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**Lotus**

For Personal Transformation



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

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

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## From the Editor...

*"It is the examined life that is worth living."*

Our call is to wake up and be all that we can. What a path of wonder we undertake. Awakening requires that we look deeply within to discover our answers. Our endeavor takes plenty of energy and focus and is made more difficult by societal forces. Our society teaches us to look beyond ourselves for personal solutions, guidance, and healing. We are encouraged to search out answers in books, with teachers, and by technology when the answers are within, waiting. Resources empower yet the answers are ours alone to unfold.

Ours is a very personal mission. We are moved to heal our woundedness, reclaim our wholeness, and live life to our full potential. Step by step our answers are inside.

How do we heal, who are we, and what dreams shall we pursue are vital questions.

In a current letter to the editor, a woman describes her healing as a process of lifting unresolved experiences out of inner darkness into the light where she then faced them along with accompanying feelings. From that processing she discovered self love and connection with her god. She says she feels more fully human. In my own life I know that when intense or recurring ideas and sensations emerge, I open myself for new possibilities if I let them surface and be released. Through their expression I learn about myself.

What do we examine? How do we know ourselves? Openness and willingness unlock our internal doors. We need openness to self examination and willingness to face our inner experience. To exclude parts of our experience—feelings, behaviors, thoughts, and physical sensations—puts us at risk of living a habit formed and emotionally frozen life. If we silence our inner voices we become disconnected to greater parts of ourselves and our oneness with life. Our dreams become known when we are connected.

Sharing our stories is transforming for teller and listener alike. I interact with courageous people who face and change their lives. Not long ago, I sat with Sara while she spoke about traumatic memories. When I first met Sara she avoided eye contact with others. Through examining her life and facing her feared inner world she is able to meet others directly. Her world is clearer. She feels connected with herself and with what she calls "life energy." She now has energy available for pursuit of goals and she's remembering what it is she likes to do.

We each have our own journey. We have to inspect our own lives and have our own awakenings. Yet, we are inspired by other's successes and motivated by another risk-taking. It is with a spirit of community that we move forward. A supportive community provides a safe context for revealing ourselves, especially to ourselves. We are uplifted by stories of growth. We welcome your testimony of transformation. Your contribution to Lotus makes community.

Welcome to Lotus.

*Mary NurrieStearns*

Mary NurrieStearns  
Editor

We appreciate your encouraging notes, telephone calls, and letters. We value open dialogue with our readers and welcome your ideas, reactions, and suggestions.

# Letters



Following are some personal stories from our readers. Telling stories of transformation empowers and reading them inspires. Thank you for sharing with us.

## COMPOSING A LIFE

The summer 1992 issue was my introduction to Lotus. The picture of the child's hand around the adult's finger and the title *Journey For Meaning* touched me. I've never written my story. I'd call my story *Composing a Life* because that is what I've had to do. I am a thirty-one year old woman with a family to raise. I'm a college student and an organist. I've suffered extreme depression for most of my life. I've suffered a lot. I had a very troubled adolescence. At age nineteen, my husband died leaving me with two toddlers and baby on the way. I struggled to support my family and turned to drugs to cope.

Over the years I have been filled with a rage and hatred towards life because I felt that it had been unfair to me. These feelings were so strong that I really did not want to live. Years of bitterness, loss, and loss of hope had taken its toll on me. Like the old saying, "it's the darkest before the dawn," in my despair I decided to go into therapy. This is what therapy has been like for me. You take the experiences out of the dark one at a time into the light and face them. You grieve for what is irrettrievable and lost. You learn again how to cry, laugh, and forgive.

Now I can look in a mirror and feel my heart sing. I love myself and therefore I can love others. Would I change the past? No. Because this life of mine is my own. I claim it. I would not be who I am today. I am an expression of God. Just like a fingerprint or a snowflake. Why do bad things happen to good people? For me the answer now is why not or just because. Someday, when I am with my creator I will understand the mysteries of the universe. Until then, I will feel all that goes with being human while I live upon the surface of the earth until my time in this place has come to an end.

Thanks for inspiring me to write. It's with tender feelings that I close.—*Nancy Masters, DesMoines, Iowa.*

## FRESH REINFORCEMENT

Thank you Lotus. I've again browsed through my spring issue. I really liked the articles about solitude and bliss. For me they go together. I was divorced a few years ago. I thought I was doing really well. Except I stayed busy all the time. I especially did not like to be alone. My condo was so quiet. I just could not fill up the space. Just didn't

feel like there was enough me to be there by myself. I had good girl friends and interesting and worthwhile activities. My life looked good on the outside. But there certainly was no bliss. I later found out that I couldn't be happy or relaxed until I faced myself, by myself. Finally I decided to force myself to be home alone. I knew I had to make friends with myself and come to terms with me.

That was some time ago and life is much better. I still take time daily for solitude. It keeps me centered and fresh. Thanks for the reinforcement. I enjoy your journal and look forward to your next issue. I just wish you were monthly rather than quarterly.—*Mary Palmer, Tulsa, Oklahoma.*

## I WAS INSPIRED

I found a copy of Lotus in my doctor's waiting room. I really liked the articles by Robert Johnson, especially the one about our shadow self. I can relate because I'm struggling to stop undermining myself. I'm a nice guy. I'm responsible, intelligent, and helpful. I could do so much more with my life. I know I have a contribution to make. I want to help people. I'm a self-made and peaceful man. I've had a violent past to overcome. I've come a long way. Now I want to go further, yet don't take the next steps to develop my career.

I will get there. I know I've got to wrestle with some "disowned parts" of me. I was inspired by Lotus to hang in there.—*Frank Stewart, Kansas City, Kansas.*

## IRRESISTIBLE

Thanks to my soul sister in Philadelphia, I have been introduced to a treasure trove of nutrients essential to life.

I am absolutely thrilled that you have sprouted up. Well, I'm under the impression that you're new to the world and you certainly are down this way!

From the small taste I have had, I feel absolutely compelled to subscribe for life! God bless your work, Lotus is an irresistible feast.—*Sigrid Saga, Auckland, New Zealand.*

## OUTSTANDING

From the first issue, Lotus became my favorite magazine. I appreciate the wide scope of issues addressed but especially that the articles help answer what it means to be spiritual. Each article offers so much wisdom and understanding to my own experience as a human being. Reading Lotus facilitates my acceptance of myself and others while inviting me to grow in compassion toward myself and all humankind. I am always left with a great desire to fully

integrate all I learn in each issue of Lotus.

Thank you for such an outstanding publication.—*Almita Bey-Carrion, Lytmar, California.*

#### TOUCHED

I have just received my first issue of your magazine (Volume 1, Number 3). Wow! I really have enjoyed reading it, especially the article, "The Truth About Child Abuse". It touched me deeply.—*Victoria L. Brown, Grimesland, North Carolina.*

#### KEEPING THE SPIRIT

In this world of "it can't be done" every so often someone goes the distance. I congratulate you on coming through and truly keeping the spirit of your publication through your deeds.

I am the "customer service" person for the Southwestern Region of the USOA Forest Service and I'm constantly working on going the extra mile.

You have a subscriber for life!—*Diane Madden, Tucson, Arizona.*

#### BEAUTIFUL

Having graduated from the E.S.T. Training in the 1980's, and also being interested in purposeful living, your magazine reached me at its infancy. Your presentation and content are what I have been seeking in other places.

Your beautiful articles on *Twenty-Four Brand New Hours* and *Enhancing Personal Growth With Solitude* will be read many times and savored.—*Gloria Meldonian, Santa Barbara, California.*

#### THANK YOU

I thank god for you all and your publication!

For a reason, my life training and purpose, it was sent to me. I believe there is no chance meeting.

This first issue helped me in more ways than I could have hoped for. Please don't stop printing the spiritual messages all the world so desperately needs!

Not only did I order a subscription for myself but I will be sending it to my friend. We are both on the same level of learning and work together on increasing our knowledge and awareness of our being.

Again, thanks so much for your inspirational and easy to understand words of wisdom publication.—*Jeanie Clayton, Bryans Road, Maryland.*

#### TRANSFORMING

The article *Our Shadow Side* by Robert Johnson in the summer Lotus has awakened me to several personal issues that I had covered up over the years within my self.

I once again feel like I am a seeker. I'm looking for new answers, challengeing myself, not knowing the direction my recovery will transform me.

Thank you for your inspiring journal.—*Paul Moore, Austin, Texas.*



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# *The Role of*



# Courtship

L O N N I E  
B A R B A C H   A N D  
D A V I D   G E I S I N G E R

*It is ridiculous what airs we put on to seem  
profound while our hearts gasp dying for want  
of love.*

—W. C. Williams



**M**ost of us arrive at a  
time in our lives  
when we feel ready  
and eager to enter a  
new kind of relationship, one that involves the  
long future not merely the immediate present.  
Once we have reached that distinct state of  
readiness and desire to be with that special  
someone with whom we believe we can build a  
life, we enter the realm of courtship. Courtship  
involves a prolonged experiment with a singu-  
larly serious purpose and attitude.

Louise Barbach has written a number of best-selling books on sex and relationships. David L. Geisinger has been director of the pioneering Behavior Therapy Institute in Sausalito, California, as well as research coordinator and staff psychologist at the Center for Special Problems in San Francisco. Drs. Barbach and Geisinger are both on the clinical faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco. They are practicing psychotherapists, treating individuals and couples. They reside in Mill Valley, California.



Courtship is about *mating*, not dating. It is entirely possible for two people to date for months or even years without courting, and two people do not always enter courtship at the same time. One partner may have a more casual attitude about the relationship while the other has a greater desire to deepen and advance its purpose.

At one time not very long ago, the courtship process was carried out more formally as well as more protractedly than it is today. A couple would first get to know each other's family and friends, and the development of physical intimacy would proceed more slowly in closer accord with the process of getting to know their partners in other ways. But as the pace of life continues to speed up, so has the pace of relationship formation and this has been accompanied by a tendency toward shorter and less formalized courtships.

Clearly, courtship serves an essential purpose. It can and should provide us with a microcosm of the future relationship. Its duration permits real life to have its proper impact on the romanticized, getting-to-know-you stage. Within this period we are given the invaluable opportunity to assess our future life mates more thoroughly and to learn more about whether we work well as a team, whether our values are congruent, whether we negotiate our differences well, whether we are sexually compatible, whether we enjoy each

other's company, and whether we can agree on life plans. We are able to "sample" the various dimensions of our partners: to see them under stress, to see how they handle relationships with their friends and family, to discover conflicting interests and possible personality clashes. Most importantly perhaps, we can find out whether mutual trust, the pivot point of all good relationships, is able to grow and develop.

