty often becomes a narcissistic way of dominating others. Honesty must also apply to your understanding of your own motivations and ultimately to the very nature of the construction of your self as separate from life. In the end, transformation is the movement of change in life; honesty is just the messenger.

Seeking Commitment

I've been involved with a wonderful man for three years. There is so much right about our relationship and we love one another deeply. Unfortunately, there's a hitch. I'm ready to get married and he believes the relationship is better without commitment, saying that marriage ruins love relationships. We live together and he wants to continue as we are. In my heart, I don't feel that is true, and want a marriage partnership. What should I do?

CHARLOTTE SOPHIA KASL: Before I address your question directly, I'd like to say a few words about commitment.



True commitment comes from the heart and cannot be forced. It's not so much that we "make" a commitment as that two people are led by a desire to deepen their connection or bond. Commitment provides a protective boundary around a couple that helps build a cornerstone of trust. It's like closing the escape hatches and saying I'm willing to face whatever it takes to stay present to my partner—to stay steady through conflict, differences, hurts, and joys. This includes committing

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Ask The Experts

to a deep level of awareness of one's motivation—those slippery ways we sidestep our anger, placate, or use subtle forms of guilt or withdrawal to control our partner or have power in the relationship.

Because I can only speculate on your situation, I will pose some questions for you to explore, so you can find your own answer.

My first questions are about the level of commitment of your existing relationship. Are you committed to monogamy? To being long-term partners? To being life-long partners? To talking over conflict and being willing to seek help if you reach an impasse? Is there talk of children, owning a dwelling place together? You say you love each other deeply. How is this love reflected in your daily lives? Do you both keep agreements with great care? Do you both want what is best for the other, or are there problems with jealousy and possessiveness? Is your sexual relationship alive with tenderness, passion, and honesty? Are you able to say how you feel or ask for what you want, and do you both listen to each other? Does your partner show delight in seeing you?

While you can explore the possible reasons for your partner not wanting the commitment of marriage, the reasons won't necessarily change the fact that you want marriage and he doesn't. Even so, there might be some roadblocks that can be explored to see if the possibility exists.

His generalization that marriage ruins love relationships keeps the conversation distant, theoretical, and impersonal. Ask your partner if he will explore his fear of commitment at a personal level. Do his fears come from personal experience? Does he fear losing his iden-

tity, feeling swallowed up, or being trapped? Is there a loyalty conflict between his relationship to you and members of his family? If he can articulate some of these fears, it might be possible to move through them. Sometimes these fears reflect a person who is afraid he won't be able to speak up for what he wants, or set limits and boundaries. All of these concerns suggest a need to complete developmental tasks from childhood so one is not controlled by one's family or origin. The other question, which is difficult to pose, is to find out if he has specific reservations about marrying you in particular.

Hopefully your partner will sit down and open himself to these questions, but if he will not talk personally and maintains his stance, your task is to accept the truth of the situation. You can either stay with him without the bond of marriage, or let go of the relationship. You say in your letter that he says he wants to continue as you are, but in your heart, you don't feel that is true. You need to take his words at face value and not second-guess him. It's easy to think that because you want the marriage so much, he must want it too. But if he says he doesn't, try to understand him and not negate what he says.

You can also look at your motivation for marriage. Do you want marriage because it fulfills a desire to have a public and legal commitment to each other and to celebrate the relationship openly and to commit as life partners? Be sure your desire for marriage is coming from confidence in the relationship as it is, and not based on hoping it will somehow change. Do you accept him as he is now? Only you know the answers to these questions.

Do not force a commitment. If

he marries you out of guilt or because he is afraid of losing you, it is likely to cast a shadow over the relationship that will haunt you in the future. Ultimately you must make a decision. If he won't commit to marriage, and you definitely want someone who will, you need to leave him. Don't bargain with yourself and hang on for security or comfort. That is the opiate of relationships and costs you dearly in many ways—body, mind, and spirit. It is extremely painful to leave a relationship, but it also creates an opening for something better.

So be clear with him, and clear with yourself. Ask, but don't demand, stay grounded in reality as opposed to illusions, and live by your deepest wisdom. I wish you the best.

Finding Ms. Right

I am a 47-year-old male and have been divorced for several years. I yearn for a committed relationship. I recently ended a six-month relationship. I knew it wasn't right because she didn't communicate, but I so want to remarry that I overlooked her avoidance of intimate talk until the relationship simply faded away. What do I do now to be in the kind of relationship I desire?

CHERIE CARTER-SCOTT: You said the woman you have been in a relationship



with didn't communicate.

My response to you has several different parts, which require you to be honest with yourself. Authenticity, after all, is about being real. After you answer the following questions, you should have some new insight about yourself and your behaviors. It sounds like you are

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 66

Letting Go of What I Cannot Control

SUZANNE EDMONDSON

Suzanne Edmondson's life changed forever with a phone call. Suzanne, daughter of a judge, wife of a judge, and niece of a state Attorney General, learned that her 18-year-old daughter had been arrested for her part in a 1995 crime spree that left a Mississippi businessman dead and a Louisiana store clerk paralyzed. The case, which ended with the sentencing of Sarah to 35 years in a Louisiana prison, drew national media attention because of the Edmondsons' political prominence in their home state of Oklahoma.

Suzanne went through hell in the first year after her daughter's sentencing. Her life changed a second time when, inspired by her daughter's decision to tutor other inmates, she began tutoring in the Eddie Warrior Correctional Center, a minimum security facility housing about



TONY STONE/CLAUDIA KUNIN

650 women. Suzanne has now been working with the inmates for three years, creating a program called “Tales for the Rising Moon” in which inmates tape bedtime stories for their children at home, and starting a foundation dedicated to providing college scholarships to deserving inmates.

Even more remarkable than her outward life changes, though, has been Suzanne’s inner transformation. I spoke with Suzanne several times at her home in Oklahoma. She was reluctant at first to share her inner journey; what was important, she insisted, was the work getting done at the prison, empowering women inmates to stay in contact with their families while incarcerated.

Suzanne agreed to share her inner journey for the first time with PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION in the hope that it might inspire others who find themselves challenged by unimaginably difficult life situations.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: What was life like for you after your daughter’s arrest?

SUZANNE EDMONDSON: I felt so much disbelief, like there had been some terrible, terrible mistake. I was terrified for Sarah. Every move she or we made involved a lot of intense publicity, both television and print media. I felt disconnected and unreal.

For a long time I avoided the world. I was unable to go out of my door. I call that period “the time of being under my bed,” but I was actually in my den, reading, reading, trying to make sense of it all. I tried to find a way that I could bring some meaning to my broken life. I was greatly comforted by the writings of good people who had been

through terrible things.

TRANSFORMATION: What got you through that time?

EDMONDSON: My reading, and my husband Jim’s and my commitment to surviving. I knew I somehow had to turn this into good, to suffer through it in a way that was meaningful so that good could come out of it at some point. It’s been a long journey to that point.

TRANSFORMATION: How has this journey changed you spiritually?

EDMONDSON: It’s been a profound and astonishing inner voyage. I have always been altruistic but it was more of a societal thing, to do good works. Public service has always been what my family has been about, but it was more superficial before—lunches and programs. I liked it, but I see my prison work today as having a more profound impact. I’ve shifted from the YWCA board member to someone who has a deeper mission. I live life now more meaningfully and deeply. I want to connect on a spiritual level with the women I encounter in the prison.

I’m from a political family—what we have had, more than anything, is our good name. I’ve always felt protected by the good name of our family. This certainly took that away. I came to know that one’s good name is not as important as one’s good heart. I’ve learned to live without an umbrella that seemed to protect me. I’ve always been in the public eye, but never before have I been pointed out because I was the mother of someone who has committed a very, very tragic and terrible crime. I had to come to terms with the loss of feeling protected, of being raw and naked out in the world.

When you have kids you worry about them getting home from the prom safely, or about drugs or car crashes. But when Sarah was arrested, it was so far beyond these things; the worst nightmare I could ever imagine had become my reality. Along with the “Why—why me Lord?” has come “Why not me, Lord?” I feel that this has come to me for me to do something with it. I don’t know why, but it feels like there’s a lighted path in front of me. I stop every now and then because it frightens me—the publicity—but it’s in my path, and I need to look eyeball to eyeball at my fears, and keep going because it is part of my mission somehow. One foot in front of the other...

TRANSFORMATION: What has been the greatest challenge in this journey?

EDMONDSON: Simply keeping one foot in front of the other and not succumbing to despair or hopelessness. I was committed from day one that some good would come from this. I searched everywhere spiritually for a sense of meaning and direction of where the good might lie.

Three summers ago a light bulb went on. My daughter started tutoring right after her incarceration. She would help people write letters home, help with literacy. I came across an Episcopal prayer at this time that really resonated in me: “Oh God, give me courage to live another day. Open wide the eyes of my soul that I may see good in all things. Inspire me with a sense of joy and gladness and make me a cup of strength to suffering souls.” This cup of strength piece, combined with the work that Sarah was doing, made me go, “Aha! I need to get in a prison somewhere and help.”

TRANSFORMATION: What is the most important thing you've learned in this four-year journey?

EDMONDSON: The depth and comprehensiveness of the spiritual help that is available to me, how sweeping it is. I'm astonished by how deep and wide the spiritual resources are, how incredibly loving. This help has been with each breath: "Oh Lord, help me not become a victim of my circumstances. Help me to become an active, full, loving person. Help my suffering be meaningful so that I can grow."

This has been the great joy of my life, that my spirituality is not just need-oriented. Now it's for life, and it is my life. I think of how many times I've held onto the words, "My eternal Father holds me in His everlasting arms." Those words began to have a life and a reality that address my soul now every day. Before all this, I used those words as a mantra—if I said it enough times, maybe I would believe it. Now, living that prayer instead of just repeating it, I do believe it with my heart and soul. It's been a joyful voyage. It's saved my life.

TRANSFORMATION: It sounds like one of the surprises is how much joy has come out of all this tragedy.

EDMONDSON: Oh yes. I now live joyfully every day because I really have learned to let go of things that I cannot control. I can let things go. I can make my choices about the things that I do. I feel in a state of grace in my meditations sometimes, but that's not sufficient for me any more. I have to take it outward and impact others with it, with that grace and joy.

Creating A New Life

ANNE MARIE
ELLIS

I do not remember consciously choosing to pursue a career, but I do remember consciously choosing to be "child-free." And after the first failed marriage, I consciously chose relationships without benefit of religious or legal ceremony. So maybe my career started by default as I moved away from the traditional roles of wife and mother. After all, one is always moving toward something—whether by design or default. Working, and the self-sufficiency it brought, allowed me to manifest other values and attitudes I hold as true: independence, individuality, spontaneity, self-determination and gender equality.

I was, for the most part, living my life unaware, navigating via automatic pilot. Until I lost my balance; I became a workaholic. For me, that was not only late nights, weekends, and no vacations. My work had become the foundation of my life—my power, control, confidence, and accomplishments at work were how I measured my self-esteem.

Five years ago I was working on a global re-engineering team chartered with overhauling a system that processed \$12 billion dollars of business a year. With each attempt to introduce a new way of doing



business, the resistance to change mounted. The executives feared a loss of power and influence, and the means they used to derail a project was to attack the individuals in charge of the teams. I was one of these individuals.

Soon, every move I made at work was challenged. In response, I began to question my own abilities, and for the first time in my career I felt incompetent and overwhelmed. My network of support, once strong, eroded as co-workers, more attuned to the politics, distanced themselves from me to ensure their survival. Finally I realized that I was personally under attack. But still I fought to regain control of the situation.

I had always been able to control my world in the past—by working harder, smarter, and longer. But not this time. My foundation shook, cracked, and then imploded, leaving air beneath my feet. I went down, hard. What began as mild tremors escalated into a major life-quake, a crisis point.

I was confused and in tremendous emotional pain. I cried often, but silently. I fought colds, flu and headaches and my stress level was off the scale. My physician diag-

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nosed depression and prescribed drugs. I was down and didn't know how to get up. So I did what I often do when I don't know what to do or how to do it: I read.

I read about the need and art of balancing all aspects of life—work, family, social, spiritual—and approaching each of these aspects holistically, using spirit, mind, and body. These concepts resonated with me from the beginning, but how to integrate them into my life? Now the skills that made me successful in business paid off, as I brought them to bear on creating my new foundation.

My work ahead was both destructive and creative. I had to finish the destruction of my old foundation—down to ground zero—then sift through the rubble to find what to keep and what had to go. Then I would need to create a new foundation based upon the design forming in my mind, inspired by my readings.

To complete the destruction and re-build I needed tools, but which tools? I studied and used numerous healing tools: affirmations, aromatherapy, soul retrieval, Reiki, Network Chiropractic, flower essences, meditation, etc. The tools that formed what I call my “trinity of grace” were psychotherapy, journaling, and bodywork.

I connected with a therapist of great caring and insight who created a safe place for me to delve deep into myself and face what I found. We identified major life-impacting teachings and experiences; when seen in the clear light of awareness, reasons for my personality, perspectives, and philosophy emerged. And I saw how my current behaviors were replays from the past—coping devices and defense mechanisms valid at one time but now

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 67

Relationship as Healer

The Little Things

Don't let the little things bother you so much," said my husband, Tom, as I fumed about the grocery store stockboy packing the bread under the bag of apples.

"I'll get bothered about anything I want," I fussed as I tried to restore the bread to its original shape. My fist put another dent into the end of the loaf.

A few days later, my temper flared when I dropped a pan of soup on the floor. I was so upset about having to clean up the terrible mess that when my family arrived home, I snapped at everything they said.

Once in a while, Tom and I entertained business associates. One time the get-together arose at the last

minute with the activities to take place the next day. To prepare I had to change appointments. I wasn't happy and had snapped at Tom when he told me about the plans he made. My silent treatment was Tom's goodbye as he left for work.

Tom arrived home from work early that day. I frowned at him as he explained that the men of the group had agreed to meet their wives at our house. Within a half-hour of the agreed-upon time, everyone except two wives had arrived. Doris and Betty had gone shopping together for the afternoon.

Finally, as supper was about to be served, they walked in. I left the kitchen to greet them. Their husbands entered the living room a few steps ahead of



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me. The two scenarios that occurred stopped me in my tracks.

Doris' husband walked to her, hugged her, and asked if she had fun shopping. He never scolded her for being late. Instead, he asked what she had purchased. Doris smiled and started chattering away as they walked into the dining room arm in arm.

Betty's husband didn't move toward her. He snarled, "Why are you so late? It's a half an hour after you said you would be here. How can you be so irresponsible?" He then turned and stomped away. She dropped her head and followed slowly.

My husband's words, "Don't let the little things bother you so much," came flooding back to me. I saw myself at that moment. Not as Doris' husband who made a bad situation good by emphasizing the positive, but as Betty's husband who turned the minor event into something worse than it truly was.

I turned and walked to Tom, sliding my arm around his waist. After giving him a quick kiss, I watched his face light up. Then I whispered a prayer of thanks to God for showing me how my angry words of the past had made minor incidents worse and how kindness improves even bad situations.—
Jeanne Knappe, Davenport, Iowa.

Family Ties

On our way home from visiting our parents one day, as we rounded a curve in the country road, we saw a red glow in the sky, and then the flames, and then an old farmhouse back in the field burning. Fire engines were there. We later learned that the house was destroyed and the family living there lost everything.

Several months later, when we passed that way again, my twelve-year-old daughter commented sadly, "The old house is still burned down." We all laughed at the way she expressed herself, but we knew exactly what she meant. Something bad had happened and it had not been fixed. Whether this was true we never knew, but to this day when a problem in our family, church or neighborhood needs attention it is not getting, someone is sure to say, "The house is still burned down."

The youngest of my children, at three, was shy and quiet. Her father, who could be firm when a child needed correction, was very soft-spoken and gentle with her, and her siblings envied her relationship with their father.

One day while tossing a baseball in the yard, she broke a garage window and was very upset about what her father would say when he got home. She knew he wouldn't spank her, or send her to her room, but he would surely raise his voice! At the table that night, when their daddy asked about their day, the older children practically drooled in anticipation as Sally, with trembling voice and teary eyes, told him what had happened. He looked at her for a moment, then at the other children, then he patted her hand and in a loving voice said, "That's alright, honey. Daddy knows it was an accident and you didn't mean to do it. Because you were so honest, and told me about it, I'm going to give you a quarter," which he promptly did.

The other children were nonplussed for a moment, then burst out laughing. Ever since then, if someone has a small accident someone else is sure to say, "Give her a quarter." When this happens,

it always brings up those warm, wonderful days when our family was young. I believe these kinds of memories help to keep a family strong and caring and together.

All of these experiences are unique to our family; they bespeak the fabric of our lives, and bring back a flood of loving memories.

At my 50th wedding anniversary, I looked around at my family—husband, children, grandchildren, my sister and her family, and thought how close we all are. We disagree, we glare at each other, we raise our voices, and sometimes feelings are hurt, but we are a family, and we love and trust each other. Part of the glue that binds us together are our wonderful, funny memories. They are free, and all families can have them.—*Phyllis Haughton, Topping, Virginia.*

Change of Life

It isn't difficult to choose the most inspiring role model of my life. That would be Dorothy. I met Dorothy at our Common Ground class. Common Ground is a non-profit educational organization focusing mainly on the spiritual awareness of its participants.

She was a "shiny penny," amongst drabness. She radiated energy and light. And I only found out why later. Dorothy is a spiritual healer.

On June 7th, Dorothy invited me over for a spiritual healing session. It changed my life forever!

Dorothy talked to me for about two hours about how to cope with my psychiatric disorder. (Both she and I had been psychotic before.) Then for a half an hour she did a "laying on of hands." I could feel the energy flowing between us.

Dorothy called it "electricity."

The brilliant sunlight flooded the "healing room" of her beautiful home. The soft, tranquil sounds of the melodic "Angelic Harps" music wafted throughout the chamber. I can feel God reaching into me just by recalling those events!

I'm not a "believer," in the faithful sense. Nor illogical. In fact, before that episode, I would have described myself as a skeptic in anything relating to the "spiritual."