In short, courtship is a critical testing ground for future compatibility. When the courtship period and its important purpose become abbreviated, the opportunity to get to know our prospective mates in greater depth is compromised and the results can be most unfortunate.

Of course, a courtship can also go on for too long without ever moving forward. In fact, one woman married thirty-three years told us that she was flabbergasted when her husband informed her the first time they went out that he planned to date for "at least two years" before deciding whether or not he and his prospective mate were compatible. "What if I didn't pass the test?" she had wondered. "What then? I would have already given him two years of my life."

Interestingly, this couple came upon a few major problems that took them over a year to resolve. When they were finally ready to marry one and one half years later, the time seemed right for both of them.

Since the creation of an intimate relationship is without doubt among the most satisfying, complex, demanding, and crucial components of a life well lived, it makes no sense whatsoever to compromise the potential contribution that a solid courtship can make to the ultimate success of such a relationship. A conscious courtship can reduce the likelihood that we will encounter painful surprises later on after having made a commitment to our chosen one. As the adage warns us, "Decide in haste, repent at leisure." Despite the time

pressures that make contemporary life so different from that of previous generations, we can still learn to use the information we receive during the courtship period more thoughtfully so that its benefits are not denied us.

## THE ROMANTIC RUSH

Relationships begin with a variety of openings. Most of us however seem to await the moment when someone we meet "knocks our socks off." These intense feelings then become the basis for pursuing a deeper relationship.

Joshua describes a quintessential first meeting of this sort, "I was new in San Francisco," he reported. "I had just gotten back from Asia and was going to be returning to my home in Philadelphia in a few days. Anyway, I had been invited to the home of a friend of my family's for Easter morning breakfast. I walked in the door and there was this beautiful, blond-haired, tanned epitome of a "California girl" standing in front of me. I absolutely fell in love the moment I laid eyes on her. I couldn't stop looking at her. Everything I had dreamed of was right there. It totally blew me over even before I spoke to her."

Buried somewhere in our unconscious perhaps is the notion that this kind of dizzyingly powerful experience identifies "the real thing." Unfortunately, this scenario is far more typical of relationships that burn out after a few months than those that last a lifetime. To be sure, there are those couples who "fall in love at first sight," marry within a few weeks, and are still happily married fifty years later, but they are clearly in the minority. Why is it then that so many of us look at the romantic rush that Joshua described as being a reliable indicator of true love?

The truth is that *we love to be in love*. Being in love catapults us into a scintillatingly alive plane of existence far away from our mundane daily lives, a deliciously captivating high that is better than that induced by



any drug. So when we "fall in love," we are most often falling in love with the intensity of our own feelings rather than with the other person. The desire to be enraptured by these feelings can drive our convictions and easily capture our imagination. Without knowing it, we can "fall in love" with an image based mostly on a fantasy of the kind of person we'd always imagined ourselves being with and then project this fantasy image onto our new acquaintance. The intensity of these sweeping feelings can easily obscure the actual characteristics of our alleged loved one.

Since at the outset we actually know very little about the real person, we can't truly love him in any meaningful sense of the word. When we fall "head over heels" for someone, we are usually aware only of relatively superficial elements about him, characteristics that have powerfully impressed us during the short time we've spent together. We are easily inclined to make more of these than they ultimately may be worth, and it is quite common to be surprised and even shocked when we later discover that what we assumed about the person turned out not to be true at all. Alas, some people never seem to stop falling in love with love, and their romantic relationships follow the same repetitive and tragically unfulfilling pattern as a result.

Janet recalled that when she first met Otis she was struck by his polished manners and how handsome and beautifully dressed he was. The fact that he was president of his own company impressed her a great deal more than she let on, even to herself, and when he laughed at her jokes or looked deeply into her eyes, she felt overcome by a rush of excitement.

Otis called Janet the very next day and the day after. On each of the first three dates he brought a gift—flowers, wine, a sweet card. He was attentive to her in a way she had never before experienced. She delighted in the feeling of being pursued. By the third date they became lovers and

Otis vowed his undying affection; it was a whirlwind affair and Janet had fallen hopelessly for him.

It was not long however before Otis began making excuses as to why he couldn't see Janet on particular weekends. Most of the time he claimed to be traveling on business, and since he was so sweet and reassur-

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ing when he did see her, she accepted his words at face value. Then one day when Otis was supposed to be out of town, Janet noticed his car parked outside a local restaurant. She watched from her own car as he emerged with his arm lovingly entwined around another woman. This was the beginning of the long, drawn-out demise of a heart-wrenching love affair, one that is all too familiar to millions of us, male and female alike.

While first impressions may be important, they rarely tell the complete story. Neither Joshua nor Janet knew much about the person they were intoxicated with. They knew virtually nothing about all the most salient dimensions that make for a lasting, intimate relationship.

## THE FUNCTION OF COURTSHIP

As dating progresses and evolves into courtship, the very nature of the relationship changes; partners reasonably come to expect more from one another and to scrutinize each other more closely. It can be said that the fundamental purpose of courtship is to "tease out" the real person from the fantasized image we projected onto her or him. This deeper knowledge is the by-product of time spent together in a wide array of situations. When a date is broken for instance, does it begin to signify the lack of importance our partner places on the relationship? Does it indicate a tendency to be rather irresponsible? Or, is it simply an innocent and insignificant lapse?

It is all too easy to brush aside some of the most salient information—our feelings, intuitions, perceptions—because of our wish to believe the best about our partner so we can go forward without impediment. Sometimes our own desperation (because we have been lonely, because we are growing older) encourages us to gloss over relevant details, but we are taking foolish chances with a very important life decision when we do so. The more we know, the wiser our decision will be and the wiser our decision, the more likely we are to have happiness instead of hurt as its outcome.

Brian was a physician who was almost forty-five, already divorced and longing for children. While he was somewhat concerned about Connie's age (she was only twenty-six), he fell in love with her vivacity, beauty, and intelligence. The fact that he was a good friend of her older brother only seemed to make him more certain of his choice. But he was disturbed by the fact that Connie smoked marijuana and used alcohol a good deal more than he was comfortable with, and her substance abuse became a serious source of contention between them. Each time they fought about this,

Connie would agree to cut back but within a few weeks, her good intentions were clouded by a haze of marijuana smoke or dissolved in an evening of too much wine.

Despite these problems, they decided to marry. Brian felt he was getting too old to start another relationship and wanted to give this one his all, and he convinced himself that marriage would help Connie settle down. Less than one year after their marriage, they divorced. The only significant change that occurred that year was that Brian ran out of patience. Connie had made and broken too many promises. With his trust undermined, Brian was left a bit older, wiser, and considerably less hopeful about ever establishing a family.

#### TESTING THE WATERS

Courtship is comprised of a series of tests which we set up both consciously and unconsciously in order to observe and evaluate our partner's reactions. Are our partners sensitive, caring, and reliable? Do they mean what they say and say what they mean? Do they keep their word or do they make repeated excuses for why they have failed to do so? Do they lie and cover up or do they tell the truth?

It is the outcome of this process of resting that helps us determine whether we want to keep moving forward toward a deeper commitment. Because trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship, distrust and the lack of feeling safe curtails intimacy. With sufficient breach of trust, the relationship begins to falter. With each confirmation of trust, however, we are able to relax a bit more of our guardedness, reveal more of ourselves. If our partner still loves us after we have exposed our vulnerabilities and imperfections, a crucial test has been passed and we have begun the healing process.

Bennett's business began to fail during his courtship. Try as he might, a shifting business climate and

an excess of competition made it impossible to turn a profit any longer and he was forced to close his restaurant. Although he had done his very best, he still felt guilty and embarrassed about the unfortunate turn of events; he felt as though he himself were the cause of the failure and he feared that others would see it that

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way as well. But Andrea continued to be supportive. She saw his business difficulties as situational, having no bearing on his character and she repeatedly told him so. Her reaction strengthened Bennett's trust in her and encouraged him to make plans to consider another business venture, one that ultimately proved to be quite successful.

Trust is the outgrowth of reliability, dependability, a measure of predictability, and a correspondence between words and deeds. These attributes provide relief from the energy-draining state of guarded vigilance, the result of wondering whether we are being told the whole truth, whether we can count on having our partner's loving support when we need it, and whether things will turn out as we had hoped they would. Will our partner be willing to com-

promise some of her or his own needs to assist us with ours? Will he or she rise to the occasion when an occasion arises?

"I had been going out with Stuart for about a year," said Jenny, "and while I was very much in love with him, there was always this cautionary voice inside. There were these peculiar ways in which he didn't come through but nothing I could put my finger on. And then one day, I had to work late and there was no one around to pick up my daughter so I called him and asked him if he would take her to dinner that night. Stuart was a dentist. He said he couldn't take my daughter because he was behind on reading his dental journals. Suddenly, something clicked inside me. I knew it was over. It was like an epiphany. His priorities were so different from mine. I understood why I never trusted him completely. I just didn't think I could count on him coming through for me."

A reasonable courtship period should also allow sufficient time to see how you weather your first big fight. Serious differences of opinion or a clash over style or attitude will occur before too long, even between two people who are very well suited to one another. How these frictions are resolved, however, will influence the viability of the relationship.

"When Patty and I had our first major argument, she walked out without giving us a chance to resolve it," said Giorgio. "When I hadn't heard from her by the second day, I had the feeling that she was gone for good. Emotionally, I went nuts. I felt nauseous and I was quivering with anxiety. I said, 'Oh my God, I've opened my heart to her and now she's going to walk off just because we had one fight.' And she was the one who always said that as long as we could talk about things the relationship would make it."

But Patty's actions spoke louder than her words, as actions inevitably do. When she did talk to Giorgio some days later, it was to tell him

that she hated emotional confrontations and she didn't think she could handle the relationship after all. Giorgio felt duped and was furious, but ultimately he was glad that he had learned this about Patty before the relationship had progressed even further.

#### COMPULSIVE TESTING

Since each of us has been hurt by various experiences and disappointments in life, none of us goes wholeheartedly and unguardedly into a relationship. The step-by-step testing that we carry out is a normal part of courtship and in fact quite often continues well into marriage, but it can be carried to the extreme. While scrutiny and analysis must play a role in evaluating a relationship during courtship, it should not play so large a role that it ends up killing the love that is there. And some tests can be so severe and dramatic that they do precisely that.