But on June 3rd at my church, our pastoral staff for the first time had conducted a "healing worship service." It lasted for an hour and a half. I cried and wept silently to myself throughout. When I felt God pull me to the rail, I raised my head to my minister and asked through my tears, "What is God's will for me?"

Little did I know that God would answer in the form of the wonderful woman and gentle soul named Dorothy. I had to wait to find that out.

Recently Dorothy wrote me a letter which arrived in the mail after I had experienced a period on the "dark side of the soul." In the letter she promised me another "spiritual healing" in the near future.

As Dorothy said in her letter, "It's so important to find the strength within oneself from God so we can deal with these things and understand He does see all, knows all, and all will be fine with our prayers and actions."

I'm beginning to believe that.—*Gail Kathleen Kroll, Northbrook, Illinois.* •

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Putting Prayer in Action

GUY FINLEY

Just as all the books in the world can't describe the beauty of the simple light that dances through the dozen facets of a single diamond, neither can millions of words hope to reveal the Living Light behind the true nature of prayer.

In some ways, the attempt to define prayer is a bit like stating that the form and function of one bird is the same as all others, even as it goes ignored that no feathered creature can leave the ground were it not for the wind beneath its wings. All this aside, yet not apart from these inherent limitations, we begin our work together with a short spiritual story. Its one lesson tells many truths.

The second day into their week-long trek through a high mountain pass, Marian noticed her husband, Jim, mumbling something under his breath. Besides being an unwanted intrusion into her own tranquility, she didn't want him to be unhappy on this frosty, but oh-so-fresh country morning. Searching for the right tone to her voice, she asked, "What's the matter honey?"

Jim paused and shifted the weight of his backpack. "I'm not really sure, but I can't seem to stay warm," to which he added one last thought. "I think this new Hi-Tec Goreplex coat is for the birds! It's really scratchy around my wrists and neck."

As he spoke, Marian drew him near enough to her to examine his coat. A moment later she began

laughing out loud.

"What's *so* funny?" Jim said, not even trying to hide his irritation at her finding humor in his discomfort.

"Well, honey, for one thing, I believe I've found your problem."

"And what would that be, do tell."

Marian knew anyone could have made the same mistake her husband did, especially someone who didn't understand the special design of the coat's unique fabric, so she swallowed her grin as best she could.

"Sweetheart, it's no wonder you're cold and miserable." But she couldn't contain her laughter, and her words spilled out with it. "Anyone would be unhappy who managed to put his coat on turned inside out!"

Jim's gratitude for Marian's discovery outweighed his temporary embarrassment, and with his troubles resolved, the rest of his journey was a delight.

Spiritually speaking, we face a problem similar to Jim's. Something isn't quite right on our journey. Surely you've felt this. Everything *seems* to be in its right place, yet... Something is turned around. But what is it?

In short... Our attention is turned inside out and, as such, follows our awareness so that the very basis of what we see (experience) as being reality *is reversed*. How can this be?

Our present level of consciousness is not just merely fascinated with the sense of self provided for it by its interaction with this physical world, but this "self" has become literally hypnotized by life's ever-shifting conditions and dwells therein as an unsuspecting captive. So much so that we've fallen spiritually asleep to the existence of our true, permanent inner home, and the presence of the Divine Self residing there.

We mustn't discount this idea just because it's disagreeable with spiritually self-pleasing pictures. Instead, let's evaluate the facts that follow, keeping in mind that it is only in recognizing the truth of our current spiritual state that we can hope to transform it.

Day in and day out the bulk of our energies are

invested more in the struggle to resolve our exterior concerns than to realize their actual inner cause. In other words, when challenged by life, we tend to always turn, face, and start struggling to “take control” of these outer conditions instead of realizing that the only condition we ever really “face” is a reflection of our own level of consciousness. The true words, “my experience is myself” are known to us... But not their realization that sets us free.

Like all great truths, the solution to our as-yet unrealized inner situation rests right within our awareness of it. This rescuing awareness, like the Light that it is, dispels not only the darkness of self-ignorance, but also the secret suffering it serves to create and maintain.

To this end, we must learn to use each moment possible to awaken to ourselves. This action begins with deliberately, consciously, bringing our full attention and awareness to bear upon the whole of us so that no thought or feeling goes undetected or unattended.

Within this specialized inner light we are able to see that whatever these mental and emotional states may point to as being their “cause” is *no excuse* for their disruptive or punishing presence. Here’s the happy result of this higher understanding brought about through this New Action. Instead of going into our usual mode of seeking exterior ways and means to deal with what we perceive as the disturbance, a “blaming mentality” that keeps us perpetual victims, now we are empowered by our own awareness to see the real source of what disturbs us. We see we are only mistakenly identified with some false thought or feeling about the nature of Real Life. We realize

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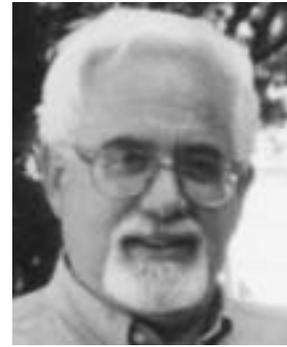
The Sufi Approach to Opening the Heart

ROBERT FRAGER, PH.D.

The heart is a temple that has been placed by God in everyone, a temple that houses the Divine spark within us. In a saying much beloved by the Sufis, God reveals, “I, who cannot fit into all the heavens and earths, fit in the heart of the sincere believer.” Therefore, this temple within each of us is more precious than the holiest shrines and temples on earth. The earthly temples were built by great saints and prophets, but the temple of the heart was built by God to house God.

Many of us have neglected our heart temples. We have also allowed in our hearts the worship of idols. By idols I mean the ephemeral things of this world. We have worshipped worldly success—fame, money, and power—and devoted ourselves to hungering for them and pursuing them. Most of us have spent far more time on these worldly goals than we have in seeking God or in seeking personal transformation. One of the fundamental practices of Sufism is to repeat the phrase, *la ilaha illallah*, “There are no gods but God.” One level of meaning of this sacred phrase is, “There is nothing worthy of worship but God.” The discipline of Sufism includes cleansing our hearts of the idols we have enshrined there, making them suitable temples for God’s presence.

My Sufi master taught that the goal of Sufism is to develop hearts that can pray. Anyone can learn the



outer forms of worship, but it is much harder to teach our hearts to pray. The outside is always easier than the inside. For example, it is not difficult to make our outside clean by bathing and putting on clean clothing, but it can be very difficult to cleanse our insides. Through sincere, patient practice of worship, service, and other spiritual exercises, the heart becomes cleansed and expanded.

In the kundalini yoga tradition, the heart is often described as the mediator between the three lower chakras and the three upper chakras. If the heart is opened, energy will not remain stuck in the lower chakras. The heart helps draw the energy upward, activating the upper, more spiritual chakras.

In the Sufi tradition, the heart is seen as a mediator between the outer influences of the world and the spiritual influences within us. If our pride, greed, and other negative tendencies become involved with things of the world, they put out a kind of heat and smoke that distracts us and hides the spiritual light of the heart. The more we open to that inner light, the more we can see clearly our own negative tendencies, and also, the more we strengthen our positive and spiritual tendencies.

PRACTICE

One essential element in the knowledge of the heart is the practice of what we know. Heart knowledge is deepened by experience. One of my teachers once said, with great humility, “I don’t know a great deal about Sufism, but I have loved whatever I have learned, and I have lived it for over forty years.” These are the words of a real Sufi and a real master. Sufism is a lived teaching. A little knowledge that is applied brings wisdom, whereas too much book learning results in mental and spiritual indigestion.

In the Middle East, there are many stories of Nasruddin, a Sufi master who taught with a great deal of humor. In the following story Nasruddin clearly distinguishes between the experiential knowledge of the heart and the abstract knowledge of the head.

Nasruddin was serving as the local judge. A woman came to him with her son and complained that her son had an uncontrollable sweet tooth. She asked Nasruddin to tell the boy to stop eating sweets all the time. Nasruddin nodded sagely and told her to come back in two weeks. When they returned, he simply said to the son, "Boy, I order you to stop eating sweets!"

The mother then asked, "Why did you make us wait for two weeks? Couldn't you have said this to my son when we first came to you?"

Nasruddin answered, "No, I couldn't possibly have told that to your son two weeks ago."

"Why not?" asked the mother.

"You see, I love sweets myself. First I had to stop eating sweets, and only then could I tell your son to stop."

Our knowledge is not complete unless we act on what we know, and, also, every action affects the heart. My master taught that a kind word or helpful act softens and opens the heart, while a harsh word or harmful act hardens and closes the heart. He would add that our actions also affect the world around us, and that every kind word causes a rose to bloom while every harmful word causes a thorn to grow. As the heart begins to open, we become guided by our inner wisdom and intuition. Now, it is essential to act on our wisdom and insight, or else our connection with the heart will diminish. Even though we know how we should behave, our old habits and tendencies may still dominate or distort at times, and so we have to continue to struggle with these tendencies.

If we would remember that our hearts are divine temples, we would be transformed. From this perspective, we are not worldly creatures seeking the spiritual; we are spiritual beings seeking to discover our own true nature. What we truly are, what we are all seeking, is to be found in our heart of hearts.

RELATIONSHIP

If we remember that everyone's heart is a divine temple, then we will see everyone else differently and behave with far greater love and caring. This image of others is the foundation for the Sufi practice of service. In serving others, we are actually serving the Divine in others. When we remember that the human heart is the holiest of shrines, then we become more compassionate and heedful in all our dealings with others. Remembering to honor the heart in each person is a great discipline. We so often forget. But if we could remember, our lives and all our relationships would be transformed.

To be a Sufi is to remember that the heart of each person we meet is God's temple. To be a Sufi is to honor and serve others. Many hearts have been wounded in this world, and we can serve God's creation by working to heal those wounded hearts. This kind of service will also heal and open our own hearts as well.

One day someone asked a Sufi teacher how to reach God. The teacher replied that the ways to God are as many as there are created beings. The teacher went on, "The shortest and easiest is to serve others, not to bother others, and to make others happy."

Sufism gives us a context by which we can relate to one another, a context based on the fundamental belief that God is within each of us.

We can see our own and each other's faults within this context. Some people are stingy, others don't keep their word, some have bad tempers. But that is not who we truly are. We all have habits, and we have to remember that we are not our habits. The habits are temporary, and what is real and eternal is the Divine within us. Anything that helps us come closer to God, or bring out the Divine within us, is the truth. Anything that obscures this is not the truth. The popular psychology notion of "sharing," and unloading on others all our negative thoughts and feelings is absolutely wrong from this perspective.

When we focus on another's faults, we make those faults more real both in the other person and in ourselves. If we see the beauty in someone else, we do them a service and we also do ourselves a service. For example, if someone else is a compulsive overeater, and I gossip about their weight and their addiction to food, I harm them and I also harm myself. Their overeating may be a fact, but that is not who they truly are. The truth is that they are souls. The negative traits of the personality can be transformed, and the fundamental truth is that we all yearn for union with the infinite.

The Sufis try not to let their egos get all upset by someone else's ego. We have all done this often enough in the past, and we need to change how we see ourselves and each other. We must first see the Divine in ourselves. Unless we view ourselves as having God in our own hearts, we will not be able to see others that way.

AN EXERCISE FOR OPENING THE HEART

The more aware you are of your heart center, the more the heart

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 72



Compassion: The Gift of Giving

JOHN TARRANT

Once a student came to me who was a master of loving kindness meditation. She would meditate for several days at a time and then people would start to follow her around in the street. They wanted to touch her, to be near some mystery that they sensed she held, to be blessed by the unconditional delight she was experiencing. In this story compassion is an art or a work, and there are practices that support it.

But compassion is also something given, a mystery, a strange event. It appears even when it is not looked for and it can be absent when we need it most. It seems that compassion increases when it is happening already, so that if we do some small, kind thing, others near us will also be kind. The energy of that impulse will gather and the village around us will grow happier for a certain period of time. It will be more tolerant of its outcasts and its artists. We can also see that the absence of compassion gathers energy so that some situations spiral downward until to be human is to be mere, animated, disregarded matter.

We all want more compassion. We never seem to have enough of it for ourselves, for each other, and for the creatures we share life with. So, if compassion is a mystery, how does it come about, what practices bring it into being? Can practices bring it into being?

The story that follows is a start. A physician was working at a low-fee clinic when a large man, a Harley man, a muscle-builder from Southern California,

became a patient. He had AIDS and one of the opportunistic infections afflicting him was dermatitis. He was big and frightening to begin with, and now his skin was falling off in such a disfiguring fashion that people hurried out of his way in the street. The physician treated him and, without thinking much about it, used to pick up bags of oranges for him when she shopped for her family. She knew he wouldn't or couldn't go into a market and that he didn't get much fresh food. She was a resident at the time, and one day her attending physician saw her give the man the oranges. He called her in for a lecture on boundaries. The attending physician was so concerned about her behavior that he made a note in her personnel file. Before this moment there had never been any reason to think that she was not an excellent doctor. She was a safe doctor and an effective one, a star in her class, but the attending physician had decided that this particular action of bringing oranges to the patient was dangerous. She didn't believe that the attending was right, but wasn't really sure either. The point seemed moot because she was about to leave for a rotation elsewhere and it was expected that the patient would die while she was away.

The day she returned she got a phone call asking her to visit the patient. The man was expected to die that day. When she arrived, he said, "I have been waiting for you to return so that I could thank you for the oranges. You did something for me that no one has ever done before." Those oranges meant much more than fresh food, they were globes of light; they meant love and respect and fellow feeling, they meant compassion. She knew then, she said, that she had been right to shop for the oranges. Having thanked her, which was his compassion and his obligation, he died peacefully that day.

One of the things about compassion is that it needs to persist and to be done for its own sake, for the sake of our souls. We will not be rewarded for it in the obvious easy ways we can be rewarded for making a good investment. But we will be rewarded in other ways, because if we have compassion and act upon it, life will

have a taste and the colors will be bright and we will know we are loved and have a place on earth.

Compassion is something that needs to be encouraged, like an endangered species, perhaps—something we need more of. We can always use more compassion, but as I sink deeper into my questions about kindness, it seems that compassion appears naturally without our striving for it. It appears when we are genuine, when we are, as the old Chinese would say, in harmony with the Tao.

Compassion can be an activity half in dream, natural, like a tired resident buying oranges at midnight in Safeway.

Compassion seems to begin with the earth who sends up food, animals and ourselves, receives our pains, desires, and secret, whispered hopes, and who holds us through all the span of our lives and takes us back when it is time. This is the empty land out of which we all appear and which, improbably, sustains us. So when we speak of compassion, it does not begin with a small personal effort, though it may end that way. It begins with a contact with the mystery, a surrender to the mystery that we are all linked and do not understand why. Then we discover that when we search for knowledge we stumble against love, we find unexpected companions, we find ourselves holding each others' hands.

The old T'ai Chi teachers used to watch the movements of the cranes and the snakes to work out how to move in natural harmony, and perhaps we can start our exploration of compassion by watching the earth itself. The earth gives and receives and it witnesses. There are ancient purification ceremonies in which we speak our sorrows and

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Compassion

Continued from page 31

crimes into a hole in the ground to release them.

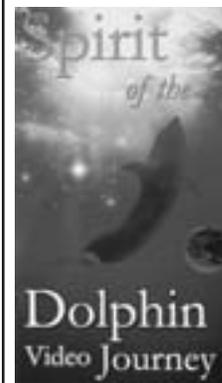
The meditation method of witness is called mindfulness. In mindfulness, we accompany our own pains and thoughts and hopes—whatever arises in the mind and heart—and notice kindly, as if what arises were a child, a lover, our oldest friend. This act of witness is pure. It does not strive to be kind, it is just a good companion. And out of this companionship compassion arises—the fellow feeling that men have in the mines, and at war, that women have in childbirth, but that is not commonly found in corporations. This fellow feeling is raw and exacting, it doesn't come from our will but reveals itself to our noticing, it appears in the most painful circumstances so we can trust it. Compassion is the link we have with each other. It leads to small and unpredictable acts of kindness. To ignore it is to head into hell. To observe it and rest in it is to be fully human and that is enough for one life. That is something real. •

John Tarrant is one of the new generation of Zen masters trained in both Eastern and Western traditions, and the author of "The Light Inside the Dark: Zen, Soul and the Spiritual Life." He is a contributor to the poetry anthologies "Beneath a Single Moon: Buddhist Poets in America" and "What Book." John has practiced meditation in the major Buddhist traditions, is a Zen Roshi, and teaches meditation and trains meditation teachers in the United States and Australia. He also has a Ph.D. in psychology and practices Jungian psychotherapy with a special interest in healing and the imagination. He founded and directs the California Diamond Sangha. He can be contacted by email at jobnt@wco.com

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Conscious Healing

Yoga: Listening to the Body

STEPHEN COPE

Recent surveys reveal that more than eight million Americans currently do yoga on a regular basis—in YMCAs, health clubs, private studios, senior centers, living room floors and retreat centers around the country. The Miami Dolphins and the Chicago Bulls are doing it. The Canadian Mounted Police are doing it. Sting, Madonna, Kareem Abdhul Jihbar, Raquel Welch, Woody Harrelson, Jane Fonda, and Ali McGraw are doing it. With almost alarming rapidity, practices whose secrets have been handed down for thousands of years exclusively through the tradition of “whispered wisdom,” from adept to student, have landed on Main Street USA.

There are many obvious reasons for this *rapprochement*. Yoga is probably the world’s most perfect form of exercise. It cultivates cardiovascular health, and musculo-skeletal strength and flexibility without the painful and damaging side effects of high-impact aerobics. It tunes up every organ system—respiratory, digestive, reproductive, endocrine, lymphatic, and nervous. It cultivates the body’s capacity to relax and dramatically reduces the negative effects of stress.

With regular yoga practice, we breathe better. We sleep better. We digest our food better. We feel better. We may even begin to recover from chronic illness.

And, for many Americans, the best part is that none of these amazing outcomes require years of training and apprenticeship. The benefits of practice are immediate.



We are, by and large, a practical people. And yoga is a practical endeavor.

Yet the immediate physical benefits of yoga—reported in medical journals and the mainstream press—may be only the tip of the iceberg. Regular yoga practitioners describe a whole host of subtle transformations in their lives—changes that seem more mysterious, more difficult to quantify, and even to describe. Many experience moments of sharply increased mental focus and clarity and heightened perceptual and intuitive powers. Some describe a dramatic increase in energy and stamina, emotional evenness, and equanimity. Others report a heightened feeling of connection to an inner Self, ecstatic states of bliss, and profound well-being. And there are not infrequent stories of truly miraculous healings—physical, emotional, spiritual.

What accounts for these more ineffable fruits of yoga practice? Are they central to the practice, or peripheral?

As it turns out, the systematic enhancement of perceptual and intuitive powers is one of the primary goals of classical yoga practice. Yogis discovered thousands of years ago that there is a particular way of moving—characteristic of classical posture practice—that heightens our mind’s capacity to draw areas of the body’s unconscious into consciousness—allowing us access to aspects of our intelligence which are thought of in the West as “supernormal.” Indeed, in the classical sense, yoga postures are not so much about exercise as they are about *re-educating the mind* and developing the full potential of the remarkable perceptual powers which yogis understand to penetrate the entire body.

At the beginning of most yoga classes, I have students simply stand for a moment, with their eyes closed, and ask them to intentionally scan their body with their awareness: soles of the feet, ankles, knees, hips, belly, chest, arms, neck, head, face, crown. Almost everyone who does this finds, usually to their astonishment, that there are areas of their bodies that are completely “numb”—that exist completely outside their conscious

awareness. Students often have the unsettling sense that somehow the “circuits have not been hooked up” to one or another part of the body. “When I close my eyes, I just can’t even seem to find any sensation in the area of my hips,” says one student. Indeed, the circuitry is weak. In the process of relegating these areas of the body to the unconscious, the neuropathways into sensation have been underused. The neuropathways are there as *potential*, but the brain’s skill in intentionally using them has been underdeveloped.

The good news is that our restriction of awareness is *learned behavior*. It can be unlearned. Yogis have proven that we can learn how to redirect our awareness into every aspect of our physical life—not just the musculature and the surface of the body, but the viscera, and even deeper structures of the body as well. And the best news is that in the process of “hooking up the circuitry” again, we will naturally begin to *remember what the body has forgotten*. The intentional practice of yoga postures has the effect of “remembering” us—reuniting us with the lost parts of our self, our experience, our history, and its resulting insights.

The science of physiology has coined the term “proprioception” for the act of receiving and interpreting messages from our own bodies. Proprioception literally means “our own reception”—and through it we are able to feel the warmth in our hands as we sit quietly, or the beating of our hearts, or the burning in a group of muscles that are chronically in spasm. Through proprioception we are able to discriminate subtle shades of feeling and sensation—to both perceive and interpret stimuli from

the field of our own visceral reality. It is the capacity for proprioception, indeed, that helps us to feel real and grounded on the earth. When people lose their proprioceptive capacities through diseases of the neuro-muscular systems, they often describe a feeling that they’ve lost something core to their humanbeingness.

The practice of yoga postures is intentionally designed to develop our proprioceptive capacities to a level of supernormal refinement. There is no magic in this. It is simply a matter of training attention. A well-balanced series of postures will systematically open up every area of the body for exploration, giving us a methodical way of scanning the body, and training our attention to penetrate every aspect of it.

When we begin practicing postures, we may notice that our attunement to sensations even on the surface of the body is quite gross. But as we take different areas of the body as objects of our concentration, our capacity to focus attention grows. We rediscover those neuropathways into sensation only through trial and error, but as we discover them we can eventually learn how to use them and bring them under our conscious control. Finally, our perception becomes so refined that we begin to penetrate the surface of the body, the armor of the musculature, and at later stages of the practice the subtlest functioning of the internal organs.

As we train our attention in this way, we’ll also begin to notice our postures throughout the day, not just on the yoga mat. *Oh, I’m standing here, and I can feel my shoulders bunching forward, pulling me in. What am I feeling? What am I reacting to? Something old? Something in the moment?*



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Because yoga *asanas* are not so much about exercise as they are about learning and unlearning, *it is not the movement itself but the quality of attention we bring to the movement that makes postures qualify as yoga*. Postures have, in themselves, no magic power. Even the most seemingly “advanced” practice, if driven by fear, aggression, perfectionism, and unconsciousness, will not automatically create transformation. Postures simply provide a methodical way of training attention so movements and areas previously relegated to the “basement” of the primitive brain can be brought into consciousness.

Western science has now discovered how this works. When muscles are moved slowly and consciously, the movement is brought under the control of the most refined aspect of the brain, the neocortex. Deliberate movement, done with heightened states of attention to sensation, allows a deep relearning to happen. Yoga actually begins to change the body by re-educating the brain.

As this re-education proceeds, proprioception becomes even more highly refined and awareness begins to penetrate not just the musculature, but the organs, glands, the fluids, and even the bones. This seems odd and unlikely to us Westerners. Our Western medical model is suffused with a fascinating “split” in awareness between the outside of the body and the inside. The outside of the body—the skin, the muscles—is seen as available to awareness and volition. The inside of the body, however, is seen as automatic, reflexive, dark, unfathomable and primitive—even, for some, unclean. Not only is it repulsive and irrational, but it is outside our volition,

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 70



The Presence of Compassion

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN O'DONOHUE
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

For three months, John O'Donohue's book, "Eternal Echoes" rotated from the left to the right side of my computer. Each time my hand moved it, I stopped to read a few paragraphs, a few pages. Reading his words, I felt as though I was being embraced by a kind presence. Somehow, I felt seen, made visible, by the touch of compassion.

Compassion can be transmitted through many forms of words and actions. We recognize its energy when we feel that certain swelling in our hearts, for it is the heart that senses compassion. When compassion touches us we feel seen for who we truly are—as more than our troubles, our needs.

You will feel the presence of compassion as you read the interview with John O'Donohue. O'Donohue is a poet, scholar, and author of the award-winning and bestselling books "Anam Cara" and "Eternal Echoes." He lives in the west of Ireland, which is where he was the day we talked on the phone.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: Let's begin with a general discussion of compassion in order to deepen our understanding of its nature.

JOHN O'DONOHUE: Compassion distinguishes human presence from all other presence on the earth. The human mind is one of the most gracious gifts of creation. The human mind is the place where nature gathers at its most intense and at its most intimate. The human being is an in-between presence, belonging neither fully to the earth from which she has come, nor to the heavens toward which her mind and spirit aim. In a sense, the human being is the loneliest creature in creation. Paradoxically, the human being also has the greatest possibility for intimacy. I link compassion immediately with intimacy. Compassion is the ability to vitally imagine what it is like to be an *other*; the force that makes a bridge from the island of one individuality to the island of the other. It is an ability to step outside your own perspective, limita-

tions and ego, and become attentive in a vulnerable, encouraging, critical, and creative way with the hidden world of another person.

Compassion is an ability to feel pity for an *other*. One of the greatest problems in post-modern culture is the problem of otherness, because many of the forces, like electronic media, commerce, economics, and the ideology of rush and speed that we adhere to leave us few possibilities to really engage the difference that we are and that each other is. Compassion is the ability to enter into a world that may be totally different from you, in an imaginative way, naturally, and feel what the others feel. It is related directly to justice. A lot of evil happens because of ignorance and of numbness, and compassion is one of the forces that invites and permits us to step outside our own complacency and see what life beyond our own skin is like.

Within the word compassion is passion. There is an intrinsic connection between passion and compassion. Someone who feels no passion is in pain, a pain that is always a lonesome pain. One of the loneliest things is to encounter somebody whose longing has been numbed. Her personality becomes a mere contour of externality around vacancy. Those who are compassionate are people whose passion and imagination are fully alive and vital.

TRANSFORMATION: Is compassion innate to our nature, something to be released, or is compassion something to be developed?

O'DONOHUE: It's a bit of both. Compassion is somehow innate to our nature. We have a natural attraction toward the other, a fascination with the other, and are deeply touched when we see the other person in pain. It is natural in those ways, and it is easy to awaken, intensify, and extend. Compassion needs development. If a child is raised in a context where he is taught blame and hate, it is probable that his compassion will be damaged. It is interesting, in psychological terms, to look at the narratives of those who have done awful things in the world. Often, the root of the evil in perpetrators is found in an incredible numbing that happened at a time when they were most vulnerable. Great pain sometimes numbs the soul and quenches the potential for compassion.

TRANSFORMATION: Is there an innate rela-

tionship between our yearning to belong and compassion?

O'DONOHUE: I think there is. The creator of the universe loves circles: time and space are circles, the day is a circle, the year is a circle, the earth is a circle. But when creating and fashioning the human heart, the creator only created a half-circle, so that there is something ontologically unfinished in human nature. That is why you can't enter your own life or inhabit your full presence without a vital and real relationship with some other person. Your awakening and the fulfillment of your identity requires that you belong together with others. The need to belong to yourself, the deepest need of all, can only be fulfilled through the beautiful force-field of friendship. Our hunger to belong is actually an expression of our compassion for ourselves and our passion for the other.

TRANSFORMATION: Are you saying that the basis for compassion with oneself is the yearning for the other?

O'DONOHUE: Yes, that's not an absolute claim but it is a huge proportion of the force field. The beautiful irony is that even though we're housed in separate bodies there is a profound hidden tissue of absolute connection between us. The Celtic tradition sensed that no one lives for herself alone. Your call to discover who you are and to bring your soul into birth is also a great act of creativity toward everyone else.

TRANSFORMATION: What other understandings about compassion have you extrapolated from Celtic thought?

O'DONOHUE: Celtic thought contributes magnificently to a philosophy of compassion, deriving from its sense that everything belongs in one diverse, living unity. On an ontological level, the exercise of compassion is the transfiguration of dualism: the separation of matter and spirit, masculine and feminine, body and soul, human and divine, person and animal, and person and element. The beauty of the Celtic tradition was that it managed to think and articulate all of these presences together in a profound, intimate unity. So, if compassion is a praxis which tries to bring that unity into explicit activity and presentation, then Celtic philosophy of unity contributes strongly to com-

passion. The Celtic sense of no separating border between nature and humans allows us to have compassion with animals and with places in nature. For the Celts, nature wasn't a huge expanse of endless matter. Nature was an incredibly elemental and passionately individual presence, and that is why many gods and spirits are actually tied into very explicit places, and to the memory and history and narrative of the places.

TRANSFORMATION: Let's look at a narrow component of this philosophy. What do animals have to teach us about compassion?

O'DONOHUE: The predominant silence in which the animal world lives is very touching. As children on the farm, we were taught to respect animals. We were told that the dumb animals are blessed. They cannot say what they are feeling and we should have great compassion for them. They were tended to and looked after and people became upset if something happened to them. There was a great sense of solidarity between us and our older brothers and sisters, the animals. One of the tragedies in Western religion is the way that we have been so elitist in reserving the spiritual exclusively for the human. That is an awful, barbaric crime. When you subtract the notion of self from a presence, you objectify it and then that presence can be used and abused. It is a sin and blasphemy to say that animals have no spirits and souls. One of the cornerstones of contemplative life is going below the surface of the external and the negativity. The contemplative attends to the roots of wrong and violence. Because the animals live essentially what I call the contemplative life, maybe the most sacred prayer of the world actually happens within animal consciousness. Secondly, sometimes when you look into an animal's eyes, you see incredible pain. I think there are levels of suffering for which humans are not refined enough, and maybe our older, ancient brothers and sisters, the animals, carry some of that for us.

TRANSFORMATION: Let's move to the presence of compassion. How do we recognize it?

O'DONOHUE: We recognize compassion in the willingness of someone to imagine himself into the life of another person. We recognize its presence in the withholding of huge negative moralistic judgment. We see compassion in the expression of

mercy, in the refusal to label someone with a short-circuiting terminology that condemns her, even though her actions may be awkward. We see compassion in an openness to the greater mystery of the other person. The present situation, deed or misdeed is not the full story of the individual, there is a greater presence behind the deed or the person than society usually acknowledges. Above all, we see the presence of compassion as the vulnerability to be disturbed about awful things that are going on.

TRANSFORMATION: What is the relationship between absence and compassion?

O'DONOHUE: Absence and presence are sisters. The opposite of presence is not absence, the opposite of presence is vacancy. Vacancy is a void, a space which is hungrily empty, whereas absence is a space of spatial emptiness, but there is a trail of connection toward the departed one, the lost one, the absent one. To feel absence is to feel connection with the one who has gone. There is still a huge affective involvement with the person. In exploring compassion and vacancy, vacancy is a sinister pain, because of its hunger, its emptiness. A form of vacancy that is prevalent in post-modern culture is indifference, the inability to imagine or show compassion to others who are in trouble. Absence is different. The feeling of absence can create an incredible feeling of compassion.

TRANSFORMATION: In "Eternal Echoes," you refer to "the sanctuary of human presence." What does this phrase suggest?

O'DONOHUE: The visible presence of the body is the sign of the invisible presence of the eternal, the divine. One of the fascinating tasks in every human life is to engage and experience oneself as a unity. The idea of the sanctuary of the human presence implies a lovely lyrical unity in the human person. When you stand in front of another human being, you stand before the presence of an unknown and infinite world of love, belonging, imagination, and ambivalence, negativity, darkness, and struggle. It is sad, in post-modern culture, that human presence is diminished, rendered vacant, and not acknowledged for the wild divinity that it is.

TRANSFORMATION: The sanctuary of human presence is the basis of anam cara friendship, or soul friends. Does that kind of friendship

bring forth compassion?

O'DONOHUE: The Celtic tradition was very complex. It was a vigorous warrior type tradition, yet within it was this poignant icon of the anam cara, the notion of soul friendship. Anam is the word for soul, and cara is the word for friend. When you had an anam cara friend, it was as if you were joined in an eternal way with a friend of your soul, in some incredible recognition of the sublime affinity between the two. Originally, the myth was that each human was two in one, but they were split and separated, consequently they spent most of their lives searching for their other half. In the Celtic idea of the anam cara, the anam cara is the other half that you have been missing. In coming into the gift and grace of friendship, you enter into your own fullest completion. You are also being gifted with a dimension of your soul that was hungry and lost and is now found. That kind of attraction, passion, affinity and belonging is a profound experience of birthing one's own identity. The human body is born in miniature form, but completely there. I believe that the human heart is never fully born, and all our lives, we bring new kingdoms to birth in the hidden world of the heart. Maybe death is that moment you are fully born and you are received into another world where the laws of separation and dualism no longer operate. Unless you experience friendship, affinity, and belonging, it is very difficult to feel compassion. Therefore, friendship, especially the Celtic idea of friendship, is a profound, nurturing ground for extensive and intensive compassion.

TRANSFORMATION: Talk about human vulnerability and compassion.

O'DONOHUE: One of the most vulnerable living forms in creation is human. Around the human body, where we live, there is emptiness. There is no big protective frame, so anything can come at you from outside at any time. At this moment, there are people in a doctor's office getting news that will change their lives forever. They will remember this day as the day their life broke in two. There are people having accidents that they never foresaw. There are safe, complacent people whose lives are managed under the dead manacle of control falling off a cliff into love and into the excitement and dan-

ger of a new relationship. In life, anything can come along the pathway to the house of your soul, the house of your body, to transfigure you. We're vulnerable externally to destiny, but we're also vulnerable internally, within ourselves. Things can come awake within your mind and heart that cause you immense days and nights of pain, a sense of being lost, of having no meaning, no worth; a kind of acidic negativity can knock down everything that you achieve in yourself, giving your world a sense of being damaged.

Another way to approach this is to look at the huge difference between sincerity and authenticity. Sincerity, while it's lovely, is necessary but insufficient, because you can be sincere with just one zone of your heart awakened. When many zones of the heart are awakened and harmonized we can speak of authenticity, which is a broader and more complex notion. It takes great courage and grace to feel the call to awaken, and it takes greater courage and more grace still to actually submit to the call, to risk yourself into these interior spaces where there is very often little protection. It takes a great person to creatively inhabit her own mind and not turn her mind into a destructive force that can ransack her life. You need compassion for yourself, particularly in American society, because many people in America identify themselves through the models and modules of psychology that inevitably categorize them as a syndrome. Lovely people feel that their real identity is working on themselves, and some work on themselves with such harshness. Like a demented gardener who won't let the soil settle for anything to grow, they keep raking, tearing away the nurturing clay from their own heart, then they're surprised that they feel so empty and vacant. Self-compassion is paramount. When you are compassionate with yourself, you trust in your soul, which you let guide your life. Your soul knows the geography of your destiny better than you do.

TRANSFORMATION: A sister to vulnerability is suffering. Earlier you talked about how immense suffering can numb us. How does suffering both numb and teach?

O'DONOHUE: Yeats said, "Too much pain can make a stone of the heart." We're only able for so much. The real heroes in human life are the main-

Ask yourself: to whom can I be truly present, where can I be truly present, in what context is my presence diminished, not desired, or felt? The spiritual hunger so prevalent in our times is a hunger for true presence. There is something ultimately divine in presence. Presence is what life is about. When we come into real presence, the eternal becomes fully active in us and around us.

ly silent, unnoticed ones who draw no attention to themselves but through their daily acts of love and gentleness and compassion keep the tissue of humane presence alive and vital. Some people are called to awful suffering. Down the road from you, in South America, a woman is searching through a bin for crumbs for her starving children, whom she loves just as much as we love our own children. I am often disturbed that she is there, near starvation, and we can talk about something that we love in the comfort of our homes. I don't know the answer to that, but I do feel that the duty of privilege is absolute integrity. The suffering of the world is not relieved because of our inability to realize how privileged we are, because of our blindness to our duty to help others. I also don't understand why innocent ones are called to carry awful cargoes of pain at their most vulnerable time. There is no doubt that pain damages. Often, the most beautiful people are those who have been badly broken, who have accessed a place of grace and light and healing. They come back, cohered together beautifully. There is also suffering which numbs you, deadens you. Out of dead vacancy, great darkness and sinister negativity can arise. Therein is the need for prayer, forgiveness, and mercy, which are sublime presences beyond human achievement that visit and mend us.