For instance, there are occasions when a woman may accidentally get pregnant as a way of testing her partner's commitment. In some cases such a pregnancy is the result of an oversight dictated by unconscious feelings or needs. But such a test can be so destructive that it can negate any positive potential and jolt the relationship into oblivion.

Eleanor for instance was absolutely certain that she couldn't possibly become pregnant on that Tuesday when she and Nick made love on the deserted beach where they had picnicked; she persuaded herself that it was a "safe" time and didn't bother to go back for her diaphragm which she had left in her travel case in the car. Nick and Eleanor had been dating each other exclusively for over two years but each time Eleanor brought up the subject of getting engaged Nick would dodge it or tell her that he wasn't quite ready to make that move just yet, but soon, soon...

After Eleanor learned that she was pregnant, she told Nick, hoping that

he would greet the news positively. Needless to say, he didn't. He was extremely upset and accused Eleanor of trying to trick him into marrying her. Of course, he was as responsible as she was for being negligent about using contraception but he refused to see it that way. As one might expect, their relationship went rapidly down-

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hill from there, with each of them feeling enraged because their trust had been betrayed. Eleanor eventually had an abortion and Nick never saw her again. Perhaps this dramatic and painful test put an end to something that was already doomed. Perhaps not. Eleanor and Nick would never know.

#### THE DIMENSIONS OF COMPATIBILITY

During the courtship phase while you are exploring the issue of trust, larger questions concerning your basic compatibility can and should be examined in some depth. Discuss

your future plans and life visions together. How do you see your lifestyle? What kind of income is necessary to support it? What kind of work do you plan to be engaged in? Where and how do you want to live? What are some of your most important likes and dislikes? What about children, avocations, travel? What are your time frames for attaining your various goals? Making your expectations and desires explicit requires thoughtful reflection about the picture you hold for your life. Even if many of your aspirations fail to materialize or are revised many times, these discussions will provide you with a clearer picture of the person who may become your life mate.

As a part of this dialogue for instance, you may discover that your partner has always wanted to live in the country and, while living the big-city life now, is arranging for an early and peaceful rural retirement. Do you see this as an option for yourself or would you die of boredom reading in a hammock and tending the garden? You may both want children but with further discussion discover that one of you feels that a child should have a full-time, stay-at-home mother while the other believes that a mother should have an active career as well.

If there are discrepancies between your two points of view, further discussions give you an opportunity to see how your partner thinks, how amenable each of you is to the kind of compromising that will be necessary as you create a life together. It gives you time to grow accustomed to certain ideas which at first may cause concern or consternation. You may in fact be surprised to find yourself comfortably embracing some of these ideas and enjoying them as much as if they had been your own to begin with.

Don't avoid bringing up "touchy" but important subjects even if you believe that they might disturb your partner somewhat and cast a temporary pall over the relationship. It is far

better to deal with these issues now rather than later. If you delay a discussion of bothersome issues for too long, you open the door to further complications; feelings on both your parts can become exaggerated and facts can become distorted with the passage of time.

Heidi and Dick realized early in their courtship that religion was going to be a source of difficulty for them. According to Dick, Heidi was an "unquestioning Catholic." He himself had long been disenchanted with religious orthodoxy and was not willing to have their children raised as Catholics. Despite his opposition, Heidi eventually persuaded him to attend some classes in Catholic religious instruction—purely as an intellectual exercise, she assured him. Secretly, she hoped it would bring him back to the fold.

After attending a number of classes together, a curious thing happened. For the first time, Heidi began to feel uncomfortable with some of the tenets of Catholicism, especially the idea of original sin. She found it impossible to be at peace applying the concept to the children she hoped she and Dick would have. Her growing disenchantment with Catholicism, however, left her still longing for a spiritual orientation that she and Dick could share. Dick then began to explore Unitarianism and as Heidi read the literature he brought home, she felt herself drawn to the ideas expressed there. Eventually they both decided to become Unitarians and they married soon afterward—in the local Unitarian church.

What was remarkable about this couple was their willingness to be open and flexible in an area where they had substantial differences which potentially could have threatened the survival of their relationship. Each of them tried to remain open to the other's point of view even though it was not originally their own and in the process a mutually satisfying resolution was arrived at quite naturally.

## THE LABORATORY OF COURTSHIP

In the precourtship phase when you are simply dating, compromise is limited to fairly trivial issues, such as which movie to attend or whether or not you will split the bill for dinner. On the other hand, questions about

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religious differences, the ideal number of children to have, where and in what style to live, and so forth may require negotiations of a major order. As you negotiate, you are not only provided with information about your partner's values and points of view but of equal importance you are given the opportunity to observe the negotiating process itself. Is there give and take? How well do you listen to each other? Do you each respect the other's right to have different opinions and needs?

Since differences between people are inevitable, negotiation is a necessary and ongoing activity in the life of every couple living together and

unless you can successfully negotiate differences between yourself and your partner, these differences will become a barrier that will eventually block the development of intimacy. Creating opportunities to address difficult issues establishes a basis upon which trust can be built.

If you envision courtship as the "laboratory" for a relationship, you can use it as a place to conduct critical "experiments." Being your most authentic self "warts and all" is the only real way to behave in a laboratory if you are each to learn what you need to know in order to make the most informed decision about your compatibility as life partners.

It is fairly easy to get disillusioned during the testing stages of courtship. Our expectations for having instant or thorough harmony with our partner may be very high—and very unrealistic. Relationships portrayed in the media are usually glamorized and present us with false images of marriage. In addition, many of our parents in the desire to protect us from the harsh realities of life hid their conflict behind closed doors, thereby adding to our distorted view of how a couple ought to function. We may come to believe that a happy and successful relationship can develop only if there is virtually no conflict or perhaps only the slightest amount. The greater the discrepancy between our initial expectations and the reality we are confronted with, the more unhappy and disappointed we are likely to be. But the problem lies less in the amount of conflict than in whether the resolution of the conflict is effective. Encountering difficulties which then get resolved is actually a positive sign of relationship durability.

## FORECAST FOR THE FUTURE

The patterns of interaction which are established during the courtship period can affect the entire future of the relationship. If our approach is to sweep issues under the rug as fast as they appear, we are likely to create a

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# *Spiritual Renaissance*

*The only devils in this world are those running around in our own hearts,  
and that is where all our battles should be fought.*  
—Mahatma Gandhi

**W**

*e know that more enlightened modes of consciousness are possible, for we have seen many examples—St. Theresa, St. Francis, Gandhi, and the many other “saints” and liberated souls who have demonstrated it in their lives. And we know this liberation is not that far away. Many of us*

*have at times experienced what it means simply to be oneself, secure in one’s own existence: those moments when, for one reason or another, the mind suddenly falls back into its natural state—a state of ease.*

Peter Russell is the author of seven books, including "The Global Brain," "The Brain Book," and "The Creative Manager." He is also the creator of the widely praised video, "The Global Brain," based on his book of the same name. The following is from "The White Hole in Time." Copyright 1992 by Peter Russell. Printed with permission of the author.



We also know this shift need not take time. The error is only an error of attitude and perception. These are of our own creation, and we can change them if we choose. Indeed, a change of mind can happen overnight—or even quicker.

What we do not know is how to allow this ease to fall upon us. Caught up in all our doing, we assume this release must involve some other form of doing. But it is an undoing that is required—an undoing of the constraints we have placed upon ourselves. Yet, so concerned have we become with how things might or might not be, we keep ourselves in a state of disease.

We are caught in a vicious circle and the essence of our challenge is how to break free from it. How do we let self-liberation, which has hitherto been the exception, become the norm?

#### A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

Helping people reconnect with this state of inner ease and grace has been the underlying goal of most religious teachings. But it is also clear that contemporary religion does not—in the majority of cases—do this very effectively. Many may well feel better for following a particular tradition; some may behave more charitably; and many may believe that they are saved through their faith. Nevertheless true self-liberation still remains a great rarity.

We have religion without spiritual awakening.

One reason for this is that most religions have lost touch with their

source. Over the years they have collected various additions and changes that have distracted from or confused their original message. Teachings that were once intended to liberate us from our attachments have turned into belief systems—and thus into

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minds of the great  
saints and sages.*

new attachments. In most instances religion has become part of our social byproduct, not a release from it.

In addition the practices themselves, without which no spiritual teaching can be alive, have become distorted or lost. This is inevitable. It is the entropy of information, the slow inevitable decay of knowledge as it picks up random noise.

I am not therefore suggesting that we need a revival of any classical religion—or, for that matter, any new religion. In the hands of the ego-mind, religion can become the most dangerous force on Earth.

What I am arguing for is a spiritual renaissance. We must find again the wisdom that originally shone through the great religions, the wisdom that illuminated the minds of the great saints and sages. And we need to put this perennial philosophy of human consciousness into the language of our times, in the expressions and forms appropriate to the latter days of the twentieth century—and to the third millennium.

#### PRACTICEABLE PATHS

There are, needless to say, numerous paths to self-transcendence. Not all of them are easy. Some may be arduous and time-consuming, some may be only for particular types of people or for minds already used to discipline. Some may be dangerous without proper supervision. And some may not work very well at all.

Yet within these various techniques and teachings there may be others that are easy to disseminate, simple to practice, and quick to take effect. At present there is no general agreement on which approaches offer the best opportunities for liberation, which are most appropriate for whom, or how they may be developed and improved. All that is certain is that no existing path has so far succeeded in transforming humanity as a whole.