One of the best teachers in the world is suffering. Sometimes we suffer because we are renegeing on our own growth and suffering comes along to unsettle, disturb, and break up some of the false constellations in which we have become atrophied. You may be atrophied in a position you don't even know you're in. Unknown to you, a shell grew around you and your life, rather than being a vital presence, was becoming a mere echo. Nothing

breaks that shell like suffering. Suffering teaches you what you don't want to learn, bringing you the gift that you can only receive through suffering.

TRANSFORMATION: Discuss the growth of integrity and compassion.

O'DONOHUE: Human identity is about individuality. One of the greatest duties we have in the world is to become the individual we were called to be, to inhabit the destiny which we were prepared to follow from ancient times. Individuation is a call to holistic identity, to the fullness of identity, and it is a complex journey. The awakened life is the true life. I have been around death a lot and have noticed that people who have been faithful to the call of their own complexity and identity feel that they have attempted to realize what life calls them to. To renege on that is to settle for a life in a little ledge somewhere in your destiny and not to go out onto the ocean of the full voyage. That is where integrity comes in. There is a connection between integrity and integration. An awakened life has diversity and harmony within itself, and is a life which is integrated. Whatever is integrated means that the parts are in communication with each other. In the world, you find that destructive actions, which damage, come from energies which have broken off and set themselves up as a whole when they are incomplete, just a part. Integrity is the praxis of creation and compassionate being derives from integrated presence.

TRANSFORMATION: Where does desire fit into compassion?

O'DONOHUE: The heart is a theater of desire, of different longings. Desire is the call of fulfillment. One of the etymological origins of desire means being away from one's star. In a sense, the call of desire is the call to come home. You can talk all you like about the spiritual life. Very often, the more

talk there is about it, the less presence of it is actually around. One of the tests of spiritual integrity is whether a person is at home in his own life. That makes for poise. You can trust somebody who has poise and balance in his own spirit, because he is in unity and he is in rhythm, and you can always trust what is in rhythm. Distrust and fear are usually caused by an absence of rhythm and the unpredictability of the threat of destruction that it brings. In a deep, deep way, being at home in your own nature makes for a real sense of belonging. We always imagine that our desire is a call outward, toward something outside. In many instances, it can be, but in its fundamental intention, desire is the call to come home and to discover that which is sought outside is actually hidden under the heart in the home of your own soul.

TRANSFORMATION: Coming home into your own soul gives presence to human life. What is the difference between being present and presence?

O'DONOHUE: Objectively, everything that is here now is present. The stones outside this house in Conamara are present, the mountains over the road, the lake outside my house, they are all present. The neighbors at the houses in the village are present in the world. But the fullness of human presence is an awakened and focused presence toward a receiver, a listener, or a hearer. Being present is what we spiritually yearn to be. To be present is to inhabit your own presence with clarity and luminosity. One of the most awful things in modern life is the consistent and insidious diminishment of presence in life. You see it in the corporate world, in relationships, at home, in families. I like to pose a simple question, one that quickly tells what is going on in your life. Ask yourself: to whom can I be truly present, where can I be truly present, in what context is my presence diminished, not desired, or felt? The spiritual hunger so prevalent in our times is a hunger for true presence. There is something ultimately divine in presence. Presence is what life is about. When we come into real presence, the eternal becomes fully active in us and around us. In other words, when we hit real presence we break into eternity.

TRANSFORMATION: Let's close with a discus-

sion about Celtic prayer and how prayer can help us develop compassion.

O'DONOHUE: In Celtic tradition, time had a secret structure and events had their own sacredness. The Celtic mind practiced what I call reverence of approach to experience. Experience was a profound threshold of creativity and transformation. Anything and everything that happens in experience unfolds, expresses, and embodies your identity. The Celts had blessings for starting off the day, blessings for encounters, blessings for work, blessings for eating and for cooking. The last blessing at night was a blessing for the soaring of the fire. In the Celtic tradition, most of the wisdom was handed on around the fire, which was a lovely image of the heart and warmth. The coals of one night's fire would be the seed for the fire of the next day. The Celts had this intimate and almost domestic sense of divine shelter and divine activity in the world. When you approach life like that, you are acutely aware of your own gift in the world. When you are aware of your gift, you are aware that your purpose is somehow tied into the deepest hunger and the deepest call of the world.

Additionally, prayer takes you into another kind of space. It takes you into that oblique interim place where the connections between things are born and where there is secretness together, where secret togetherness becomes active. Therefore, prayer is not about anything specific. Meister Eckhart said there is a place in the soul that neither time nor space nor no created thing can touch. The intentionality of prayer is to take us as frequently as possible into that serenity and tranquility and purity of space where we can heal and renew. The insight of prayer means that you are not identical to your biography, you are not just a psychological matrix. There is a place in you which is beyond psychology, and that is the eternal place within you. The more we visit there, the more we are touched and fused with the limitless kindness and affection of the divine. The ultimate goal of prayer is to learn to behold yourself with the same gentleness, pride, expectation, and compassion with which the divine presence beholds you at every moment. If we can inhabit that reflex of divine presence, then compassion will flow naturally from us. •



Soul-Level Healing

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF

Living in Process is a path of healing and learning. Human existence being the way it is, our learning possibilities often come as woundings. On the TV program *Saturday Night Live*, there's a skit about a little boy who's hyperactive. He's always hurting himself. His mother dresses him up in padding and a helmet and ties him to a jungle gym with a bungee cord. He's always running off, coming to the end of the bungee, and getting snapped back, essentially unharmed, to the jungle gym. I tend to think of all of us as being much like that little boy. The Creator has fixed us up to be ultimately safe, given us a jungle gym as a sturdy base, and tied us to a bungee cord. The bruises we get are often of our own making. We keep running and getting snapped back until we finally get the point and start learning the lessons we need to learn to walk the path of the soul.

Of course, there are things that just "happen" to us in living life that need to be healed. We do not "cre-

ate" all our situations for learning, at least not consciously. *And*, all situations in our life are opportunities for healing and learning. At some ultimate level, the issue is not whether we have been molested, beaten, spoiled, or overindulged. *We* are the ones who have to deal with whatever our life is and has been. Our issue is to do the healing necessary so that we can get the learning and become whole and move on and live our life fully. Focusing on what others have done to us is useless. We need to have the commitment to do what we need to do to heal and move on.

WILLINGNESS

Willingness is an important word here. Nothing positive can happen in our lives unless we are willing. We have to be willing to go to any lengths to heal. We have to be willing to plumb the depths of our inner selves courageously, to be ready and open to learn whatever is there for us. Life will present us

Sometimes, all we need is the willingness and our inner process will do the rest. Yet, willingness is not just an act of will. It is much deeper than that. By willingness, I mean an openness to face courageously whatever we need to face to take the next step in our journey.

with many opportunities to learn. I have seen some who stubbornly refuse to gather the learnings there for them. Yet, life still continues to present them with opportunities for learning the lessons time and time again. Unfortunately, each time the opportunity recycles, it seems to appear with more force and more intensity in order to get our attention. I see this increase in intensity as one of the ways that our inner process loves and cares for us. It gives us every opportunity to heal, grow, and learn. We can choose not to take those opportunities, and they will just recycle with more intensity the next time.

Sometimes, all we need is the willingness and our inner process will do the rest. Yet, willingness is not just an act of will. It is much deeper than that. By willingness, I mean an openness to face courageously whatever we need to face to take the next step in our journey. Often, our fear is so overwhelming that we're afraid we won't be able to handle the information we learn about ourselves. Yet, in the end, all of this information is inside of us and it's *our* information. Getting clear about it, whatever it is, and working through the healing is what life is about. I find that it is often our mind and our *thinking* about horrible illusions that make our healing difficult, not our reality. Ironically, as we truly probe deep within ourselves and face our learnings, we find that our connection with our spirituality gets stronger and stronger, and we find we have the immeasurable support and caring to do whatever we need to heal.

Often, I find that many people underestimate themselves and become satisfied with a quick fix. Once they're feeling better, they're not willing to go to the depths within themselves required to truly heal themselves at a soul level. They will feel a little

better, give up some of their harmful and dysfunctional behaviors, and back off, accepting existence rather than true living as enough.

Accepting a half life is not what Living in Process is about. In this work, there is an acceptance of wherever one is, while at the same time believing and knowing that we can have and are meant to have an abundant, fully alive life. In Living in Process, we have the possibility of embracing the process of full healing and full spiritual living. We see in those around us lives changed and people living a complete, happy, and serene life, and we believe that this fullness of living and complete healing is possible for us all.

In my earlier career as a psychologist and psychotherapist, I came to see that the field of psychology did not believe that anyone can completely heal. They can go through endless psychotherapy and work on themselves forever, *and* underlying the whole field is a belief that no one ever really changes. Unfortunately, this actually limits what is possible.

My experience with the Living in Process work that I was developing was that people could heal from *anything* if they were willing to do their work and stick with it. This deep healing, regardless of what the wound is, has been my continued experience in this work.

The only requirement is to have the willingness to do our work and to have the commitment to follow it through as far as it takes us. As we heal, we move into a freedom and responsibility we could not have previously imagined. •

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Intimate Relationships as Training for Service

AN INTERVIEW WITH
EVELYN AND PAUL MOSCHETTA
BY MELISSA WEST

Drs. Evelyn and Paul Moschetta, authors of “The Marriage Spirit: Finding the Passion and Joy of Soul-centered Love,” have evolved a model of spiritual intimacy in personal relationships. So many of us, claim the Moschettas, married twenty five years, try to fix our intimate relationships by focusing on emotional or sexual healing, never considering the state of our souls. They have discovered, in their twenty-eight years of counseling, that most relationship problems arise from the inability to let our spiritual self, our highest self, determine the course of love in the relationship. Marriage, says the Moschettas, is a sacred place, one created when egos fade into the background and the spiritual self emerges.

Given their focus on spirituality in intimate relationships, **PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION** decided to pick their brains on how compassion, desire, and

right action are woven into the fabric of intimate relationships.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: What is the importance of compassion in intimate relationships?

EVELYN MOSCHETTA: We see compassion as something that clearly requires going beyond your own self. To be compassionate you must be able to have empathy, which means you actually have to feel for another person. That’s different than identifying with the other person.

TRANSFORMATION: What’s the difference?

EVELYN: When I identify with my husband, let’s say my husband’s brother or sister treated him badly, then I feel as if they’ve treated me badly as well. If I have empathy for him, I can feel his pain for having been treated badly, but it isn’t me, it hasn’t happened to me, it’s happened to him. I feel his pain, but there’s a dif-

ference: if I identify with him, I'm not going to be able to see him as a separate individual, which he is.

Obviously, in any marriage, especially a spiritual marriage, we're functioning on two levels. On one level we have to see each other and respect each other as two separate individuals with our own views, opinions, and ways of doing things. On another level, we are one, and there is no difference between us.

PAUL MOSCHETTA: What comes up for me in regard to compassion in intimate relationships is acceptance. When we live together there are things about one another that are just different than how we'd like them to be. I think living together on a daily basis is where you find compassion, the ability to really accept the things we wish were different but simply can't be.

EVELYN: With compassion, it's important to have passion for the other person as well. It's not just sexual passion. We're talking about a passion for your partner: being attentive to that human being, being able to focus on that human being, having a true passion and unselfish interest and involvement. When we have that, we are going to feel compassion for that person.

TRANSFORMATION: Is it possible in an intimate relationship to be too compassionate?

PAUL and EVELYN: No!

EVELYN: I should ask, what do you mean by being too compassionate?

TRANSFORMATION: I'm thinking of the Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa's term "idiot compassion," mushy compassion rather than a more strong-hearted compassion, losing your own boundaries in an overpowering feeling for the other's suffering.

EVELYN: That's just what I was saying about staying two separate individuals. If I stay separate, I can't lose my sense of self. In a healthy relationship, my partner wouldn't want me to lose my sense of self. If I've lost my sense of self, then I simply cannot have compassion for you; I'm needy and dependent and insecure and frightened. I'm simply not going to be capable of having the compassion for you that you will need when the time arises. What you're talking about isn't compassion; it's neediness and dependency. That isn't even love. That's a

clinging attachment. When we talk about compassion, we mean it in the healthiest, strongest way—the way in which a person knows clearly who he or she is, and is able to go past themselves in an unselfish way, to put the needs of the other person first. That doesn't mean you lose who you are.

TRANSFORMATION: How do we learn to be more compassionate in an intimate relationship?

PAUL: We have to begin to see all the places where we're not so compassionate. We have to be willing to look at all the places where our ego rises up and we act in selfish, insecure ways. Evelyn and I talk about relationship being a classroom for personal and spiritual growth. It's an opportunity to really see ourselves as we are. I might think I'm a wonderful guy, but it's only when you live intimately with another person day after day that our rough spots start to show up. We can use these rough spots as an opportunity to learn if we don't attack one another.

EVELYN: It is essential to learn to see how we work as individuals, see how and when our self-absorbed, self-centered self comes through, which leaves very little room for caring about the other person's well-being and needs. To really have compassion in an intimate relationship, you have to be able to be aware. In our book we call it witnessing, being able to witness our selfish self come up on the scene and interfere with our ability to be compassionate.

PAUL: It's how we describe spiritual intimacy: using the everyday give and take between us, the difficult moments, as an opportunity to rise above our selfish self and express our higher self.

EVELYN: We don't wonder very often how to be compassionate when it comes to our children. When we love our kids, our hearts open and that selfish part isn't even there. We're just open and giving. But that doesn't mean you're not wise or losing a sense of self. It's not any different in a partnership.

TRANSFORMATION: So I start to practice this and I notice all the places where I'm selfish. What does self-compassion mean in that context?

PAUL: It would mean not beating myself up, not judging myself, not laying guilt trips on myself, just seeing the fact that I acted in a self-centered way,

and making a commitment to do things differently next time around. To have a forgiving attitude toward ourselves is so important; it doesn't do any good to beat ourselves up, it just wastes a lot of energy. We need to be compassionate, kind, and loving to ourselves as well as to everyone else.

We're not perfect, but we can commit to being on a path of manifesting the highest that we're capable of doing. We can do that if we just look at the facts of our behavior.

EVELYN: That's so important, and that's why in the book we call that witnessing: being able to observe—not to analyze, but just to observe—your self-absorbed behavior. That observation means no judgment or criticism or beating yourself up; otherwise, you're right back into your ego. The only way you can lessen the power of your selfish ego is non-judgmental observation.

PAUL: Krishnamurti called it being choicelessly aware.

EVELYN: Choiceless awareness has a powerful impact, because when you can simply observe yourself without criticism or judgment, you can immediately let it go; that's just how it was.

TRANSFORMATION: If a couple consciously practices compassion in their relationship, how might that affect their level of compassion toward the greater world around them?

EVELYN: It would have a very profound effect, because once you are able to be compassionate to one human being, you will be compassionate toward all human beings. You can't go out and save the world, but you can act compassionately toward those around you. People in strong, healthy, compassionate marriages never have a mindset of "us against the world." Instead, it's "you and me with the world." Once you can practice compassion in your intimate relationship, you can automatically practice it with the whole world. You see that we are all fundamentally the same, with the same pain, the same grief, the same joys and fears. As a couple, when we're able to go past our own self-centeredness and care about each other's well-being, we grow and our hearts open and expand. You can't help then but to begin to feel deeply for others as well.

PAUL: It's an impersonal compassion then: you see yourself in everyone else. There isn't a sepa-

rateness. If you're in a relationship that's helping you to grow and be more compassionate, by definition it's helping you to be more compassionate with the world around you. Compassion isn't private, it's transpersonal. It's beyond a self-identity.

EVELYN: With compassion, you're no longer identified with your personal, itty-bitty ego. A good relationship literally bursts open your capacity for love.

TRANSFORMATION: What is the place of desire, sexual or otherwise, in marriage?

PAUL: A good relationship makes me more conscious and careful of what I desire, since most of what we desire seems to make us pretty ill. As a couple grows together, they become more discriminating about what they desire. Most of our desires are about "me, my, and mine," and inevitably bring about suffering. In a relationship where the partners are on a spiritual path, one of the things we can help each other do is to look at the nature of our desires and see if they help our life unfold in a harmonious, peaceful way, or are they desires that literally drive us crazy.

TRANSFORMATION: What kind of desires might lead us in one direction, and what desires in the other, in intimate relationships?

PAUL: Well, my desire for control or power or prestige in an intimate relationship obviously creates competition and suffering. That's the main reason for a lot of couples showing up in our office.

EVELYN: My desire to be right, my desire for things, my desire to expand myself at the expense of my partner, so I can feel better about myself. There's no harm in desiring something material that can bring us harmony, but a lot of people desire things they can't afford and that becomes their priority and their center of being, rather than the relationship. Desire in itself is not bad; it's our compulsion to have to satisfy the desire, and lack of discrimination to ask, "Is the satisfaction of this desire going to add to harmony in my life and in my relationship, or is it going to bring discord?"

PAUL: Frustrated desire is a big source of anger, which then gets churned up in the relationship.

EVELYN: A major source of anger in the relationship. What do couples do with frustrated desire? They take it out on each other.

Once you can practice compassion in your intimate relationship, you can automatically practice it with the whole world. You see that we are all fundamentally the same, with the same pain, the same grief, the same joys and fears. As a couple, when we're able to go past our own self-centeredness and care about each other's well-being, we grow and our hearts open.

PAUL: Frustrated sexual desire leading to anger is very clear. But there are all sorts of more subtle desires that also lead to anger.

EVELYN: In terms of sexual desire, it is clearly an expression of this love that we have for each other, of who we are together in this big picture, expressing harmony and connection and spiritual in-syn-ness. Of course we have a desire to express this at a physical level, enriching our relationship. But if it's sexual desire only for self-satisfaction and self-absorption, then it's going to cause pain between us.