The absence of such a path does not imply that it does not exist. It could lie buried in some process known only to a few. It could be staring us in the face in some practice of meditation whose value has not yet been widely appreciated. It could lie in the synergy of several existing approaches. Or it could be in some process yet to be discovered. •

# Facing The Aging Challenge

*The phone rang. My friend Nancy had just returned from a visit with her eighty-year-old mother on the East Coast. ✦ "Paula, I thought about your research and teaching work so often while visiting my mother. I found myself just collapsing, regressing into a childish role around her. She's so negative and self-centered. I'd ask her how she slept; she'd say, 'Awful.' I'd ask her how she felt and she'd say, 'Terrible.' I'd encourage her to come to Illinois and visit more often and she'd say, 'I can't do that, who'll drive me to the airport?' as though it was impossible to take a taxi." ✦ "Paula, Mother will never change. She'll stay in that big house, feel sorry for herself, and try to make the rest of us feel guilty. She's absolutely miserable—and it's just getting worse. Toward the end of the trip I found myself clenching my jaws all the time—I talked to Mother through clenched jaws!" ✦ Nancy is a woman with a reputation for taking things in stride, yet what she was confronting overwhelmed her. Nancy was witnessing the painful process of her mother becoming a burden to herself, to her family, and to society. She was afraid for her mother's future and its impact on her own life. Anna, Nancy's mother, is an example of unsuccessful aging.*



*Paula Hardin is the director of her own business, Midlife Consulting Services. She also teaches, lectures, and writes. She and her husband find life more rewarding now at ages 58 and 64 than ever before.*



We come into the world full of potential that can be encouraged or repressed. Each of us is dealt a unique set of circumstances, liabilities, and resources, and it is our responsibility to sort these out and nurture our lives. We must learn to play the hand that has been dealt to us with skill, integrity, and imagination, so that our promise is nurtured and not lost.



Each of us sculpts our destiny every day of our lives, and at the same time, we are sculpted upon. Inner and outer forces and events shape and reshape us continuously. Each new stage in life presents us with different challenges, and it takes courage and flexibility to live through these passages fully and virally.

Most of us face hazards in the course of our lives, especially after age forty or so, which may include sickness, loss, financial reversals, divorce, or loneliness. We may suffer from broken dreams, forced retirement, or reduced circumstances. Loved ones can be ungrateful and thoughtless. Tragedies, physical deterioration, deaths of friends or family—all these can visit us.

Some people fail to negotiate adversity well; they fall into chronic anger, joylessness, unnecessary physical deterioration, or isolation. Sometimes despair, low vitality, complaints, and even meanness of spirit rule their daily lives. Others, however, seem to have found something valuable, enduring, and joyous in life in spite of obvious difficulties. This group has made contact with a creative inner core and has gained strength, humor, wisdom, and much more.

What is this inner core? This is only one way of describing an essential aspect of ourselves—some call it the inner self, the higher self, the real self, the center, or the God

within. Whatever the name, it feels like “home” when we connect with it. Swiss psychiatrist and innovative thinker Carl Jung used the simple word Self with a capital “S” to indicate that this essential place in us is connected to that which is greater than our individual identity.

Those who have connected with their inner core can face life’s inevitable hazards with nourishing resources. Their sense of meaning and their belief in themselves has grown until it has become unshakable. Richly connected to others and to something greater than themselves, their lives have a compelling personal grace and naturalness. But some, like Nancy’s mother, don’t fare so well in the later years of life.

What went wrong in Anna’s life? This basically well intentioned, religiously inclined woman slipped onto a negative track—and stayed there. It is easy to do. Some inevitable disappointments and losses came to her and she fell under the load. In her pain she began to blame others for not rescuing her. She began to see people only in terms of how they could meet her needs. As Anna spent her energies



trying to make others fit into her life scheme and play the parts she wanted them to play, she alienated the ones she truly needed. Trying to control others and force them to change to fulfill our expectations will not work. Anna’s desperate attempts sabotaged her ability to shape her life and engage in the task of exercising the only true power any of us really has—the power to change ourselves.

Aging well does not mean the absence of problems. It does mean we can choose to prepare for and recognize a fork in the road that comes to us during the second half of life.

We can recognize some problems that may confront us as we grow older. We can learn to avoid unnecessary suffering and focus on attitudes and activities that bring us joy and fulfillment.

Although the inequities and wrongs in our social systems and institutions often discourage our human promise, I believe that creative social change comes from the grass-roots—from you and me. So I have focused in this study on how we can claim the power of our middle years and together become a force for good.

Kahlil Gibran observed, "The river continues on its way to the sea, broken the wheel of the mill or not." Time keeps moving us, like a river, inexorably along to our destination whether we are productively engaged with life's flow or not. We can learn to tap into the life-flow, the Tao, and

When I say "Mid-life happens when it happens," I am trying to convey that there are certain awarenesses, recognitions, and shifts in mind, body, and spirit that seek to emerge in the middle of one's life span. For some, these develop in their thirties; others seem to pass through their thirties and forties uninitiated into the call of new tasks, only to be confronted when they reach their fifties or sixties. I was fifty before I really let myself feel the pain of knowing I was mortal—on a feeling level—and that my life on this earth would come to an end. Only then could I open positively to the new responsibilities and perspectives that wanted to come forth.

To enter the spirit of the middle years means that one must have accomplished certain things and have met certain requirements—prerequisites for the next stage. The

### *The Truth Shop*

*I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the name of the shop: THE TRUTH SHOP. The saleswoman was very polite. What type of truth did I wish to purchase, partial or whole? The whole truth, of course. No deceptions for me, no defenses, no rationalizations. I wanted my truth plain and unadulterated. She waved me on to another side of the store.*

*The salesman there pointed to the price tag. "The price is very high, sir," he said. "What is it?" I asked, determined to get the whole truth, no matter what it cost. "Your security, sir," he answered.*

*I came away with a heavy heart.*

*I still need the safety of my unquestioned beliefs.*

*From Song of the Bird, Anthony de Mello*

when we do, life gains the effortless beauty of which the wise ones speak.

We can learn to form a partnership with time, harnessing the energy of the river of life. We can engage the mill wheel with creativity and skill so it grinds the flour to make the bread that nourishes us and those around us. And when we do, we will find we are supported, guided, and blessed beyond what we could imagine—we will find Life a generous giver.

*Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue ... as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a course greater than oneself.*

—Victor Frankl

Researchers do not agree on the age range that constitutes midlife. Some assign ages forty to sixty as midlife; some include ages thirty-five up to seventy.

challenging and potentially rewarding tasks of the middle years cannot come to those who are stuck at some earlier developmental stage, such as in adolescent values and goals. Our developmental process is influenced by how we have reacted to all that has gone before: our childhood, adolescence, and adult past. These experiences have shaped and molded what we are today.

### REALISTIC ASSESSMENT THE CHOICE IS OURS

Successful aging begins with a realistic assessment of our life situation and the challenges that will undoubtedly confront us. We can choose to meet our futures more fully prepared. The choice not to choose means that we choose to live irresponsibly. If we do not select our activities and attitudes with clear judgment coming from a courageous and realistic assessment of our lives and circumstances, we fall into poor unconscious choices. We usually choose what seems easiest and most comfortable in the moment, not realizing the terrible price we will pay later on.

We are always making choices, whether we realize it or not. Responsible choosing envisions the consequences that will follow each choice. It requires that we take time to reflect. In projecting the outcomes of our current ways of life we should ask ourselves,

- What will probably happen if I continue this path?
- Is that what I really want for myself?
- Am I ready to accept the consequences of what I am choosing, for both myself and others?

Through such a reasoned and responsible choice process, combined with careful listening to our intuition and insights, we can contribute to a fulfilling future—for ourselves and for those around us.

Although we have incredible power to forge our destinies, outside influences invade our lives. At such times, our power lies in our ability to choose our responses. We are both the potter and the clay. When we are the potter, we have the opportunity to shape our clay-self. When we are the clay, we can choose creative acceptance with the student's mind, "What am I to learn in all this?" Or, we can resist and feel defensive and victimized. "How could this happen to me?" Our power of choice lies in assessing our particular situation and learning to use whatever is happening for our long-term benefit.

Cultivating the creative attitude can change everything. Conscious choosing like this will take work. Sometimes the way of wisdom means we seek counsel.

Recognizing the need for change and then following through with that change is not easy. One prerequisite of positive change is the willingness to face the truth about life—and about our own life in particular. Facing the truth includes recognizing our fears of the future.

#### FACING THE TRUTH — USEFUL PAIN

Truth by its nature is empowering. Avoiding the truth sabotages us because we then make decisions based on illusion. The essential nature of truth brings light, awareness, honesty, health. These are the building blocks for successfully living the second half of life.

The truth always points us in the direction of freedom. Using our fears as a beacon calling us to the truth helps us cut through our resistances. We can then gradually uncover and let go of any false assumptions and securities we have adopted. Anything false will always let us down, preventing us from discovering our true desires.

Facing the truth about the life we have lived so far and the life we are living today is a necessary mid-life task on the way to a richly rewarding second half of life.

Seeking the truth about ourselves also includes a willingness to allow ourselves to be changed. Only by releasing the old ways and enduring the loss of former behaviors and attitudes, can we then make room for new ways.

#### CHANGING DIRECTIONS: TWO ROADS INTO THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

The famous character Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* is the quintessential example of a person who changed directions when he faced his fears and allowed the truth of his past to free him.

The enormous popularity of Dickens's tale of human transformation indicates that it touches a deep chord in all of us. Scrooge's situation, before and after his transformation, can be likened to two roads in life, each with very different destinations. Both roads contain pitfalls and possible detours, but if we journey along the self-absorbed road, we fail to climb out of the pits or to recover from the detours and instead sink into an escalating concern with our own life, which becomes more narrow and irrelevant. We focus on what we eat and wear, how we feel, how we pass the time and entertain ourselves, how offended we are by perceived slights from others, how much we blame others for our problems, how much we demand attention from others, how sorry we feel about our lot in life, and so on.

When we choose the path of self-absorption we find our world constricting until, as one physician observed from his practice, our lives are focused on what goes into our bodies and what comes out of them. If we fall into such traps (and it is so easy to do), we feel increasingly unhappy and useless.

The road that Scrooge took calls for a new birth to a new way of being. Mid-life—or any major transition in life—is a time for change, a time to give birth to our future and the quality of that future. We can deny the passing of time, we can delay our developmental tasks, but mercifully they will not leave us alone and will continue to call to us throughout life. When we travel on this road of new birth, the road leading to successful aging, we start by wondering who we really are and why we are here. Cosmic questions regarding the meaning of life force their way into our awareness. Everything comes up for inspection. Activities that once brought meaning and rewards lose their vitality.

This intense questioning period can be disorienting. We find ourselves asking, "What is it I really want and need to do?" "What gives me energy?" "What do I need to clear from my life to make room for what I really must do?" "What will it cost?" "What are my deepest values that I want to honor?" "Are there interests and skills I want to develop?"