TRANSFORMATION: Are you saying it is not desire itself that causes pain and suffering in a relationship, but first, what the desire is actually for, and second, a person's relationship to that desire?

PAUL: Yes! It's about discriminating between healthy and non-healthy desires, and also about not identifying with that which I desire. I might desire a new car. If I'm not identifying with the desire, then if I get it, fine, and if I don't get it, that's fine too. If I identify my well-being or self-worth with having the new car, and I don't get it, then it's an awful disappointment and I'm going to suffer. Then the relationship is going to suffer as well. If I'm identified with that desire for a new car, if I do get it I'm going to feel good about myself and my life for a short time, a lift, but that good feeling will quickly burn out and I'm on to the next desire.

If I have a desire in the relationship to be right, or to be in control, and am willing to see it, or if my partner can skillfully point it out to me and I don't get defensive, then I can say, what is that all about? and look at the consequences in the relationship.

EVELYN: Or if I have a very strong desire to achieve, if I'm very ambitious, and everything else

comes second to that, then I'm not going to be able to give my relationship the care and importance that it needs. And the relationship will pay for that. Many, many people sacrifice their marriages, and their children, for some very self-centered desires.

TRANSFORMATION: As a couple works to become more conscious, what kinds of desires might arise that could be helpful for the relationship?

EVELYN: A desire for a simple, well-ordered life that's going to give us time together. A life and lifestyle that will enrich our togetherness. If that's a priority desire, that will determine the decisions that we make about the work we do, where and how we live, the vacations we take and the friendships we make.

PAUL: The desires become primarily to have a peaceful mind, a peaceful heart, to keep our senses from running away with us because we know that causes agitation. We would still have material needs, but our desires would run toward the non-material dimensions of life.

EVELYN: That doesn't mean not having comfort in life, but it does mean not going after things that we know very well in our heads are only going to increase our agitation and pressure.

TRANSFORMATION: What does right action mean within intimate relationships?

PAUL: They are those actions that keep my partner and my relationship a top priority in my life. Right action means having decisions, values, and behaviors that honor the primacy of my relationship and my partner's well-being on a daily basis. Right action leads to emotional, spiritual, and sexual closeness.

EVELYN: Right action is action which is sane,



Becoming Loving The Hoffman Process

MARY NURRIESTEARN S

Friends and associates often report that in spite of years of study, psychotherapy, prayer, and meditation, they suffer some insurmountable psychological pain. For some it is nagging self-doubt. For others it is problems with intimate relationships. Just the other day, a colleague shared that he and his long-term girl friend had parted ways. Bill had thought they would live out their remaining years together. Instead, the relationship had suddenly ended after an argument. At age fifty-one he was starting over. Feeling discouraged and lost, he felt as if an invisible, psychic umbilical cord still attached him to his mother's negative traits and behaviors. In that pulsing membrane was the difficulty with trust, commitment and intimacy that had been passed down through generations of her family. He literally felt a knot in his solar plexus. Not only could he not fight it anymore, he didn't know where to turn. While years of therapy had helped him in many ways, Bill had not found freedom from this powerful psychic energy.

My husband has a different story. A devoted spiritual seeker, he has complained about vague sadness deep in his chest for years. Therapy, dream work, and consciousness groups have been valuable, but none touched the depth of his pain nor gave him relief. Mine is a story of hurt masking as muscle tension in my back. A regular yoga practice has provided relief and lessened the ache. I thought that eventually yoga would work this out and I would be pain free. I will never know if yoga would have released my tension, for now it is gone. I credit the comfort in my spine to the healing I experienced at an intensive program called the Hoffman Quadrinity Process.

I have long known the value of intensive retreats. There is a depth of healing available that is less accessible in one-on-one interaction or through self-study. The loving energy that gathers around a group of dedicated seekers, under proper guidance, reveals to participants their deeply engrained emotions, patterns, and attitudes that block happiness and intimacy. This same energy frees up love and creativity. While

The Hoffman Quadrinity Process

RAZ INGRASCI



In Asia, the lotus is a symbol of spiritual transformation. How easy it is to forget the other, hidden half, of this profound symbol: the muck in which the plant is deeply rooted and from which it somehow draws its nutrients. The symbol tells us that we cannot escape our less presentable parts. We can only transform them—just as the plant draws from mud the elements to form its elegant blossom. Genuine spirituality is not an escape; it is a challenge.

To embark on this transformational path, we must first recognize that suffering and spirituality are intertwined. Many of us have found our most profound initiations into the infinite through misfortune, whether an illness or accident, an addiction or codependency, or the grief of loss. Matthew Fox tells us, “Just as our joy is cosmic... so too is our pain cosmic.”

We are called upon to heal our wounded hearts from the negative attitudes, moods, behaviors, failures, and tragedies of our lives, while simultaneously opening to our innate radiant spirituality. To meet the challenge of true spirituality, we need to engage those dark parts of the personality that we learned to keep hidden. The question is how to engage in a way that transforms our suffering rather than belaboring it. We want to grow a lotus, not make a mud pie.

Thirty-three years ago, Bob Hoffman began devising a re-educational process to help us transform deep patterns of emotional pain and spiritual suffering. But how did these patterns ever get implanted?

We adopted negative emotional patterns from our parents through what Hoffman termed “Negative Love.” At those times when parents are unable to provide a consistent flow of unconditional love, children feel abandoned and desperately seek to win back their parents’ love and approval by imitating them emotionally. What are the children imitating? Not unconditional love, because if the children were basking in love,

these programs are not quick fixes, they can facilitate spiritual connectedness and psychological healing that move people along on their transformational paths. At least this has been the case for my husband and myself.

Following an intuitive hunch, my husband made arrangements for us to attend one of the Hoffman Quadrinity Process intensives. Several weeks before the process we received a thick packet containing a self-inquiry questionnaire. We were both shaken by what that extensive inquiry revealed to us.

One Friday morning, at a spiritual retreat center in the California Sierras, we came together with twenty-four other participants, three teachers and three student interns. We were each given workbooks along with writing paper. After meeting with our teacher, becoming acquainted with our small group, and connecting with our spiritual essence through guided meditations, we embarked on a week-long journey.

From our pre-process homework we were familiar with what Hoffman calls the “negative love syndrome”—the inherited collection of attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that inhibit our ability to feel love’s presence. We began with a thorough investigation of attitudes and behaviors that we adopted from mother. For this examination, we put aside all the loving traits we had absorbed from her and focused on the negative traits. We accessed childhood memories in order to make the inquiry specific and real. This was followed by an emotionally cathartic exercise in which we released buried sadness and anger. We felt intensely the ways in which we had been wounded by the negative love pattern. I cried long neglected tears. Next, we examined traits and wounds inherited from father. I felt a rage that must have been stored in the marrow of my bones, as the depths from which it came surprised me. I also felt the tension in my back release and my ache dissolve.

By that time I was acutely aware, in my body, mind, and heart, how the negative love syndrome had wounded me. It was time to move toward understanding our parents. Freed from buried emotional pain, we could learn more about our parent’s lives and how they too had suffered.

Moving on meant undergoing a powerful ordeal—the funerals of mother and father. There was no escaping profound loss. Imagining that they had been killed in a car accident, we mourned their deaths. From the funeral we proceeded to a wooded cemetery and kneeled at graves that symbolized mother and father. There, beside a modest grave, I poured out long suppressed grief for my father’s death many years ago. I felt an understanding about him and

a sorrow for his life that had previously hidden from me. It was as if his essence told me about the tragedy of his life and the ways he would have been more loving had he been able. On that same day Rick sobbed out long held sadness. The ritual was evocative; however, it did not generate the feelings we all felt. Rather, it lifted the buried feelings to the surface where they could be released.

As I climbed the path to the dining hall on the fifth morning I felt great profound forgiveness and appreciation for my parents. The journey of the first four days clearly showed that our parents were not to be blamed. They were simply carriers of the negative love syndrome that came through their parents. They had been wounded just like we and had unknowingly passed the negativity to their children.

While I anticipated that I might finally forgive my parents during the week, I was surprised to realize how I had, in turn, hurt my parents. I mirrored back to them withdrawal, withholding, and criticism. I saw, ever more clearly, how I was like them. It was one thing to experience forgiveness of my parents, it was another to discover that I needed to ask for forgiveness of them. Although humbled, I felt grateful for being shown the ways that I close off love. I also felt my spiritual essence pervading and shining beneath even the darkest aspects of my personality.

Thinking that I had accomplished what I could, I felt ready to hike in the mountains after day five. However, there was more to come. I was being guided through a process that was as yet incomplete. Familiar with the negative love syndrome—self-loathing, minimizing feelings, dismissing spiritual self, acting indifferent, judging others—we visualized what would happen if the syndrome continued to make our choices in life. A horrific scene of loved ones spitting on my grave intensified my desire to allow spiritual essence, instead of negative love, to guide me.

To release the grip of these negative patterns we learned methods of recycling negatives into positives. Entering into sacred space, we asked for a message from “the still small voice within” to disempower an old pattern, replacing it with one more life-enhancing. I had believed, for as long as I can remember, that somehow I was flawed. During a recycling meditation, I received the loving message that I am of God. That wasn’t news to me. But my ability to absorb that reality into the depths of my being was new.

After recycling more negative patterns than I wish to report, I felt strong and centered. It’s a good thing I did. In a simple room with a dramatic mountain top view, I encountered my dark side, the inner monster that shames, blames and scares. Arising in childhood and known as the false self,

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 72

they would not be anxiously trying to win it back from their parents. No, they are imitating their parents’ worst traits, the very ones that make Mommy and Daddy feel insecure. And as any observer knows, children do not imitate what their parents say, but what they do.

Love involves emulation. To the extent that parental characteristics are positive, children inherit treasures. However, when the parental patterns are negative, as they often are, children also inherit trouble. Negative Love programming stays with us as we grow, perniciously undermining virtually every aspect of our personal, professional, and social lives as adults. The question is what to do about it?

The Hoffman Quadrinity Process is an intensive spiritual/emotional/intellectual/physical program known for rapidly inducing extraordinary emotional healing and spiritual growth. From the start, participants are guided into a deep experience of their radiant, loving, and powerful spiritual dimension of self. During the next eight days, different forms of this inner power are brought to bear on the Negative Love “wounds” of the emotional dimension of self. A profound healing occurs. A new emotional maturity begins to emerge.

These gains are stabilized and extended through a heart-rending experience of authentic compassion, forgiveness, and love toward the parents of our childhood who unwittingly passed their pain onto us. What follows then is a transcendent integration of intellect, emotions, spirit, and physical body to form a new integral whole, which we call your Quadrinity. The center of gravity of one’s being literally shifts from the fear-based personality toward a love-based integral self.

The Quadrinity Process is a contemporary rite of passage: a loving resolution of our broken past and an empowering initiation into a new integral reality. Participants release Negative Love patterns and experience a cosmos that cares for them always, loves them unconditionally, and supports them in their highest aspirations. The symbol becomes a reality. • *Raz Ingrasci is president of the Hoffman Institute. For information about the Hoffman process, call (800)506-5253.*



We Are Architects of Our Destiny

R A M A V E R N O N

Vision is! It is timeless and eternal. We do not create vision, we simply link into a piece of the Universal Vision that already exists as it filters through our own perception. Sometimes we can see the immediate sequence of steps needed to map a plan of action to bring vision into form. Other times, we can only see one step at a time. How do we allow vision to flow through us? How do we manifest it?

Timing is a most important factor in vision manifestation. If we force it or try to fit it into our mental constructs or framework of understandings of “time,” we will grow frustrated and fearful if our timelines are not met by the Universal timeframe. If, due to our fears, we rush a vision into “being” before its full gestation period, we rush the embryonic beginnings with high forceps or cesarean delivery. If, instead, we act as patient midwives bringing the fully developed infant into the world after it is complete on the subtle and unseen plane of existence, the vision will fulfill itself far beyond anything our human minds can conceive

of. The final result will be transformative for nearly all involved.

This is the difference between a great project and a good product. Both take the same energy output. If we have faith and ride the waves of “universal rhythm,” attuning ourselves to the rings of energy that are always flowing within, around, and through us, we are carried by the tide of vision as it carries itself into its full manifestation. We are only the vehicle—not the doer.

I have observed many times, with each expanding project, that I do not hold the vision, but the vision seems to hold me. Manifestation requires faith, trust, surrender to a power higher than oneself. As we walk, jump, and sometimes crawl through the initiatory rings of fire in the completion of our “mission,” it leads to ever-expanding vistas of understanding and compassion for others.

What is it that keeps us in the “dream” phase, talking about what we are planning to do and yet never

getting it done? Where does the plethora of excuses for not stepping out of our comfort zones come from? Rather than complaining about all the things we could have done and ending our lives with remorse and lack of fulfillment, we can trust the process, for we are led from one point to the next, until one day we awaken and realize we are fulfilling our life's purpose.

It is not easy to embark upon the path of bringing vision into action. Sometimes the path is lighted and the way is effortless; other times it asks us to step out in faith, one foot in front of the other with only our own inner light to guide us. "Thank God," I have thought many times, that I was only given one step at a time. If I could have seen where my first steps would have led, the enormity would have overwhelmed me, causing a retreat into a safe, secure, and comfortable environment. As we fulfill our destiny through the guidance given us at each juncture, windows of opportunity begin to open, leading to doorways and eventually to gateways that clear our path regardless of how difficult our undertakings may seem. As we clarify our vision, we gain greater power in our ability to "hold the vision." As we do this vigilantly, we will see the miraculous play of momentum swirling around us as the Universal energy helps us bring Vision into form. The appropriate people, serendipitous chance meetings and events begin to happen, confirming that we are moving in the "right" direction at the "right" time.

Another area that restricts us from fulfilling the Vision is allowing ourselves to be limited either consciously or subconsciously by our perceived constraints. When this happens, we give from an empty heart, creating fatigue. We don't have to learn to say "No" to preserve our energies if we can let go of our perceptions of limitation and shift our awareness to each moment as if we were seeing and doing things for the first time with joy. If we can do this, we will always have enough energy for whatever is required. After all, our hands are the extension of our hearts.

When others do not feel fulfilled in their own lives, it may be difficult for them to watch others fulfill theirs. This may manifest through envy, which leads to criticism, expressed doubts, and negativity, which is one way to hold someone else back if even only in the thinker's own mind. It is all

right—understand the source of pain, see where this is coming from in the other person, bless them, and go on. It is such a temptation to want to criticize the one who criticizes or to become intolerant of the intolerance of others. Be compassionate without letting others' self-imposed limitations limit you. As we continue, regardless of the obstacles, our "vision quest" leads to ever-growing contentment, unshakable peace, and a rich sense of love and fulfillment that flows like warm lava through the cells of the heart, spreading out to every cell of our being.

Each time we fulfill the "tasks" that cross our path, it becomes easier and easier to activate the required momentum for each wave of manifestation. If we take on a project and do not follow through on our particular task, then the next one takes even more effort to formulate and "lift" off the ground. There is sometimes a rhythm of ebb and flow. If we can keep a sense of "nondoing" or inaction within each of our actions, we will not grow tired or feel the need to withdraw to recuperate. As we combine a sense of ease, of stillness within our activity, we will feel renewed each hour.

The following guidelines have helped me considerably over the years in manifesting vision:

1. Do not identify with your vision or think that *you* are creating it. We are the vehicle through which Vision manifests. I have found over the years that it is important not to identify or "lose" myself in the vision. Especially remember to hold the vision each day until it holds you.

2. Carry through always—even if it seems impossible, even if on a smaller scale than originally planned. This creates momentum for your next action.

3. Do not let money, or the lack of it, influence the fulfillment of your dreams. Money is a scapegoat for fear. Be creative and resourceful. The success of a project does not depend on funding alone. Money is one resource, but people are another. When there is shared vision, when others join you, there is a collective commitment that is a powerful manifestor. When you begin regardless of funds, if it is an idea that is meant to be, the forces of the Universe will array to help bring forth the Vision into being.

4. When you reach an impasse, pull back... wait... meditate, pray for guidance and answers. Ask

yourself: Is this my work or the work of another? “The Bhagavad Gita,” the sixth Canto of the “Mahabharata,” the great epic of India, says, “One’s own work done imperfectly is far better than another’s done perfectly.” Each time a new idea filters into your consciousness, test the waters to see if it is “your” work.

5. Watch for the universal signs—events, people, a word, a sentence, a book—that confirms and reaffirms your vision and even helps move it toward eventual manifestation. People may suddenly appear around the idea and help lift the vision onto the crest of a wave that has its own momentum. Have the courage to ride it instead of wanting to control it. Our need to control usually comes from our fear of “the unknown.” We do not know where it will “take us.” This is why so many people today and throughout history have not yet fulfilled their dreams.

Fulfilling Vision, I have found, is like surfing. First, we must have the courage to swim out beyond the breakers, leaving the solid, secure beach with all that is familiar behind. On a calm day, we may wait and wait for a big enough wave to arise. We wait for our vision, we grow impatient when it does not appear. Finally a large wave arises, an inspiration, a thought. To catch the wave, we must paddle very fast to align our rhythm with the rhythm of the wave. Once we catch the wave, then we must be discriminating and vigilant in knowing when to stop paddling and surrender effort to let the grace and power of the wave carry us to shore. If we let go in time, we have only to maintain our balance as we ride the crest of the wave.

Our vision begins when the mind is momentarily free of everyday thoughts, worry, fear, expectations, criticisms, etc. When the moments grow between each thought, Vision begins to appear. We may receive it as an idea, an impression, an inspiration. It arises from the field of collective thinking, a gene pool where ideas originate and perhaps even return. Sort through the imprints, watching them like clouds passing through the sky of your mind. Write down a few. If these ideas are retentive and keep persisting, frolic with them, brainstorm with yourself, entertain their possibilities and potentials. Do not speak about them yet. Sharing your vision prematurely with others can create discouragement

and in turn dissipation before passion has had a chance to come to maturity.

If after a time, the idea(s) keep forming, gaining greater clarity, excitement, and momentum within you, try them out on a trusted and supportive friend, a confidant. Watch and observe reactions and then wait and watch for a “sign”—a call, a letter, a conversation, a person who crosses your path confirming the pulse and clarity of your vision. Watch for the signs that carry messages parallel or in alignment to “your” idea(s) and see if you feel deep within that this is your piece of the Universal imprint. Then hold the vision with clarity and purpose, asking your own inner guidance to reveal why you are being called to bring it forth. What is its purpose in service to humanity? When the time is right, you will be shown the first steps if not more. Have the courage to trust the inspiration pouring or even trickling through at this time.

Take the first steps toward manifestation. Succeeding steps will be shown progressively—not always at once. Sometimes a veil will lift, revealing the future in its entirety. When this happens you will feel a deep sense of joy, gratitude, and overwhelming love. There is no fear, even though we may be shown how our path grows increasingly steep and narrow, with less margin for error and fewer cul de sacs for momentary detours from our mission. These are the moments of clarity that carry us through the times when the veil once more drops and only darkness lies on the path ahead. We commit our feet to the path in these moments where everything seems open and become as clear as a cloudless blue sky. When the veil drops, covering the future once more, it may momentarily feel like “the dark night of the soul,” as we begin the process of the next phase of our own inner evolution in the service of humanity.

Serving the global vision through our personal vision may change thousands if not millions of lives, and in turn change our world. However, it serves nothing if we ourselves are not transformed in the process with a growing sense of fulfillment rather than an empty feeling of resentment of having given too much. The importance of the work is not so much in changing our world, but in transforming ourselves in the process.

Fulfillment of vision is an inner process that

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 70



Compassion

A Way of Being in the World

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHARON SALZBERG
BY DAVID N. ELKINS, PH.D.

Buddhist teacher Sharon Salzberg argues that compassion, which comes from understanding the interconnectedness of all things, is a powerful force that can transform our own lives and make a difference in the world.

Sharon is the cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, and author of “A Heart as Wide as the World.” A student of Buddhism for more than 20 years, she travels throughout the world teaching Buddhist practice to others.

Sharon is a warm, compassionate person who practices what she preaches, as I learned firsthand. Due to equipment failure, the first interview I did with Sharon did not record. Horrified to find the tape was blank, I called her back, apologized profusely, and asked if we could re-do the interview. She said, “These things happen,” and graciously rescheduled. That simple act of compassion meant more to me than all the words she spoke in the interview, pro-

found though they are. Compassion is not simply an intellectual idea. It’s a way of being in the world.

DAVID ELKINS: In your book, “A Heart As Wide As the World,” you wrote, “From my earliest days of Buddhist practice, I felt powerfully drawn to the possibility of finding a way of life that was peaceful and authentic. My own life at that time was characterized largely by fear and confusion. I felt separate from other people and from the world around me, and even oddly disconnected from my own experience.” I suspect many of us can relate to those feelings. Tell me more about your personal journey.

SHARON SALZBERG: I went to India when I was 18 while a college student. The school program offered the possibility of going to another culture as a cross-cultural consciousness study. The deeper reason that I went was because I felt unhappy and confused, not sure where I belonged in this world. I had an instinct

that if I could learn how to practice meditation, and I was especially interested in the Buddhist tradition, I could come to greater peace and clarity. So when the opportunity arose, I completed an application saying I wanted to go to India and study Buddhism. It was accepted and off I went.

ELKINS: So that was the beginning of your journey. For the last 20 years or so you have worked at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, correct?

SALZBERG: Yes. When I went to India, I met Joseph Goldstein. Joseph and I came back in 1974 and began teaching at Naropa Institute which had just opened in Boulder, Colorado. I met Jack Kornfield there, and the three of us led Buddhist retreats in various places. After awhile, someone suggested we start a retreat center in this country. We looked at a number of places and finally settled on Barre, Massachusetts. We opened the doors of the Insight Meditation Society on Valentine's Day, 1976. Then in 1989 Joseph and I established the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies just down the road, which offers programs about the integration of Buddhist concepts into contemporary society, as well as the classical study of languages.

ELKINS: Compassion is a central tenant of Buddhism. But what is compassion? Can you give me a working definition?

SALZBERG: The traditional definition from Pali, the language of the original Buddhist text, is the trembling or quivering of the heart in response to pain or suffering. Some Buddhist schools say the teaching has two wings, like the wings of a bird, and they are wisdom and compassion. Compassion is something we develop concurrently with the development of wisdom. Compassion is the natural response of clear seeing or understanding.

ELKINS: Why is compassion important? Why should we be concerned about developing it in our own lives?

SALZBERG: Recently, I had this wonderful experience of seeing the Dalai Lama address 40,000 to 80,000 people—the attendance estimates varied—in Central Park in New York. There was a tremendous outpouring of people. The Dalai Lama said very beautifully that we've come to a time when the interconnected nature of the world is more readily

apparent, and that we can't deny it. If you fight your neighbor, you are fighting yourself, and if you destroy your neighbor, you are destroying yourself. We are all linked, and compassion is the natural response of seeing that linkage. It is caring and concern rather than a feeling of separation into us and them. We now have an opportunity to see the interconnected nature of things as the environmental movement has made clear. Who knew, for example, that deforestation in a far-away place would affect us? But now we know that it does.

ELKINS: So, compassion is the recognition of the interconnectedness of everything.

SALZBERG: It is the result of that recognition. In traditional terms, the recognition itself is wisdom and the result of that recognition is compassion. When we come to have a different perspective, we respond differently. It is hard to act as though we are completely separate when we recognize that we are not completely separate.

ELKINS: You mention in your book that sometimes when you teach others about compassion, they say, "If I develop qualities such as loving kindness and compassion, people will abuse and take advantage of me." How do you respond to that? Is compassion practical in the real world?

SALZBERG: I do hear that a lot in response to meditations for the development of loving kindness and compassion. One person said, "I hate that meditation. It reminds me of a forced Valentine's Day where we are actually angry or fearful but cover these over with a veneer of love or compassion." Real compassion is not at all like that. It is a tremendous strength. Go back to the Buddha and his emphasis on the need for both compassion and wisdom. True compassion has wisdom in it. It is not just feeling sorry for somebody or being overcome or brokenhearted in the face of pain. Compassion is a movement of the heart, and it doesn't make us weak when it's balanced by wisdom. It is a powerful force.

ELKINS: I think you're talking about the difference between authentic compassion and pseudo-compassion. In my work as a psychotherapist, I once had a client who talked constantly about Christian agape, or unconditional love, as the guiding principle of her life.

She was in an abusive relationship with a man and was depressed. I tried to help her see the connection, but she would tell me, “If I can just love him enough, everything will work out.” After three months she ended the therapy, and as far as I know, continued in the abusive relationship. Is there a tough side to compassion that would be able to deal with this kind of situation?

SALZBERG: This comes back to the Buddhist teaching about action and the different components of action. From the Buddhist perspective you can divide an action into three parts. The first and most significant part is the intention underlying the action, the motivation from which it springs. Traditional Buddhism would say this is the karma. The karmic seed is in the intention; everything rests on the tip of motivation. When we talk about compassion and loving kindness, we’re really talking about motivation. We’re talking about the energetic field out of which we act and move. The second part is the skillfulness with which we act. For example, suppose you have a beautiful motivation of wanting to say something loving to somebody. Skillfulness might involve determining whether this is best said privately or shouted out across a crowded room. The third part is the immediate result or the result that we can see. For example, out of a beautiful motivation, you give someone a gift and you do it as skillfully as you can. But perhaps they have just received terrible news and they’re not able to receive your gift wholeheartedly and they fail to thank you. This does not mean you have not acted well, it just means the conditions were beyond your control. There’s a tremendous emphasis in Buddhist teachings on transforming your intention to come from a place of love and compassion, to increase the power of your skillfulness through paying attention, and learning how to let go of the immediate result with equanimity and peace. Now, going back to the abusive relationship you described, the most skillful thing to do might be to leave the relationship, but the motivation from within that leads one to do that can be compassion for oneself or compassion for the other. It does not have to be hatred or lack of understanding.

ELKINS: It is easy to fool ourselves about the development of compassion. For example, I was originally trained as a Christian minister and I can remember certain parishioners who seemed kind and loving on the surface, but underneath they were filled with bigotry and hatred that sometimes came spewing out. I have also deluded myself at various times on the spiritual journey. How do we know the difference between real growth in compassion and this pseudo-spirituality that any of us can fall into?

SALZBERG: From the perspective of the Buddhist teaching, one continually looks at one’s motivation in order to be aware of it and honest about it. It is hard to look at our own problems, negativities, hatreds, fears, and to admit they are there. We tend to cut off these parts of ourselves, to push them away. Or we succumb to them at times. But there is a way of learning how to see these things in ourselves without taking them so to heart, so to speak. We can learn to say, “This is a habit of the mind or this is a conditioning of the mind and it doesn’t feel good.” The Buddha said, “I teach one thing and one thing only, that is suffering and the end of suffering.” One can learn to see these forces that arise in our mind not in terms of right and wrong or good and evil, but as forces that lead to suffering or the end of it. For example, we can see that jealousy, envy, greed, and hatred lead to suffering. They are suffering. But rather than feel contempt and anguish and hatred of ourselves for having them arise, we can feel compassion for ourselves. In the same way, we can recognize that others who have these mind states are also filled with suffering, and we can have compassion for them too.

ELKINS: You have had several teachers through the years who helped you on your spiritual journey. How important is the teacher in the development of compassion?

SALZBERG: Good teachers are important. We need models, exemplars of what is possible for a human being, and we need to reflect on those examples and honor them. Some people say the Dalai Lama is their teacher even though they have never met him in person. Two of the main functions of a teacher are inspiration and reminder. It is one thing to admire somebody with great qualities from afar,

and another thing to be inspired by the fact that we, too, can develop and embody those qualities.

ELKINS: Meditation is an important part of Buddhist practice. You have practiced meditation for many years. What is it like to sit for hours, days, in meditation?

SALZBERG: It is great. In my book, “A Heart As Wide As the World,” I use the metaphor of going into an old attic room and turning on a light so that we can see everything. We see beautiful, extraordinary treasures and can hardly believe they exist in our own attic. We see dusty, neglected corners and realize we’d better clean them up. We see objects that are disconcerting and unpleasant that we thought we got rid of long ago.

ELKINS: Suppose someone said, “I probably will never go to India or sit with a renowned teacher, but I am interested in learning about meditation and developing compassion.” What could this person do? Where would he start?

SALZBERG: Some of it depends on geography and some of it depends on how you learn best as an individual. Many books give practical guidance on learning to meditate, so if reading books is the way you learn, you can study at home. There are also sitting groups across the country where people come together and play tapes, support one another, and meditate together. There are retreat centers in various parts of the country. If you cannot do a three-month retreat, do a weekend, and get a grounding in the use of the different techniques of meditation. Joseph and I created a correspondence course in meditation, a set of tapes and a manual. When you purchase the course, you also receive a year’s worth of correspondence with one of our senior students, who will answer your questions about meditation. So there are various opportunities for anyone who wishes to begin.

ELKINS: Another topic that intrigues me is the relationship of compassion and transformation. As one grows in compassion, transformation occurs. But what changes? What is transformed on the journey to compassion?

SALZBERG: Nyanaponika Thera was a renowned German monk and scholar who lived in Sri Lanka most of his life. One day, I was listening to a colleague of mine who quoted him. Embedded in the quote was the statement that compassion makes the

narrow heart as wide as the world. That is what compassion does. It challenges our assumptions, our sense of self-limitation, worthlessness, of not having a place in the world, our feelings of loneliness and estrangement. These are narrow, constrictive states of mind. As we develop compassion, our hearts open.

ELKINS: What is the relationship of compassion to “right action?”

SALZBERG: As I pointed out earlier, from the Buddhist point of view, what makes any action right or not right is not only the skillfulness of the action, but primarily the energy with which it’s done or the place within us from which it comes, the motivation. Right action is grounded in compassionate motivation. We develop compassion as an aspect of the reservoir of motivations with which we move through the world.

ELKINS: Right now there are 75 million baby-boomers in the United States and many of us are noticing that our bodies are growing older. Our parents are dying and reminding us of our own mortality. What does Buddhism have to say about aging and death?

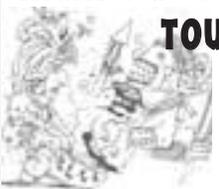
SALZBERG: Buddhism teaches suffering and the end of suffering. It is said that the Buddha was a pampered prince in his early life until he left the palace at the age of 29. According to legend, he saw what are called the four heavenly messengers—a sick person, an old person, a corpse, and a renunciate. Because he saw those first three as signs of suffering, he left the palace and began his spiritual journey to see what he might uncover about the nature of life. In our time, the cultural norm says you should never grow old, you shouldn’t get sick, you should have everything under control, and if you’re feeling badly, you should hide it. We have to defy such cultural norms or stand apart from them. As a spiritual person, as one who wishes to see things in a deeper way, you must step aside and challenge all of that conditioning. The truth is, the body has its own trajectory.

ELKINS: Spirituality, including the development of compassion, is the only answer. It contains the key to our own journey through life.

SALZBERG: Yes, there are no greater understandings than those that help us to find love, community, and a meaningful life. •

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Briefly Noted

Beyond The Self, A striking new vision of consciousness and human spirituality, by Paul Barrows. Janus Publishing Co., 1998, 258 pages.

Traditional thinking acknowledges a gulf between the religious and scientific worldviews, and the notion that as science evolved, the gap widened, but the lines between physical and spiritual were kept intact. We—humans—have always been regarded as distinct from everything around us. Until now, that is, when science has begun to invade the human soul and our humanity all of the sudden has become the subject of cognitive science and neurology. While some may fear that these modern scientific advances have somehow robbed us of our spirituality and reduced us to biological robots of flesh and blood and tissue that blindly follow conditioned behavior patterns, Paul Barrows sees the situation differently.

Our spirituality, he contends, is being reinforced, not eroded, by our increasing scientific insight. That insight is actually helping to bridge the gap between the spiritual and the scientific worlds, long considered diametrically opposed. Instead of polar opposites, he contends, the spiritual and the scientific are merely aspects of the same worldview. Barrows challenges fundamental notions of consciousness with new insights into the age-old



mind/body debate, then offers his interpretation of human spirituality, which is at ease with science and is uncluttered with the supernaturalism of many religions.

Who Are You When Nobody's Looking?, by Marc Marsan. Element Books, 1999, 155 pages.

Marc Marsan has helped create successful new products for AT&T, Disney, Quaker Oats, SC Johnson, Gatorade, Nike, General Mills, Kimberly Clark and more than 200 Fortune 500 companies. In "Who Are You When Nobody's Looking?" he offers readers a chance to do the same. But this time the successful new product is ... you. Marsan is recognized as one of America's top "out-of-the-box" thinkers for his innovation and creativity, is a member of the World Future Society, teaches a college course on innovation, and is a principle with the think tank Synectics in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His book reflects his creativity and innovation as he helps readers learn to get the most out of themselves and their life. Marsan discusses the keys for turning life's most challenging problems into opportunities for positive change. His insights urge readers to react to things in their own ways rather than waiting to see how things affect them. He defines DNA as Distinct Neuron Archetype, or the absolutely unique essence of who you are. And he adds another "N" to the nature/nurture debate: Navigation. In addition to discussing nature and nurture—and the influences and events that helped make you who you are—he also talks



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about how you can make yourself into who and what you want to be—the N for navigation. He recommends that we accept responsibility for everything in our lives and reminds us that everything we do involves making a choice. But, he adds, accepting responsibility for making the best choices gives us the power to control our destiny. He urges readers to develop a High Concept that defines them and will guide and be a road map for their life. He reminds us to laugh, and that we must constantly challenge ourselves—go beyond low-risk, low-reward experiences and, as Kurt Vonnegut urged, do one thing every day that scares you. While he is serious about his topic, Marsan's book is warm, imaginative, humorous and enlightening. He includes exercises throughout the book, all aimed at helping you make the most out of the next five minutes, and the rest of your life.

The Path of My Soul, Journey to the Center of Self, by William Homestead. Acropolis Books, 1999, 120 pages.

William Homestead, who studied with Rafael Catala early in his spiritual development, offers readers a reflection on the path his soul has taken over the last 12 years in trying to live a spiritual life. That path has had three stages, he says: detaching from our habits and perceptions that are tied to our social conditioning; struggling with newfound freedom, or what has been called "the dark night of the soul;" and awareness of a new sense of identity in which we experience a relationship of oneness with Spirit



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beyond and within all things. Those three stages are reflected in the three sections of the book: Solitude, Relationship, and World, which follow Homestead's own journey as it revealed the inward realm of the soul, the soul in relationship, and his place in the world. Each of the three sections begins with an introduction followed by excerpts of his dialogue with Spirit from his journals. Homestead has spent most of his life working long enough to make enough money to venture on his next journey. He has been a printer, landscaper, bookstore clerk, college teacher and factory worker. Along the way, he says, he has stopped looking for final answers to his religious questions and instead learned to "live the questions," a process that allows us to discover and live our destiny. In the epilogue, Homestead explains that when he started, his search was focused on becoming enlightened. In the process, his experiences have led him to a deeper understanding of his role, of each of our roles, in the universe. Advancing spiritually, he reminds us, does not mean denying the world, but rather ever widening our embrace of it and our interconnectedness.

Subtle Wisdom, An Introduction to Ch'an Buddhism, by Master Sheng-yen. Doubleday, 1999, 160 pages.

Master Sheng-yen introduces readers to the powerful world of thought, the tradition of Ch'an Buddhism, in "Subtle Wisdom." Although not as familiar as its Japanese descendant, Zen, which helped dissemi-



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nate some of the basic insights of Ch'an, this Chinese school of Buddhism retains much of the teaching that is particular to itself. From his Chinese perspective, Sheng-yen, a dharma descendant of the followers of Buddhism in China, considers suffering, enlightenment and compassion; discusses the methods of practice and stages of development in Ch'an; provides a glossary of key terms; and relates a brief history of Buddhism in China in the book. He also discusses contemporary matters and questions he has encountered during his years teaching in the United States. Sheng-yen became a monk at age 13, spent six years in solitary retreat, later earned a doctorate in Buddhist literature, and received Dharma transmission in the two major schools of Ch'an. He currently is the resident teacher at the Ch'an Meditation Center in New York, which he founded, and also is abbot of two monasteries in Taipei.