When we engage in this process of questioning and sorting out we begin to take more responsibility for how our daily choices affect our future and the future of others. Perhaps, for example, we become more concerned about the needs of the planet and seek opportunities for thoughtful service. Our personalities expand to include others in our thoughts, energies, and love. This helps keep life in per-

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# ALTERNATIVE

# 12

**T**

*he original 12-Step program is a wonderful proven way of living. It heals. But some of us have a problem with the language. Some of us read the Steps and the words "God," "Him," "pray" and "Higher Power" don't fit into the way we believe. We see ourselves as non-religious people and these words seem like religious words to us. We are told this is a spiritual program not a religious one, not "any Higher Power is okay," but the capital H and the capital P suggest a deity and any deity is not okay with us. Some of us become so uncomfortable with this language that we reject the whole program. We throw out the baby with the bath water. When we do this, we lose a wonderful chance to change and enrich our lives.*

Martha Cleveland is a consulting psychologist who spent her professional life working as a clinician with individuals, families and groups. Arlys G. has worked an active 12-Step program for 13 years. The following is from *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*. Copyright 1992 by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G. Printed with permission from the publisher, Health Communications Inc.



As 12-Step practitioners, we believe in the 12-Step program. We

## WHAT IS THE 12-STEP WAY?

The 12 Steps are a program for living, a program of action fueled by spiritual energy. Basically the Steps suggest a system of holistic healing—a practical system of action that integrates mind, body, and spirit. When our mind, body, and spirit are integrated, we approach life with a new attitude that leads to balance and contentment.

We believe the 12-Step program

self-examination and a connection with spiritual energy. It also encourages us to go beyond theorizing about our condition and to use the Steps as a specific, pragmatic, practical guide for recovery. It's not enough to think and reflect about our problems. As Bill W. said, "*The spiritual life is not a theory, we have to live it.*" In other words, we must think about our situation and then physically, emotionally, and spiritually act on it.

Maybe the reason the program is useful to so many different kinds of

# STEPS

believe it can work for anyone. Our objective is to help non-religious people accept the healing power of the Steps. This is the same program, same principles, same values, same scope, same depth—all of it said in a little different language. We have extracted the actions and principles of the original Steps and put them into a secular context. It's as if they were written in French and we didn't speak French very well, so we carefully translated them into our native Spanish. It simply makes it clearer for us and it's easier to bring our own spiritual meaning to the 12-Step way of living. Whether a person believes in God, whether a person is Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, atheist, or agnostic, none of this matters. What does matter is that we learn to live the 12-Step way. It isn't important how we climb the mountain as long as we commit ourselves to the journey.

suggests a practical philosophy for each of us—a philosophy of living. We also believe this program needs to be kept separate from any religious implications. In order to work the Steps, what we think about God doesn't matter but what we believe about our own whole self does.

The 12 Steps are a working framework anyone can use to recover from personal turmoil and pain. There are no set concepts or dogma. Each person decides the program's meaning in a unique way. There are no leaders, no right way or wrong way, only our own way. We need not compare our process or the way we work the program with anyone else's. Each person's interpretation is valid and life-enhancing for that person. And we don't even have to understand how or why it works. We just find that as we apply the Steps, our lives begin to change—and the change is good.

The 12-Step program focuses on

people is that it pulls together basically contradictory ideas. In order to carry out the Steps, we must make a personal individual choice to connect with spiritual resources greater than we are. We make a controlled, conscious choice to transcend the circumstances of our lives. At the same time, we seek help from a source of spiritual power outside of our own personal control and beyond our everyday consciousness. This contradictory nature of the 12 Steps allows the program to serve anyone, no matter what his religious or philosophical belief system.

## HOW DO WE LIVE THE 12-STEP WAY?

Harmful compulsive behaviors or addictions are any thoughts, feelings, or actions that mask our emotional pain and that we are unwilling or unable to change. They are the marks of our unhealthy self, our self-destructiveness. For many of us this kind of

self-defeating behavior has been our way of coping with life's difficulties. The problem is that self-defeating behavior does just what it says. It defeats our self. Life gets more and more out of control, harder and harder for us to manage. This is where the 12 Steps can help.

We can't eliminate problems from our past, present or future, but the Steps can help us deal with what has been, what is now, and what is to come. When we live as they suggest, we can stop letting pain and problems control us. We can learn to say no to what hurts us and yes to ideas, feelings and actions that help us.

We work the Steps with both our conscious and unconscious minds.

We use our conscious minds when we read and study for greater understanding of our problems. We call a friend from the program when we are in trouble. We consciously examine a Step and think about how to apply it to our lives. With commitment and deliberation, we practice our new ways until they are a part of us.

We use our unconscious minds, too. We use them when we meditate, when we are absorbed in creative thought or work, when we dream. New ideas and feelings "come" to us; different solutions to our problems "appear" in our minds. We think about the Steps and our unconscious responds. Our conscious and unconscious energies flow back and forth, feeding on each other, stimulating each other, producing change and growth. Slowly, slowly they lead us to health and serenity.

When we carry out the actions suggested by the 12 Steps, we examine every part of our selves and our lives: our past, present, and hopes for the future. We assess our true charac-

*Whether a person believes in God, whether a person is Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, atheist, or agnostic, none of this matters. What does matter is that we learn to live the 12-Step way. It isn't important how we climb the mountain as long as we commit ourselves to the journey.*

ter and nature. We look at the experiences we've had and how we've reacted to them. We look at how we've played out our roles and we examine our creativity.

Working the Steps means that we examine each part of our selves and we look at the whole picture, too. In a way, each of us is like a kaleidoscope made up of many varied pieces—physical pieces, mental pieces, emotional pieces. All these pieces are in almost constant movement, resting only for a moment to form the unique picture that is us at that single instant in time. Then, it changes to a new arrangement as life is lived and the scope is turned.

#### WHAT CAN THE PROGRAM DO FOR US?

The results of living the 12-Step way are wonderful. Here are some of the things that can happen for anyone who commits to the program and works at following it.

#### WE LEARN TO LIVE RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

The Steps teach us not to spend our time living in the past or imagining the future. What was, was; what will be, will be. Our only chance for changing, growing, and living well is in the present instant. Right now is the only moment we have to act on our lives. *The only moment we have.* Living in the here and now produces self-empowerment, which means we learn to change today, not to put it off. And we learn to take whatever we can from the present moment that will strengthen us.

Perhaps we glance up to see the sun shining through new spring leaves against a pale blue sky or look up from the evening TV and notice a full moon shining in through the window. We experience a moment of wonder and happiness at the beauty. This moment, this remembered image and the feeling that goes with it can be stored in our memory bank to be retrieved and give us a feeling of peace when we are anxious or fearful.

#### WE LEARN TO RESPECT OURSELVES.

For many of us it's very hard to act on our own needs and feelings instead of blindly responding to the feelings and actions of the people around us.

It's hard to answer the phone and tell a friend, "I'm sorry, but I just can't talk now," when we are tired and there are a million things to do before dinner. It's hard to tell our neighbor we can't help him move this weekend because we're going to stay home and watch the football game.

It's difficult for many of us to

respect ourselves enough to answer our own needs first. It doesn't feel right because our self-respect is so low. And even if we want to change our ways, we don't know how. But the Steps teach us. Gradually we learn to take care of our own fatigue before the needs of a friend. Gradually we learn to turn away the request of another when we need time to ourselves.

WE LEARN TO  
DETACH FROM  
OTHERS AND LET  
THEM RUN THEIR  
OWN LIVES.

The 12 Steps teach us a lot about detachment. When we detach from someone, we separate from them emotionally. We separate with compassion and without anger. It's really just a matter of respect. We learn to respect other people enough to detach from trying to manage their lives or control their feelings. We learn to let others do what they do, think what they think, feel what they feel. We don't interfere by trying to change them, fix up whatever mess they get into or make them feel better or worse.

When our adolescent daughter gets into trouble at school, we express our interest, give her our support and let her repair the situation and take whatever consequences come. Detachment may sound cruel, but really it is respectful because it assumes she is strong enough and smart enough to handle her own affairs. We respect her enough to support her and, at the same time, stay out of her way to let her work out her own problems in her own way. We respect her enough to believe in her.

WE LEARN TO  
TAKE CARE OF  
THE CHILD  
WITHIN US.

We each carry a child within us, the remnant of the little boy or little girl we once were. Those of us who are compulsive or addictive live with

a frightened, angry little person deep in our unconscious minds. This child carries the pain that blocks our road to serenity.

The 12 Steps teach us to find, to know, and to heal our inner child. We learn that we have created our present world out of our child's past. Today is not the past and we no longer have to live by its rules. Today as adults, we can speak to our inner child. We can choose which of our child's feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are relevant and useful in our present life and which we can put away.

WE FIND A NEW  
VIEW OF REALITY.

Probably one of the most important benefits the 12-Step program gives us is a clearer view of reality. This doesn't mean we get the benefits without lots of effort on our part. As we live the 12-Step way, we break out of the web of denial, rationalizations, justifications, lies, pretenses, and posturings that has created our present world.

Our reality is different when our view of life becomes less clouded and our concept of self becomes stronger. When we see more clearly and feel more confident, our life changes and we experience a reality that feels brighter and more honest. We can say, "The reason I didn't get the supervisor job is that I'm often late and sometimes take more than my hour for lunch. It's not because Judy buttered up the boss and he fell for it. I really wanted that job and I'm going to have to change some things so I can get the next promotion." No excuses, no rationalizations, no justifications or pretenses—instead, a clear honesty and forthright purpose.

OUR  
RELATIONSHIPS  
CHANGE.

Our relationship to ourselves is the most important one. The program teaches us how to honor ourselves, how to become our own best friend. We learn to listen to ourselves, trust

ourselves and know we won't ever let ourselves down. We truly believe we must have this kind of self-love and respect before we can have honest relationships with other people.

The program also gives us a structure to help us explore our relationships with others. In the past, even though we may have felt powerless, we often acted in powerful ways that hurt people around us. We controlled people by manipulating them. We yelled or clung or coldly turned away. We loved conditionally and we alone set the conditions.

The Steps help us discover the pain we have caused and how to make amends for causing it. We learn we cannot control our relationships, we can only control ourselves within them. As a result, we can build respectful relationships. And in respectful relationships everyone gets better and better.

Finally the program teaches us how to work on the relationship between ourselves and our spiritual resources. This relationship provides great power for our healing and it's a source many of us haven't used very well. The Steps teach us to stop assigning power only to the conscious control of our thinking mind. They encourage us to be open to healing energy from all kinds of internal and external sources. Each of us can find spiritual connections that are uniquely ours. Then, we never have to feel alone in the world—our own spiritual supports are always available to us.

THE JOURNEY IS  
OUR OWN

It seems that once we start to walk the 12-Step path, we are in recovery from self-abuse. Each of us instinctively does what we need to do to heal. Our spirit strengthens our healthy self, and our self-destructive self begins to disappear. But it's slow. It takes time for our changes to work deep into the fabric of our lives.

Real growth may appear as insignificant happenings, tiny things done differently, minute alterations in

the way we respond. There is no sudden, dramatic high—we are never magically “healed.” Many of us will make recovery a life-long adventure. We must be patient, generous, and loving with ourselves. We must learn to celebrate our small successes. Small changes add up to real healing and growth as we move toward self-acceptance and self-love.

Our addictions and compulsions are negative processes. Some of us suffer from severe addictions to alcohol and drugs, gambling, over-eating, under-eating, or sex. Some of us are controlled by chronic obsession, resentment, anger, anxiety or problem relationships. Whether they threaten our lives or our spirits, any of these processes can act as an insulating cloak around us—a dark, thick shroud that has no openings. We are suffocating in a burial gown we have made for ourselves and we are blind to new ways that might help us rip open its seams.

Beginning to work a 12-Step program is a way to pick up our own personal seam ripper. With it we can cut a small hole in our shroud. We push first a finger, then a hand, then our whole arm through the opening and become connected with what can heal us. We find hope and strength. We find new ways to make connections with ourselves and with our world.

Eventually, we will have many holes in the seams of our shroud. They will be big enough to step through so we move outside and stand in the world with full spiritual vision. We can take our rightful place, a place of peace and respect. We will be truly alive. We will move from resentment to acceptance, from self-pity to gratitude, from fear to trust, from dishonesty to honesty, and from confusion to serenity. It's a long, hard trip, but it's a journey anyone can travel.

A statement often read at the opening of 12-Step meetings goes like this: “The 12-Step program is a spiritual program based on action, coming from love.” This means the Steps are

based on practical work and action. It also means the energy of love for ourselves, for others, and for the connection with countless spiritual resources leads to our ever-expanding spirit. The Steps are not static. Their meaning for us changes as we change. Then, we change in relationship to their changed meaning. It's in this interplay between Step and self that emotional and spiritual healing happens, and serenity becomes an active force in our lives.

## STEP 1

ADMIT WE ARE POWERLESS OVER OTHER PEOPLE, RANDOM EVENTS AND OUR OWN PERSISTENT NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS AND THAT WHEN WE FORGET THIS, OUR LIVES BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

*Principles: Insight, Honesty*

Step 1 is a shift in thinking. We shift from thinking that we are powerful and in charge of our lives to accepting the reality that our efforts haven't worked. Our struggles to control ourselves and others have only made our lives unmanageable. In this way we have been blind to ourselves. Step 1 gives us the insight and honesty to admit that we are not managing our lives very well, that a lot of things are beyond our control and that we live with emotional pain. It is the first step on our road to serenity.

S O M E T H I N G  
A B O U T D E N I A L  
A N D S E L F -  
D E C E P T I O N

Unexamined lives are often lives lived in denial. Denial is not conscious lying—it is simply self-deception, a series of personal blind spots. We don't have to be bad people or have bad problems in order to engage in self-deception. The only require-

ment is that we don't want to know all the truth about ourselves or our lives. We use our wonderfully complex brains to deny and obscure reality and to keep on believing that we are managing, that we are in control.

## STEP 2

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT SPIRITUAL RESOURCES CAN PROVIDE POWER FOR OUR RESTORATION AND HEALING.

*Principles: Hope, Faith*

The Second Step builds on the First. It asks us to go beyond admitting our personal powerlessness, to accept that there are powerful spiritual resources that can help us reshape our lives. All we have to do is to recognize, accept, and connect with them. In Step 1, we acknowledge that we aren't in total control, that our individual power is limited. Step 2 tells us we can use spiritual resources beyond our own ordinary personal power to restore and heal ourselves.

S P I R I T U A L  
R E S O U R C E S — T O  
E A C H H I S / H E R  
O W N

Lots of us confuse spirituality and religion. The words are often used interchangeably and we must realize that they shouldn't be, for they have different meanings. To call religion spiritual is true, but religion is only one source of spiritual power. There are many, many others.

The word *spirit* comes from a Latin word that means *breath, life, vigor*. We call something spiritual when it represents life or when it enhances life.

There are people who center their spirituality on religious practices and principles. There are others who find spiritual connections with things totally outside of any religious framework. As far as spirituality is concerned, to believe in a God or not to believe in a God doesn't matter.



What matters is to have faith in our spiritual selves—in other words, to have faith in the energy that gives us life.

The phrase “spiritual resources” can be interpreted in many ways. Does it have to mean something great and mystical? Probably not. Does it mean there are a certain number of clearly-defined sources of power that we can tap into? No. There are many sources of spiritual power, more than any of us will ever be aware of or be able to use.

*Spiritual power comes from whatever gives us peace, hope or strength and enhances our humanity.*

## 3 STEP

MAKE A DECISION TO BE OPEN TO SPIRITUAL ENERGY AS WE TAKE DELIBERATE ACTION FOR CHANGE IN OUR LIVES.

*Principles: Decision, Acceptance, Action*

Steps 1 and 2 call for reflection. They are the mental Steps of the program, calling for insight, honesty, faith, and hope. Step 1 gives us insight into our faulty thinking and shows us the reality of our powerlessness. Step 2 provides a vision of hope for great positive change in our lives. And then there is Step 3, the Step that takes our recovery into the outside world. Step 3 calls for decision. Our decision is the bridge between the mental part of the program and the action part. The decision of the Third Step connects the possibility of change with the reality of doing it.

### ACTIVATING CHANGE

Having insight about ourselves and having hope that our lives can improve does not automatically produce change. Only change makes change. Change rarely happens by accident and good intentions don't do the job either. We must decide that things will be different and then follow through with action.

In Step 3, we activate our own winds of change. We decide, we open ourselves to spiritual energy, and we commit ourselves to deliberate action. The interplay among these forces sets up a dynamic that soon begins to fuel itself and healing change becomes a true force in our lives.

## 4 STEP

SEARCH HONESTLY AND DEEPLY WITHIN OURSELVES TO KNOW THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR ACTIONS, THOUGHTS, AND EMOTIONS.

*Principles: Self-examination, Personal Honesty, Self-acceptance*

Step 4 helps us discover our true self and Step 5 teaches us to share it with other people. They work together to join us with the human race as who we are, rather than as who we pretend to be. Our life takes on a different reality as we change the way we know our own nature and the way we interact with other people. First, Step 4.

We want to change — we honestly want to change. We have tried and tried to make things different in our lives, but we haven't been able to find a way. Now, we can let the Fourth Step help us. It tells us to search honestly and deeply within ourselves in order to know the exact nature of our actions, thoughts, and emotions. We try to know and understand what we do and why we do it, what we think and why we think it, what we feel and why we feel it. Otherwise, there will be no change.

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got. If you want something different, you have to do something different.

—Paul R. Scheele

## 5 STEP

WILL TALK TO ANOTHER PERSON ABOUT OUR EXACT NATURE.

*Principles: Trust, Personal Integrity*

When we commit to the Fifth Step, we agree to “talk to another person about our exact nature.” We agree to reveal to another human being the things we have found in our Fourth-Step search. This is not something most of us do easily. We would rather pick and choose among the things we tell others—we would rather carefully control the image we show the world. Step 5 requires that we change this. Talking with another person breaks down our emotional and psychological isolation, and we stop anxiously hiding our secrets. Working a Fifth Step is a safe way to allow our internal and external worlds to meet.

Most of us are afraid that if people really know who we are, they won't like us, they'll turn away. Step 5 teaches us this doesn't have to be true. Another human being can actually know all about us and still accept us. When our guide hears about our “bad” behavior and our “awful” thoughts and doesn't judge us, our shame lessens and its power fades. We no longer have to hide, protecting our secrets and problems. A guide's non-judgmental feedback helps us break through denial and decreases the probability of self-deception and helps us examine our values and explore new options. Finally, we listen to our guides, really hear what they say and then have to confront our mental backtalk that instantly contradicts the good things others tell us about ourselves.

## 6 STEP

BE ENTIRELY READY TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ABIDING

## STRENGTH AND RELEASE OUR PERSONAL SHORTCOMINGS.

*Principle: Willingness to Change*

Time and time again, we've asked ourselves, "What's the matter with me? Don't I want to change? Don't I want to feel better?" And the answer is always the same: "Of course I do, of course I want my life to be better!" But someone standing on the outside watching our struggle would comment, "No you don't. You don't really want to change or else you would." In our heart of hearts we know this is true. We want to make our lives different but we don't know how—and we don't know what gets in our way.

### WHY WE DON'T GET READY

Basically, we resist change because it's harder to change than to stay the same, even when staying the same hurts. There are powerful threats to becoming ready to give up the old ways and search out the new.

First, there is the fear of losing predictability and security—the fear of the unknown. It's a psychological truth that most people will stay in a bad place rather than change. They say, "At least I know where I am and what's going to happen." Even badly abused children will usually want to stay in an unsafe home rather than move to a foster situation that's safe but unfamiliar. Whether we're adults or children, we're just too afraid to live with uncertainty or chart new territory.

A second threat to becoming "entirely ready" is our fear of facing what we have done, who we have been, who we are. To say, "I have hurt my daughter by controlling her, by not respecting her, by not letting her know how much I love her" is a very frightening thing. To let ourselves truly know our shortcomings and to experience the pain that goes with knowing them are always hard. But, we have to acknowledge our past behaviors and ways of thinking and

feeling if we are going to become entirely ready to release them.

Third, there is the fear that if we do change, we won't know what to do with the person we become. What if we don't like him or her? What if we have to give up things we think are important? What if we do like what we find and then can't carry through over the long haul? We're afraid of giving up what we have without being sure of what we're getting. We're afraid of being stranded between the old and the new. Before we're willing to change, we want a guarantee that things will work out the way we want them to and that if they don't, we can go back to the old way.

And finally, there is the threat of the emptiness we are afraid of feeling if we release some of our pervasive shortcomings. We don't know what we can put in their place.

## STEP 7

WORK HONESTLY, HUMBLY, AND COURAGEOUSLY TO DEVELOP OUR ASSETS AND TO RELEASE OUR PERSONAL SHORTCOMINGS.