Freeing the Soul from Fear, by Robert Sardello. Riverhead Books, 1999, 304 pages.

The greatest threat to modern life, says Robert Sardello, is fear. Fear of war, terrorism, global warming, plane crashes, Y2K glitches, corporate downsizing, volatile stock markets, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, relationships, suffering, aging, death and more. Fear is also the greatest enemy of the soul, and it is only when we look every fear—from job insecurity to existential angst—in the face, and overcome our fears that we free the soul and allow it to fulfill its potential for kindness, love, and compassion.



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Fear cannot be eliminated, Sardello says, and shouldn't be hid from. Instead, we must overcome fear, and the key is to strengthen our soul capacity and find a more balanced relationship with fear. In "Freeing the Soul from Fear," Sardello offers exercises for strengthening the soul and becoming present, both of which are vital to combatting fear. His insights can help change our individual situations and, thereby, change the world. Sardello outlines three steps in the process of countering the presence of fear: becoming aware of the way that different kinds of fear affect the soul and how each kind of fear weakens a natural capacity of the soul; reawakening the weakened soul capacity through activities and imaginative exercises; and reflecting on our soul life and describing what happens in us. Overcoming fear allows us to become more loving which, Sardello says, is the only effective antidote to the spread of fear. His book helps readers understand that engaging in a healthy struggle with fear enlarges our consciousness, awakens the life of our soul, and makes possible the transformation of fear into love both within the individual and within the wider world. Sardello is co-founder of the School for Spiritual Psychology, which conducts programs worldwide, and has worked extensively with James Hillman and Thomas Moore.

Full Exposure, Opening Up to Sexual Creativity and Erotic Expression, by Susie Bright. HarperSanFrancisco, 1999, 224 pages.

Often dubbed the "sexpert of our times," erotic pioneer Susie Bright in her latest book explores

our personal eroticism and reveals the way in which sexual expression can transform all aspects of our lives. Bright examines the deeply personal aspects of sex: What are the differences between men and women's sense of eroticism? How does talking, reading, and writing about sex affect our actual sex life? Is there a line to be drawn in sexual creativity; that is, can you go too far? Why is it frightening to consciously address sexual desire in the first place? She argues that sexuality is the soul of the creative process and that erotic expression of any kind is a personal revolution. Bright is careful to distinguish between erotic life and sex life, because of the unstated meaning that accompanies the latter phrase. Her book is not about physical sex; it's about the personal meaning of erotic expression: the creativity it demands, the challenges of sexual candor, the rewards of admitting our desires. It's about the sexual energy, sexual creativity, and sexual power that offers enormous opportunities if we only embrace it. In the end, she dishes up a collection of ideas and activities to help tap that sexual energy.

The Mastery of Love, A Practical Guide to the Art of Relationship, by don Miguel Ruiz. Amber-Allen Publishing, 1999, 205 pages.

Using insightful stories to bring his message to life, don Miguel Ruiz shows readers of "The Mastery of Love" how to heal emotional wounds, recover the freedom and joy that are our birthright, and restore the spirit of playfulness that

is vital to loving relationships. Ruiz is a master in the Toltec spiritual wisdom and traditions of ancient Mexico. Though not considered a religion, Toltec honors all spiritual masters who have taught on earth, and while it embraces spirit, it is more a way of life that brings happiness and love. Three fundamental masteries in the Toltec tradition lead to happiness, freedom and love: Mastery of Awareness, or seeing ourselves with truth, being aware of what we really are; Mastery of Transformation, which teaches us to become spiritual warriors to change our life by changing our agreements and beliefs; and Mastery of Love, which results from the first two masteries. When we master love, we align with the Spirit of Life within us; we are Love, and every action we take is an expression of Love, and Love in action produces happiness. In his book, Ruiz illuminates the fear-based beliefs and assumptions that undermine love and lead to suffering and drama in relationships. He offers insights as to why domestication and the image of perfection can lead to self-rejection, how the war of control can destroy relationships, why we hunt for love in others and how to capture the love inside us, and how to accept and forgive ourselves and others. •



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Ask the Experts

Continued from page 16

willing to take responsibility for the situation. Therefore, you are in the perfect place to learn about how you were drawn to the type of situation that you were just in.

You seem to know what you want, at least one aspect. Are there other aspects regarding a relationship that are important to you?

When did you discover that this woman didn't communicate?

Did you stay in the relationship for six months because this woman had other attributes, or was your vision clouded by rose-colored glasses, denying the reality of the situation?

Did you communicate to her what was important to you?

If you did, how did she respond?

Were you having conversations in your head about her that she was not a part of?

Were you hoping she would change, believing that time would open the doors to intimacy, thinking her priorities would change?

Are you seeking the right person in the wrong place?

Are you behaving in the manner in which you envision your ideal partner behaving in a relationship?

Are you willing to be clear about what you want, what you will and won't tolerate in a relationship?

There are several things you need to do at this point:

Think about and honestly assess the thoughts, feelings, and ideas generated by the questions asked. Are there behaviors you want to change for future relationships? You can change any behavior by following these six steps:

◇Become aware of what you are doing. ◇Acknowledge what you notice. ◇Make the choice to change those behaviors. ◇Strategize an action plan. ◇Commit to

your choice. ◇Celebrate.

Then take steps to prepare for future relationships. ◇Make a list of the criteria you must have in a partner, criteria you can take or leave, and what you absolutely will not tolerate. ◇Use the list when you meet any new possible candidate. ◇Trust yourself and honor your instincts.

Then ask the hard questions. These range from religion to personal philosophies to finances. This will encourage you to find out what you need to know early on, without hoping things will change with time. Be careful not to deny your truth. It is easy to feel good in the beginning of a relationship with "other" qualities while pretending that your new partner doesn't lack one of your essential criteria. This sounds similar to your situation. You are not alone.

Build intimacy by sharing hopes, wishes, and dreams.

You sound like a good soul who deserves to have a meaningful, committed, authentic, loving, joyous, and healthy relationship. If you learn the lessons from this experience—know what works for you, know what you want, trust yourself, notice and address the clues you receive, and don't settle for something that is "sort of" OK, denying the truth of your preferences—then you will surely find the love you are seeking.

JIM ROSEMERGY is the author of nine books, including his most recent, "A Quest For Meaning, Living A Life Of Purpose," writes a monthly column for *Unity Magazine* called "The Spiritual Journey," and has published several audiocassette albums. He is also an active speaker, workshop, and retreat facilitator. He was ordained a Unity minister in 1976 and served

churches for over 14 years. In 1987, he was elected president of the Association of Unity Churches. He is now an executive vice-president of the Unity School of Christianity.

STEVEN HARRISON is a long-time student of the nature of consciousness and has traveled extensively and studied a wide variety of meditation and spiritual practices. He is a founder of All Together Now International, a charitable organization that provides aid to street children and the destitute in Nepal and Tibet. Harrison is the author of "Doing Nothing: Coming to the End of the Spiritual Search," "Being One: Finding Our Self in Relationship," and the just-released "Getting To Where You Are: A Life of Meditation." All author profits from Harrison's books are donated to charity. He lives in Boulder, Colorado.

CHARLOTTE SOPHIA KASL, Ph.D., has been a practicing psychotherapist, workshop leader, Quaker, and Reiki healer for twenty years. She has had a long-time involvement with feminism, Eastern spiritual practices, and alternative healing, bringing a holistic approach to all her work. Her books include "Finding Joy," "Many Roads, One Journey," and "Women, Sex, and Addiction: A Search for Love and Power." She lives near Missoula, Montana.

CHERIE CARTER-SCOTT, Ph.D., is a motivational speaker, management consultant, trainer, coach, seminar leader, and author of two best-sellers, "Negaholics" and "If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules," as well as several other books. She founded The Motivation Management Service Institute, Inc., which specializes in personal growth training programs and workshops for the corporate and

private sector worldwide, in 1974. She lives with her husband and daughter in Nevada. •

Transformation

Continued from page 20

detrimental. There were moments of such intense pain I thought I would break and never mend. I forged onward because despite the pain, the release was real. I felt more vibrant everyday.

Simultaneously, I began to journal, putting my story into words and pictures. I wrote epistles to parents, teachers, religious leaders, God, siblings, friends—dead and living—telling them how I had been hurt by their words and silences, actions and inaction, both intentional and accidental, real or perceived. In my journals I found another safe place to express my emotions. All that I had ever wanted to say or to yell at others and at the world took shape in my journals. I had begun to own my emotions, letting a facade of control and aloofness fade away.

But why couldn't I express myself out loud? In business I was considered an articulate communicator, albeit sometimes overly direct, brutally honest. When had I lost that part of my voice needed to articulate my emotions and personal boundaries? Why hadn't I noticed before the tightness in my throat and what felt like a tight collar around my neck? My ability to express myself for myself had been silenced. I used multiple addictions—smoking, food and adrenaline—to suppress my voice and my life energy. I realized that as far back as I could remember I had become disconnected from my body, moving through life on automatic pilot, my mind fully engaged, my body

and spirit ignored.

I was once again graced by the synchronicity that can only occur when Spirit conspires with you. I connected with a tremendously gifted bodyworker. As my physical body was reintroduced to energy flow, movement and stretching, waves of emotion thundered outward. At first I was unable to distinguish anger from terror, grief from anxiety, their presence was so frightening. With the release of emotion came memories, some known but never coupled with the emotions they caused, other memories buried deep because their reality was too painful. At times, the flashbacks of physical and sexual abuse were so vivid in my mind's eye, I thought I was there again. My bodyworker coached me to relax into the emotion by evoking the witness aspect of my higher self. I also overcame the reflex of holding my breath and learned to “breathe through” the emotion.

As the buried memories and toxic emotions were released, my voice began to emerge. At first it was tentative—barely audible whimpers and stifled sobs. I felt embarrassed, ashamed of being a “cry baby” or afraid of “making a scene.” Statements from my childhood and adolescence replayed in my head, “girls should be seen and not heard,” or “stop crying or I will give you something to cry about,” or “if you scream I will hurt you even more.” With encouragement from both therapist and bodyworker, I began to exercise my voice through sighing and tones. I practiced saying words like “no” and “ouch” and “stop,” over and over again, altering pitch and volume. When I was in my car or the shower I would yell and scream.

One day I realized I no longer felt embarrassed or ashamed. And my speaking voice improved; I now speak more confidently and calmly. The tightness in my throat and around my neck had diminished, and it felt so good!

It has been five years since the crisis, when my life-quake began. I continue to read voraciously, expanding my search in an ever-greater circle. My “trinity of grace,” psychotherapy, journaling and bodywork, has helped me create a new foundation. Work is now a part of my life, not the center of my being, and I make sure I spend time doing work I am passionate about—personal coaching. One of the great benefits of this process, the turning of a breakdown into a breakthrough, is that I am a much better coach now. My focus has moved from situational coaching intended to help an employee make incremental performance improvements to coaching the person as they grow through their own search for meaning, authenticity, and wholeness.

The beliefs, perspectives, and lessons learned that are part of my life's foundation today are a lot different than those I held five years ago. I now know this destruction and re-creation were not separate serial events, but the core, continuous work of personal transformation. I know that suppressing emotions is an “all or nothing game”—when I suppress grief and fear I also suppress joys and loves. I now know that when I use my voice to articulate my feelings, personal boundaries and dreams, my creativity flourishes. So instead of creating negative things I don't want I now channel my creativity toward enjoying life, healing, and spiritual expansion. •

Letters From Readers

Continued from page 8

much fear. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to attack, attack leads to suffering." Now that is a much better answer as to where suffering comes from.

Basil, God speed in your focus to bring contemplative practices to the world. A very worthwhile path. You could be the one that is "the salt that would bring savor" to the Christian churches.

It is depressing to read through the interview and see such a lack of interest in the Holy Spirit. The Catholic church has pushed the Holy Spirit to the background. You make one mention, "Jesus (Joshua) is the Son of the Father, and they have in them immense love, they embrace each other in Holy Spirit."

And what did this Joshua say of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of truth) that the churches, Protestant and Catholic, mostly ignore, so they can use fear, guilt, thoughts of suffering, and dogma to have authority over their charges? You have forgotten the words describing the Spirit of truth as Counselor, Guide, Comforter. Your words suggest that communication for the layman with the Spirit of truth no longer happens.

What your church demonstrates, Basil, is that the Holy speaks only to the Pope. How insane.

And now aside from all this, I have attended Centering Prayer meetings in the area I spend summers, Grand Rapids, Minnesota. At that time the Episcopal church opened their doors to us.

Of late the Presbyterians have done the same, but not the Catholic church.

The Centering Prayer meetings were helpful. They were in general a good contemplative

practice.—*Glenn A. Matson, Cobasset, Minnesota.*

LIVING CLOSE TO FEAR

Blessings to Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi for his discussion of fear in the Autumn 1999 issue. He discussed the three Hebrew words for fear and as I read them I felt less afraid somehow. Fear has been with me all of my life, although less so than it used to be. I want to comment on his description of Yir'ah, the fear that is not really fear, but a sense of being scrutinized. He stated that we experience this in our relationship with God. In being seen by God we are reassured and threatened, both comforted and exposed by divine presence. As I read his words I began to understand my own experience as normal.

Living so close to fear, I have often turned to the 23rd Psalm for strength and help. Rabbi Zalman interpreted one of its lines, "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." He described the staff as the crutch that we can lean on and the rod as the pangs of our conscience that reproofs. It's interesting how words impact us when we are ready. The idea of being thoroughly seen yet loved by the Creator eased some fear in me. If I am seen, yet cradled by divine love, then I can also see myself with my shortcomings and strengths in a more compassionate way.—*Sally White, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

SIMPLY BEYOND

This issue of PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION was beyond any I read before.

Maybe it was the article on Michale Gabriel by Melissa West that started it. It really reached to

the heart of what goes on in a war-ridden place. Knowing how little she could do to change the situation, she faces the result of forces way beyond her, and reaching the humanity in herself, in the children, and their parents. I felt as though I was with her. I thank you for allowing such a resonating piece on the value of the human being. It was something that touched me.

I loved Richard Moss' article on fear and on love as something beyond fear; that both are powerful gods, but love is stronger and therefore, we give ourselves to it in order to go beyond the fear.

The answers in "Ask the Experts" were all useful, and the questions on a deep level of inquiry. The spiritual "dry spell" is something so many of us experience and I also now know that they were incubation periods for something new to emerge.

The article by Oriah Dreamer, about risking, the willingness to let go and love and worry about it later, was a message to trust, to let go and to reach, and yes, sometimes things do not work out, but the openness and the capacity to love are very important.

The pieces on fear and sage-ing were wonderful. I, as an elder, am a wisdom-keeper.

I didn't mention all of it, but I wanted you to know how I felt and that I keep this issue near to me to re-read whenever I can.—*Wilma Heckler, Long Beach, New York*

ENJOYED SPRING

I just wanted to write to tell you how much I enjoyed the Spring edition of your magazine. Many of the articles were by authors that write books that I've read and enjoy. Many thanks for a wonderful magazine!—*Betty Stock, via e-mail*•

Prayer

Continued from page 25

that *this false sense of self is the source of our suffering*. Freedom is at hand.

The following two Silent Prayers-in-Action, taken from my most recent book, “The Lost Secrets of Prayer,” point toward a new kind of inner practice whose purpose is the transformation of experience for the realization of True Self. Within them is revealed the possibility of learning to use even the most mundane of our temporal, physical circumstances to realize an interior and Everlasting Consciousness.

Prayer-in-Action #1: *Give up the last word to someone else who’s obviously glad to take it*. Only the unconscious and painful idea that not having the last word is the same as losing yourself could compel you to verbally do battle with another person. Choose instead to consciously drop this losing war of words and watch how the inner and outer, Higher and Lower, worlds part by themselves... leaving you, at last, with the choice where you will live.

This special spiritual understanding, and the inner-diligence it calls for, will help you in other areas of your life as well. In learning to turn and walk away from all arguments in the outer world, you’re slowly earning the spiritual strength you need to let go of those interior battles where *any* kind of fighting or resistance is secret futility. No one wins in a dark inner dialogue except for the darkness that drags you into such a struggle within yourself.

Yes, give the last word in any unpleasant disagreement to anyone who wants it. You can do something much, much higher. Instead of turning on that person, *turn around and see the self within you* that believes who you are, your kingdom, is measured by verbal wins

and losses. Winning illusions isn’t worth losing yourself. Let the world outside of you have all of its temporary conquests while you secretly claim the internal victory that wins something eternal.

Prayer-in-Action #2: *Walk away from shallow social circles where gossip, sarcasm, and one-upmanship are the coin of the realm*. Just walk away from them. This prayer-in-action will show you—after you dare the judgment of others—or the aloneness that attends from your refusal to join in society’s sick circles—that the real departure you must make is from your own internal circle of thrill-seeking thoughts and false convictions. The following insight more than proves the need for this special kind of self-quitting:

One quirk of human psychology, connected to the wrong use of imagination, is that when we don’t understand the actual purpose of something, we invent one for it. A child too young to yet understand the purpose of a shoe will find ways to entertain himself with it, to use it for purposes that have nothing to do with what the shoe was created for.

When men and women fail to discover the true inner purpose of their lives, their invented ones can often be cruel. One small example of this can be seen in our unconscious treatment of one another in various business or social settings where, in an attempt to be seen by others as being “better” than some contemporary, we may unknowingly use sarcasm to cut someone down to make ourselves seem taller. This misunderstanding of life’s purpose is secretly the same as self-ignorance. And our state of spiritual sleep actually perpetuates this unconscious assumption that winning friends and overcoming ene-

mies is the purpose of our being because this outer struggle lends us such a strong sense of self.