*Principles: Personal Responsibility, Involvement in Change, Courage, Humility, Self-discipline*

We can't be a changed person unless we are willing to make changes. Step 7 actually involves us in personal change. As we use this Step, we go further than becoming willing to risk change. We *do* risk and we *do* change. We risk, we try, we fail, we start again. We act and our actions change our lives. In Steps 4 and 5, we discover our assets and our shortcomings. In Step 6, we become psychologically prepared to deal with these qualities. Step 7 finds us ready to act.

# STEPS 8 AND 9

LIST ALL PEOPLE WE HAVE HARMED, INCLUDING OURSELVES, AND BE WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL. BE WILLING TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HARMED US.

*Principles: Compassion, Personal Honesty, and Accountability*

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, WE WILL CARRY OUT UNCONDITIONAL AMENDS TO THOSE WE HAVE HURT, INCLUDING OURSELVES, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD CAUSE HARM.

*Principles: Compassion, Change, Honesty and Responsibility, Forgiveness, Self-discipline*

Steps 8 and 9 go together, like 4 and 5 or 6 and 7. With each of these pairs, first we look inward, then we act outward. First we engage with ourselves, then we engage with the people around us.

- With 4 and 5 we discover our shortcomings, then share them with another person.
- With 6 and 7 we decide to accept our strengths and release our shortcomings, then work at doing this.
- With 8 and 9 we list those we have harmed, then make amends.

One of the reasons the entire program works so well is that it asks us to *think* and *act*. Neither one is enough alone—we need to do both.

When we start truly examining our harmful behavior, our load of guilt threatens to crush us. Guilt is relentless. It's the "gift that keeps on giving"—and giving and giving. In a subtle way, it makes us feel better to feel guilty. Subconsciously we tell ourselves it's a bad thing to hurt someone else, so we should hurt too. Our own suffering pays for our sins.

Instead of playing this guilt game, we need to take full responsibility for what we have done, make our amends, and let the whole thing go.

With Step 8 we need to acknowledge that we've hurt others and are honestly willing to do something about it. We don't have to like making amends, we don't have to feel good about making them, we don't have to feel ready to do it. We just have to do it.

## STEP 10

CONTINUE TO MONITOR OURSELVES, TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SUCCESSES AND QUICKLY CORRECT OUR LAPSES AND ERRORS.

*Principles: Perseverance, Integrity*

Step 10 moves us into the maintenance Steps of the program. With it we practice the unfailing discipline of regular self-examination and we monitor the everyday workings of our lives. Consistently working the Tenth Step is an ongoing commitment to ourselves and our program. We demonstrate perseverance as we continually practice the skills of accurate self-appraisal. Then we demonstrate integrity as we follow through and correct our errors.

Step 10 is a practical approach to self-examination and it's a gentle one as well. Our self-correction needs to be loving and firm. We mustn't attack ourselves with the weapons of self-blame and reproach. We monitor and correct ourselves for our own good, kindly, with great care, the same way we would correct a child we love.

ERRORS AND  
LAPSES ARE  
NORMAL

There will be many, many times we make mistakes and fall back into old ways of thinking, feeling and

behaving. This is to be expected. Spotting an error and stopping that particular thought, emotion or action seldom means we're through with it. Old ways die hard. We all have troublesome behaviors, thoughts or feelings that we've stopped dozens of times. Stopping is the easy part. Staying stopped is what's hard. Staying stopped means we have to monitor ourselves every single day. And we have to persevere.

## 11 STEP

INCREASINGLY ENGAGE SPIRITUAL ENERGY AND AWARENESS TO CONTINUE TO GROW IN ABIDING STRENGTH AND WISDOM AND IN THE ENJOYMENT OF LIFE.

*Principles: Openness, Connection to Life and Spiritual Resources*

Step 11 carries the spiritual concepts of Steps 2 and 3 into our daily lives. Our spirit is our life force and our spirituality is expressed in the way we relate to the world through our thoughts, attitudes and actions. Everyone is spiritual. The question to ask ourselves is whether we are moving with positive spirituality or whether our spiritual energy is taking us in a negative direction. Positive spirituality nourishes life, negative spirituality diminishes us.

The text in Step 2 tells us that positive spirituality comes from whatever gives us hope, strength, and peace and enhances our humanity. We learn to recognize, accept, and engage the resources that help our spirit grow. Step 11 encourages us to engage spiritual energy and awareness to...

1. *Grow in abiding strength*
2. *Grow in inner wisdom*
3. *Grow in the enjoyment of life.*

SPIRITUAL  
AWARENESS IS  
SELF-AWARENESS

Spiritual awareness is an intensely

individual thing. What is spiritually helpful to one person may be meaningless to another. Having full awareness of what gives us hope, strength, or peace does not mean we can analyze spiritual energy. We can't know what gives hope, strength, or peace to others, either. Our only responsibility is to recognize and use what helps us.

## 12 STEP

PRACTICE THE PRINCIPLES OF THESE STEPS IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS AND CARRY THE 12-STEP MESSAGE TO OTHERS.

*Principles: Commitment, Self-discipline, Service to Others*

Step 12 acts as an arrow, sending us right back into the entire program. As we "practice the principles of these Steps in all our affairs," we refer back again and again to the principles we have studied.

ONE DAY AT A  
TIME

Each morning we wake up to a new day—a day that will be full of choices. There will be big choices that we know will have an impact on our lives. There will be small choices that reinforce us, sustain us, and ultimately create us. We are learning to make the choices that express the 12-Step principles. In themselves, the Steps and their principles are only printed words lying lifeless on a piece of paper. The trick is to decide what they mean to each of us and how to breathe life into them in our real world.

To walk the talk

We carry the 12-Step message to others by the way we live our lives. We don't have to talk about it or to proselytize. We can if we want to, but it isn't necessary. We don't have to be perfect in order to carry the message either. We just have to live with integrity. •

# GENUINE *Compassion*

*His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso of Tibet, is one of today's most respected leaders. In 1959, nine years after China invaded Tibet, he went into exile to Dharamsala, India. He now travels throughout the world, cutting across religious, national, and political barriers, and speaks of peace and humanitarian values. His life is his message.*

**A**s human beings, social animals, it is quite natural for us to love. We even love animals and insects, such as the bees who produce and collect honey. I really admire bees' sense of common responsibility. When you watch a beehive, you see that those small insects come from far away, take a few seconds' rest, go inside, and then hurriedly fly away. They are faithful to their responsibility. Although sometimes individual bees fight, basically there is a strong sense of unity and cooperation. We human beings are supposed to be much more advanced, but sometimes we lag behind even small insects.

As social animals, we human beings cannot survive alone. If we were by nature solitary, there would be no towns or cities. Because of our nature, we have to live in a cooperative setting. People who have no sense of responsibility for the society or the common good are acting against human nature. For human survival, we need genuine cooperation, based on the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. Friends make us feel secure. Without friends, we feel a great loneliness. Sometimes, there is no proper person with whom we can communicate and share affection, so we may prefer an animal such as a dog or a cat. This shows that even those people who lose their trusted friends need someone to communicate and share affection with. I myself like my wristwatch, even though it never shows me any affection! In order to get mental satisfaction as a human being, it is best to love another human being, and, if that is not possible, then some animal. If you show sincere affection, you will receive a response and you will feel satisfaction. We all need friends.

There are different approaches to friendship. At times we may think that we need money and power to have friends but that is not correct. When our fortune is intact, those kinds of friends may appear loyal but when our fortune disappears, they will leave us. They are not true friends; they are friends of money or power. Alcohol is another unreliable friend. If you drink too much, you may collapse, and even your dreams will be unpleasant.

But, there are other kinds of friends who no matter what the situation remain true. When our fortunes rise, even without friends, we can manage. But when they go down, we need true friends. In order to make genuine friends, we ourselves must create an environment that is pleasant. If we just have a lot of anger, not many people will be drawn close to us. Compassion or altruism draws friends. It is very simple.

All of the world's religions emphasize the importance of compassion, love, and forgiveness. Each may have a different interpretation, but broadly speaking everyone bases their understanding on the basis of brotherhood, sisterhood, and compassion. Those who believe in God usually see their love for their fellow human beings as an expression of their love for God. But, if someone says, "I love God," and does not show sincere love towards his fellow human beings, I think that is not following God's teaching. Many religions emphasize forgiveness. Love and compassion are the basis of true forgiveness. Without them, it is difficult to develop forgiveness.

Love and compassion are basic human qualities. From a Buddhist point of view, love is an attitude of wanting to help other sentient beings enjoy happiness, and compassion is the wish for other sentient beings to be free from suffering. Compassion is not a selfish attitude such as, "These are my friends and therefore I want them to be free of suffering." Genuine compassion can be extended even towards one's enemies because the very basis for generating compassion is seeing suffering in other living creatures, and that includes your enemies. When you see that your enemies are suffering, you are able to develop genuine compassion even towards those who have injured you.

Usual compassion and love give rise to a very close feeling, but it is essentially attachment. With usual love, as long as the other person appears to you as beautiful or good, love remains, but as soon as he or she appears to you as less beautiful or good, your love completely changes. Even though someone appears to you as a dear friend and you love him very much, the next morning the situation may completely change. Even though he is the same person, he feels more like an enemy. Instead of feeling compassion and love, you now feel hostility. With genuine love and compassion, another person's appearance or

behavior has no effect on your attitude.

Real compassion comes from seeing the other's suffering. You feel a sense of responsibility and you want to do something for him or her. There are three types of compassion. The first is a spontaneous wish for other sentient beings to be free of suffering. You find their suffering unbearable and you wish to relieve them of it. The second is not just a wish for their well-being, but a real sense of responsibility, a commitment to relieve their suffering and remove them from their undesirable circumstances. This type of compassion is reinforced by the realization that all sentient beings are impermanent, but because they grasp at the permanence of their identity, they experience confusion and suffering. A genuine sense of compassion generates a spontaneous sense of responsibility to work for the benefit of others, encouraging us to take this responsibility upon ourselves. The third type of compassion is reinforced by the wisdom that although all sentient beings have interdependent natures and no inherent existence, they still grasp at the existence of inherent nature. Compassion accompanied by such an insight is the highest level of compassion.