We must work to turn away from any social situation where false purposes mask secret punishments, as well as from that false sense of self that seeks itself indiscriminately in these strained settings. *Our willingness to be alone*—when necessary—is a Prayer-in-Action. Being inwardly willing to walk away from this level of ourselves is the same as inviting Truth to provide us with a New Self; one which is already content because it is a living expression of *true life at peace* within *true purpose*.

There is beautiful scripture, both Western and Eastern, that alludes to an aspect of self that is little known, less practiced. Paraphrased from my memory it goes something like, “Birds fly, fish swim, man prays.” This truthful idea speaks volumes, and hidden within it is its secret instruction.

Remembering the Divine *begins* by remembering that God dwells within each of us, and to enter into relationship with this Light of lights requires that we turn around within ourselves to face It. When we will work to use every moment to remember where our Real Heart lives, Real Life begins. •

Guy Finley is the author of eight books and tapes in the field of self-development. He lives in Oregon, where he is overseeing the construction of his new Life of Learning Center. For information about his books, tapes, and nonprofit Life of Learning Foundation, or to join his once a month free inner-life web site chat room, visit his site at www.guyfinley.com. For a free poster entitled “Ten Ways the Love of Truth Gives You a Fearless Life,” send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Life of Learning, P.O. Box 10-P, Merlin, OR 97532.

Yoga

Continued from page 36

and hence outside our responsibility, as well. This attitude allows us to maintain a split—the “outside” as conscious, the “inside” as unconscious. The result is that we can banish feelings we don’t want to face to the inside of the body where they manifest as disease or malaise of many kinds. Then we are apt to disavow responsibility for them, seeing them as *alien invaders*.

When Western scientists began to study the feats of yogis, they were, for a time, obsessed with charting and describing the supernatural feats of internal bodily control, control of so called “involuntary processes.” In a famous experiment at the Menninger Clinic, for example, it was documented that Swami Rama was able to slow his heart almost to a stop for significant periods of time and to bring it under conscious control. These kinds of “feats” are a direct assault on our worldview. Yet yogis have shown for millennia that our blindness to the insides of the body is just another one of what Deepak Chopra calls our “premature cognitive commitments.” Awareness can naturally penetrate even the so-called involuntary organs—the digestive tract, the heart, the lungs—raising their functioning into the control of the higher centers of the brain and making them conscious and voluntary.

Surprisingly, Swami Rama’s feats are not that far beyond the scope of many Westerners’ practice. In my experience, I’ve found it is not uncommon for us to develop a level of awareness of the body which is capable of penetrating into organ systems, and from there into what yogis call the “subtle body”—the pulsating world of

pure energy which is understood to be the ground of consciousness from which the entire phenomenal world arises. As we penetrate this subtle world of energy and consciousness, we have an experience of “coming home” to our true nature, and a sense of attunement to the deepest sources of our wisdom and compassion.

In my opinion, it is this experience of homecoming that draws us back again and again to this remarkable practice. As author—and yogi—Jon Kabat Zinn has said, “wherever we go, there we are,” and yet it is my experience that for many of us, after exposure to the practice of yoga, there is simply, and at times astonishingly, a great deal more of us there. More consciousness, more energy, more awareness, more equanimity, more life in the body, more connection with the mysteries of the soul. And there is that wonderful, haunting voice of the True Self that calls to us, that keeps us company as we stride deeper and deeper into the world, determined, as poet Mary Oliver says, “to save the only life we really can save.”•

Stephen Cope is a psychotherapist who writes and teaches about the relationship between contemporary psychology and the Eastern contemplative traditions. He has degrees from Amherst College and Boston College, and currently is Scholar-in-Residence at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Lenox, Massachusetts, the largest residential yoga center in the world. His first book, “Yoga and the Quest for the True Self,” was published in October 1999.

Destiny

Continued from page 54

teaches greater love, compassion, and caring for all life’s species, if we can meet the labyrinth of chal-

lenges along the way with joy and a heart lightened by our own inner faith. You are not alone, even though there will be times it will feel as if you are. These are the times that strengthen our fortitude, faith, and commitment. There is a “higher” power guiding us even in moments of greatest distress. These are the blessings given to us to smooth our sharp edges and sensitize our conscience to feel another as ourself. Instead of armoring and layering ourselves with defenses because of past hurts, we can open ourselves even more and experience a renewed sense of joy and fulfillment never dreamed possible.

It is up to each of us. As we move into the twenty-first century let us align with one another to bring our highest vision into manifestation. We can make personal and collective dreams a living reality. Let us work together. We are the architects of our own destiny. •

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Relationships

Continued from page 48

healthy, clear, and compassionate...

PAUL: ...which leaves no trace of regret.

EVELYN: In order to engage in right action, there are certain values that we need to embrace: truth, integrity, harmony, both within myself as a human being, and between us.

PAUL: If we value goodness, then our previous discussion about compassion applies here. When you value goodness, you will act with compassion and look to see where you can put your partner's needs before your own. Forgiveness, to let go of things, not hold on to angers and hurts. If you practice these values on a day-to-day basis in your relationship, right action will naturally follow.

TRANSFORMATION: If we practice right action in our intimate relationships, how does that affect our ability to practice right action in the larger world?

EVELYN: You'd be doing exactly those same things in the larger world. You can't practice right action in your close relationships and act in a contradictory fashion in the larger world. You just can't practice right action over here but not over there. Practicing right action is just like practicing compassion; it's having a larger vision of humanity, seeing that we're all one.

PAUL: Being an active participant in the conscious evolution of consciousness. If you have a better intimate relationship, you'll have a stronger family. More loving families make for more loving communities. More loving communities make for more loving societies.

TRANSFORMATION: As we talk about compassion, desire, and right action, I am reminded of how all the major spiritualities

talk about how easy it is to go to sleep, to become unconscious. It's easy to practice these things when we're in a great mood and things are going our way, but how do we work with self-deception and going to sleep when things are not going smoothly?

PAUL: We strongly encourage couples to use their relationship as a vehicle for self-transformation, as a classroom to wake up spiritually. When I go to sleep and act in self-centered ways, my partner can call this to my attention if we've made this a conscious goal of our relationship. We can use our everyday interactions to go past our ego. When the ego shows up and causes friction, whether it's a little pinch or a big, big ache, we deal with it in a positive way.

EVELYN: And we make a commitment to letting go of images of ourselves. For instance, I don't want to have an image of myself as this wonderful person and all-loving partner. I want to be real. If I'm real, I've got to be willing to say when I'm not acting in a loving manner. This is, once again, where witnessing comes in: stepping back, observing yourself as you're really behaving, and having a loving partner who can, without attack or blame, show you that this action was not very kind or loving. That gives you an opportunity to look, let go, and correct.

TRANSFORMATION: It sounds like a key ingredient is that a couple make a conscious commitment to entering into the relationship as a way of waking up and growing spiritually.

EVELYN: We've got to be conscious that we're a team, and we can help each other. It's a difficult task, this waking up, but it's not

something that can't be done. We begin also then to honor our relationship as a sacred place that we don't want to pollute with a lot of ugliness and selfishness and unkindness.

PAUL: This is the new emerging idea for couples: to see their relationship in these terms. It's a whole new ball game when that's the contract between us.

That's what most men and women are wanting today, especially since the old ways are breaking down, but it's not widely articulated or understood in the culture yet. A lot of couples are still groping around in the dark looking for a new way of relating. This could be a way of turning on the light.

TRANSFORMATION: This model could help the couple to not only grow spiritually, but directly engage the couple in helping to heal the world around them as well.

PAUL: Absolutely. You enter into the relationship as a way to grow, and then you grow beyond yourself into the larger community.

EVELYN: It's practicing love, soul-centered love, at its deepest and highest levels. We discovered it's the kind of love you are able to give and receive when you are fully awake, when you can go past self-absorption. In our book we talk about three kinds of love. The first is nurturing love, when we can listen and attend to our partner, and be there for each other...

PAUL: ...to give each other the feeling of being deeply understood...

EVELYN: ...to know that if I'm having a hard time understanding myself, I have here a partner who made this commitment to me and who loves me in a way that will help me understand myself. And

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 72

Relationships

Continued from page 71

then there's intentional love, which means that both of us do everything possible to help the other to grow as an individual emotionally, intellectually, spiritually...

PAUL: ...where the other person's growth is just as important as my own.

EVELYN: And finally we talk about revering love. That's the kind of love we give to each other that sends the message that you're important to me, you're a major priority. I value you and appreciate you. I have a deep sense of gratitude that you're in my life. When we are able to give each other these kinds of love, then what happens is that we become strong, independent individuals and, at the very same time, intensely connected. •

Hoffman

Continued from page 51

it uses intellect, emotions, and body to create our sense of who we are. It distorts reality, dramatizes or minimizes feelings, and normalizes what is not normal. It enshrouds our hearts and blocks compassion for others and ourselves. We can't kill it, but we can meet it and dispel its power. And meet it I did during the ritual! More truthfully, a spiritual warrior in me arose and overpowered this energy. How reassuring to know that she is forever with me to engage my dark side.

By day six I felt ready to play and that is what happened. Wonderful hours ensued. The child in me was tickled and pleased. Coaxing out innocence, curiosity, creativity was easy. Celebrating the energy of child was miraculous in its own right. It was also a precursor to what was to come.

Our final day was highlighted by an integration ceremony. I felt

myself letting go of the past as the emotional self, whom we had been identifying as our emotional child, in a heartfelt ritual, was symbolically raised from innocent child to present age, then joined together with body, intellectual self, and spirit. For me it was a wedding ceremony. There, in the glow of the crimson sunset, I felt as if I had at long last united with myself.

After returning home, I bought a gold wedding ring to wear on my right hand, a reminder of the sacred vow I made with myself. My back feels fine and my faith in life is growing. I still get stuck in negative love patterns, but I am aware of them and can more easily get out of the potholes. A new tenderness is flowing between my mother and myself for which I am grateful. My husband's sadness has subsided and he is experiencing a new found joy. I hope my associate Bill gives himself the gift of going through the process. On the road of personal transformation, it is a safe haven where one can cast off the unneeded and embrace what is essential for the journey. •

Opening the Heart

Continued from page 27

becomes open and energized. As you are going about your daily business, think of your heart as a miniature sun that radiates light to everyone and everything you meet. While your head and your mouth are busy with conversation, let the light from your heart touch and warm the heart of the other. It is as if there is a second, heart, interchange that is going on beneath the conversation.

Let your heart-sun touch the heart-suns of everyone you meet. No matter who they are or what their personality is like, their

hearts are just like yours; their hearts yearn for the divine light, just like yours. •

Robert Frager, Ph.D., received his doctorate in psychology from Harvard University. He is the past president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology and the founder of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, where he is currently Coordinator of the Spiritual Guidance program and professor of Psychology. Dr. Frager is also a Sufi teacher, or sheikh, in the Halveti-Jerrahi Order and has written three books on Sufism: "Essential Sufism," "Love is the Wine: Teachings of a Sufi Master in America," and "Heart, Self, and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony."

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Compassion in Action

Continued from page 12

while surfing in Hawaii, Kaleo is always aware of death. “When I die, I’m not going to take anything material with me, obviously,” says Kaleo. “It’s going to be what I can’t touch that’s really important: spirit, heart, compassion. What I’ll take with me when I die is the love that I’ve left in the world that I’ve given to others, the hearts that I’ve touched.

“Working with these guys, I really got how Spirit is love. It has deepened my capacity for loving, and allowing Spirit to flow. When you go into a pit like that where people do some really crazy things, if you can keep on seeing the goodness in those people, that’s what you’re going to get out of them.”

Kaleo consciously incorporates spirituality into his work with the inmates. He explains Tai Chi by saying that it is really praying with the body, just like art is praying with the soul. The inmates, he realized early on, were hungry for Spirit, but didn’t know how to find it. He tells the inmates that through Tai Chi and art, they can find what Spirit is trying to say to them.

“The ancestors are always speaking to you in art,” says Kaleo, “especially if you start first by going deep into the body through Tai Chi. By moving with the body, you access the inner voice, which is Spirit speaking to you.”

Kaleo has been deeply gratified to watch the inmates heal over time. The inmates, he has observed, not only heal inside. They also begin to share a spirit of community between them, a marked contrast from being guarded and suspicious with each other in the initial sessions. Kaleo brings fresh vegetables, fruit, and chocolate to share with the inmates.

From time to time he is able to sell one of the masks that an inmate has created, and puts the money on the prison books for the inmate to spend. As the class opens up, an inmate will frequently ask Kaleo to take \$20 of the mask money and buy treats—often hamburgers—for everyone in the class. “I see them become kinder and kinder to each other, go from being withdrawn, isolated, and angry, to opening up in some amazing ways both to each other and to me.”

Working with disturbed inmates has not been easy. “You walk into a place like that, and your body soaks up all the violence and psychic toxins like a sponge,” he says. At one point Kaleo began having violent nightmares of killing or being killed. He realized talk therapy would not be enough to stop the nightly inner violence. Instead, he walked his own talk and created a mask with the help of one of the inmates, decorating it with his own hair. Later, in a private ritual, he prayed and then burned the mask while praying and chanting. The nightmares stopped. “That experience taught me a deeper sense of the power and importance of both creativity and prayer,” Kaleo recalls.

Even with its challenges, Kaleo has loved the work. “This population gets so much criticism and judgment thrown at them, fingers pointing at them all the time telling them what they did wrong. I’ve tried to open their hearts. They could feel my heart reaching out to theirs. What I got back was a lot of respect and gratitude. That’s what my teaching is about: namaste, heart to heart. There’s such incredible suffering in the jails, such anger and pain. During the movement, the meditations, and the art

I would see them starting to release this suffering.”

He has brought others interested in service work into the jails with him, but knows that not everyone is cut out to do this work. “The service has to be fulfilling to you; it has to bring you passion,” says Kaleo. “Find out what really inspires you, opens your heart, challenges you to grow. Some people are incredible working with children, others aren’t. Some are called to hospice. Know where your strengths lie, your passions, your weaknesses and challenges.”

Kaleo suggests writing in a journal to find clarity about where your gifts might lie in service to others. “Write about all the things you don’t like for the first week. Then for the next week write about everything that you love, that gives you life and joy. For the third week read everything you’ve written and put it all together. Ask, ‘Where is this all leading me?’ and you’ll know where to go to help.”

Following his own advice, Kaleo is following his passion and moving his focus of service from the jails to working with young people with the same processes of movement, meditation, and art. “I feel called now to work in the schools, given all the violence there. It’s so inspiring when kids can see that through art they go beyond skin color, body size, or what group you hang out with. Youth are so hungry for spirituality, but they don’t know where to turn in this culture.”

It doesn’t matter where you feel called to serve with love and passion, says Kaleo; what is important is that you do it, no matter how small you start.

“Service is about keeping the heart open and loving—that’s what really heals people, all people.

Everyone—it doesn't matter who they are, what they look like, where they live—is looking for acceptance, respect, and love. If you can go anywhere giving that respect and caring, it doesn't matter what you're teaching, you'll be bringing healing. And that, in the end, is what counts."•

For information on Kaleo Ching's work, write to him at P.O. Box 8356, Berkeley CA 94707, call him at (510)237-9122, or email him at kaleoching@earthlink.net.

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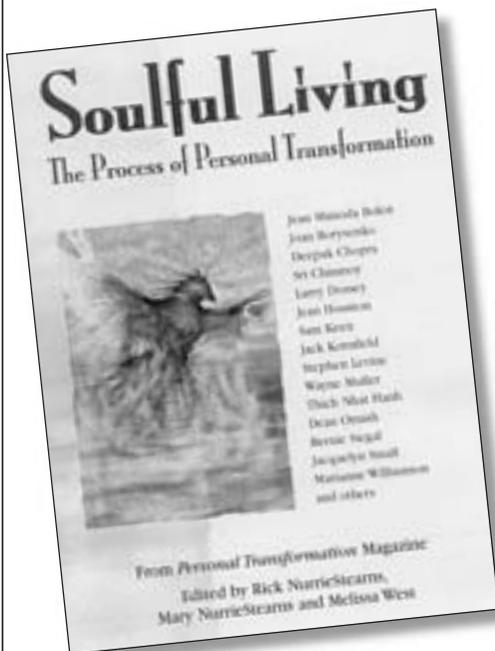
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The Nature of Compassion

E C K H A R T T O L L E

Compassion is the awareness of a deep bond between yourself and all creatures. But there are two sides to compassion, two sides to this bond. On the one hand, since you are still here as a physical body, you share the vulnerability and mortality of your physical form with every other human and with every living being. Next time you say, “I have nothing in common with this person,” remember that you have a great deal in common: a few years from now—two years or seventy years, it doesn’t make much difference—both of you will have become rotting corpses, then piles of dust, then nothing at all. This is a sobering and humbling realization that leaves little room for pride. Is this a negative thought? No, it is a fact. Why close your eyes to it? In that sense, there is total equality between you and every other creature.

One of the most powerful spiritual practices is to meditate deeply on the mortality of physical forms, including your own. This is called: die before you die. Go into it deeply. Your physical form is dissolving, is no more. Then a moment comes when all mind-forms or thoughts also die. Yet *you* are still there—the divine presence that you are. Radiant, fully awake. Nothing that was real ever died, only names, forms, and illusions.

The realization of this deathless dimension, your true nature, is the other side of compassion. On a deep feeling-level, you now recognize not only your own immortality but through your own that of every other creature as well. On the level of form, you share mortality and the precariousness of existence. On the level of Being, you share eternal, radiant life. These are the two aspects of compassion. In compassion, the seemingly opposite feelings of sadness and joy merge into one and become transmuted into a deep inner peace. This is the peace of God. It is one of the most noble feelings that humans are capable of, and it has great healing and transformative power. But true compassion, as I have just described it, is as yet rare. To have deep empathy for the suffering of another being certainly requires a high degree of consciousness, but represents only one side of compassion. It is not complete. True compassion goes beyond empathy or sympathy. It does not happen until sadness merges with joy, the joy of Being beyond form, the joy of eternal life. •

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