In order to cultivate and develop genuine compassion within yourself, you need to identify the nature of suffering and the state of suffering that sentient beings are in. Because you want sentient beings to be free from their suffering, first of all you have to identify what suffering is. When Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, he spoke of three types of suffering: suffering that is obvious and acute, like physical pain; the suffering of change, such as pleasurable experiences that have the potential to turn into suffering; and pervasive suffering, which is the basic fact of conditioned existence. To cultivate compassion, first of all you have to reflect on suffering and identify suffering as suf-

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*Unfinished business from the past doesn't simply disappear. If it is not dealt with, it remains buried inside. Then, the wounded inner child resurfaces later in unexpected and troubling ways.*



STEPHANIE COVINGTON  
AND LIANA BECKETT

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# The Healing

## The WOUNDED ADULT

Paula was the only child of wealthy parents—both actively alcoholic during her childhood. They adored her. When they were sober they showered the young child with caring attention, affection, and treats. At such times she felt really special. At other times, during and after their periodic drinking binges, she felt completely ignored and neglected. Her very first memory of her parents, retrieved under hypnosis, was of such an incident when she was barely two and still in a crib. Her parents had taken her to the beach. The day had been filled with joy—the three of them splashing in the surf and collecting colorful pebbles and other treasures. That night her father tucked her in with a big hug while her mother softly hummed a lullaby, stroking her hair until Paula drifted contentedly into slumber. But when she awoke the next morning, happy and eager to get up, no one came when she called. With increasing frustration and rage she yelled and cried for what seemed like hours, rattling the bars of her crib to get her parents' attention. Eventually Paula had drifted off into a fitful sleep—uncomfortable in her soiled diapers, hungry, exhausted, and, above all, confused.

Because of her parents' dramatically inconsistent behavior, Paula grew up very needy and unable ever to trust her reality. As a child, she had interpreted her parents' behavior as an unspoken message that she was not worthy of their care and love. The inconsistent care she had received had also made her despise being dependent on others and contemptuous of the part of herself that still had infantile needs. In reaction, she made it a point to seem very independent, needing nothing from anyone—a real superwoman. She met some of her own unfulfilled, disowned needs unconsciously by projecting them onto her patients and boyfriend, convincingly telling herself, "I can't let them down; they really need me."



The fears and scars we carry from our past tend to hide our true, most vital core or self.

Denying her dependence created problems for Paula especially in her primary relationship. Her partner was twenty years her senior. In many ways he was a substitute father from whom she demanded perfect empathy, constant reassurance, and immediate availability. With such unrealistic expectations, the inevitable disappointments that followed such demands triggered her painful early childhood experience. At such times Paula would become plaintive and manipulative. With an injured air designed to produce guilt in him she would complain, "I ask so little and you can't even do that much for me!"

A central issue for Paula lay in her inability to accept and nurture herself. At an unconscious level she did everything in her power to negate her inner needs—to the point of nearly dying of starvation because she refused to feed herself. Sadly, just as she had been emotionally abused in her childhood, so she was abusive to herself as an adult. She lived a life filled with paradoxes: externally an independent contemporary woman, internally an emotionally deprived little girl afraid to grow up. Trained to be a competent healer, she was incompetent to manage her own wholeness, denying her own profound wounds until it was nearly too late.

After spending more than a month in a hospital to treat her anorexia and chemical dependency, Paula began the slow, painful process of re-evaluating her early experiences in the family and of learning to care for herself—the prospects that held the most immediate promise of bridging the early separation of her inner child and her adult self.



Often when we think of childhood wounds, we think only of physical or sexual abuse where the traumas are more evident. But the implications of emotional wounding may be equally important for a person's wholeness. Emotional wounding can take place not only when a child's *outer* needs are not met but also when the *inner* needs are ignored or neglected. This may be more likely to happen out of

parental ignorance—that is, lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness—than out of neglect. Also, the parents themselves may have been abused or wounded as children, so unless a crisis or a major intervention takes place to break the pattern, they perpetuate the only model they know into the next generation, in an endless cycle of dysfunctional family dynamics. This pattern of multi-generational transmission fit Paula's family. Her mother, for example, had wealthy parents who traveled all over the world when she was a child, frequently leaving her with household staff. Much of the time Paula was also left with a nanny, a caring woman who was inconsistent in meeting the young child's physical and

emotional needs because of her many other household responsibilities. Therefore, although Paula's mother was not abused in the common sense of the word, the repeated separations from her parents without an adequate substitute were wounding experiences. Without the benefit of other models, she was bound to repeat the familiar pattern in raising Paula. Her drinking then aggravated a family pattern that was fundamentally dysfunctional.

Even with poor starts, we are capable of meeting many of our own needs. Honoring, nurturing, and healing—in effect, reparenting—our wounded inner child can help us overcome our feelings of inadequacy and dependence, learning again to feel, play, be joyful, and creative. Paula's own emotional depletion contributed to both her personal and



professional burnout—you can't share a drink of water when your own cup is empty.

#### HUMAN SURVIVAL NEEDS

When we talk of "basic survival needs" we are usually speaking of food, water, sleep, and shelter—the bare essentials the body needs in the life-or-death crisis of someone lost in the wilderness. While it is common for the basic survival needs of children growing up in high-stress families not to be met, in order for infants to thrive and even merely to survive, their psychological and emotional needs must also receive attention.

More than forty years ago, researchers coined the phrase *hospitalism* to describe their observations of institutionalized infants. Even though the infants' physical needs were adequately met, an alarming number of them simply wasted away and died.

What's more, as anthropologist Ashley Montagu observed, that the failure of infants to thrive seemed to occur in the home as well.

It was found to occur quite often among babies in the "best" homes, hospitals, and institutions, among those babies apparently receiving the best and most careful physical attention. It became apparent that babies in the poorest homes, with a good mother, despite the lack of hygienic physical conditions, often overcame the physical handicaps and flourished. What was wanting in the sterilized environment of the babies of the first [group] and was generously supplied to babies of the second [group] was mother love.

Similarly, a study with newborn rhesus monkeys found that contact comfort was more important to the infants than nursing comfort. Given a choice of two mother surrogates—one made of bare wire, the other covered with soft fabric—the infants spent overwhelmingly more time with the cloth-covered "mother," even when she was not attached to a nursing device, during five months of observation. The research team concluded that "the primary function of nursing as an affectional variable is that of insuring frequent and intimate body contact of the infant with the mother... We may be sure there is nothing to be gained by giving lip service to love." Caring touch, then, is also a basic human need—basic for wholesome growth.

#### UNMET NEEDS

The unmet needs of adults who grew up in dysfunction-

al homes are often not as obvious and clear-cut as the cases just described. Their survival into adulthood attests to the fact that their basic physical needs must have been met much of the time. As in the case of Paula, their emotional and psychological needs may also have been met, at least fitfully and minimally—either by the primary caretaker, usually the mother or through the nurturance of others in the extended family such as grandparents, older siblings, uncles and aunts, or even nannies.

Children whose needs are not met spontaneously by others often find unhealthy, seemingly effective ways to meet their own. According to "stroke economy" theory, children who don't receive enough positive strokes begin to settle for negative strokes rather than get no strokes at all. (Originally used to refer to physical touching, the definition of stroking has been extended to include any act that implies the recognition of another's presence.) Nothing is worse than being completely ignored. This kind of sensory and emotional deprivation, or recognition hunger, threatens and places into question a person's very existence. There is truth in the saying, "The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference." So children who receive no attention and affection from their parents often begin to "act out," unconsciously seeking the attention

they so desperately need to survive—even if it means being yelled at or receiving a spanking or some more severe form of punishment. For children in some families, punishment unfortunately escalates into violence. Amazingly, children who are abused by a parent continue to remain bonded to that parent. Attendants in children's wards report that children hospitalized as a result of severe physical parental abuse still cry at night for that parent.

Unless new learning intervenes, children who are used to negative strokes continue to act out similar scenarios in their adulthood. It is the only way they know of getting attention. Partly because of feelings of low self-worth, at some level they have convinced themselves that punishment is what they deserve. Not only do people raised with negative strokes often enter into abusive primary relationships, they often stay in them even when their sanity and life are at risk. But relationship dysfunction is only one of the ways in which woundedness manifests in adulthood. Chemical dependency, depressions, anxiety, phobias, self-mutilating behavior (such as cutting or burning oneself), eating disorders, and prostitution are some of the others.

*We are just beginning to expand our inner limits and that is the current challenge of the human spirit. It alone holds the promise that we may at last become cycle breakers, interrupting generations of family and social myths, dysfunctions, and conflict.*

WHAT HAPPENED TO  
YOUR UNMET NEEDS?

Whenever as children we are confronted with very painful or frightening experiences, we tend to internalize or "stuff" them. This is especially true of an infant's first two years of life, because during that time the child has no language or conceptual labels to attach to the feelings it experiences. Unresolved feelings of frustration, fear, and rage that surround a young child's unmet needs for nurturance and caring are often internalized. They may remain unconscious into adulthood when the state of woundedness finds expression in unexpected ways in relationships. By age two, Paula had already stuffed her frustration and rage, learning that her parents couldn't be counted on. Later, she interpreted her early experience as cause and effect; if her parents weren't dependable, it must mean that she was not lovable. Therefore, she now internalized the profoundly wounding message, *you're not worthy of our love*. Actually, her parents loved her a great deal. Still, this is how Paula interpreted the message, leading her to the next conclusion, *therefore, you're not worthy of anyone's love—including your own*. She had constructed a syllogism that seemed perfectly logical, *people who can't even be loved by their own parents are not lovable. My parents don't love me. Therefore, I'm not lovable*.

In reality, Paula's reasoning was flawed because it was based on two false premises. First, parents—especially those in high-stress families—are perhaps the least objective benchmark by which to measure our intrinsic worth. Second, Paula's parents did love her—albeit in a very damaging way. So, through the years she carried the burden of the faulty conclusion that had followed naturally from her false premises, enacting it irrationally as an adult with nearly catastrophic outcomes. Paula's lack of bonding in early childhood also made it difficult for her to bond in her adult relationships. The mistrust she learned as a result of her parents' unpredictability carried over into her primary relationship. Not only was she often unaware of what emotions she felt, but she was also unable to express her feelings openly—even when she could identify them. Revealing one's inner states calls for a trusting climate that in turn requires the ability to trust.

Unfinished business from the past doesn't simply disappear. If it is not dealt with, it

A

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remains buried inside. Then, the wounded inner child resurfaces later in unexpected and troubling ways. When you don't recognize the source of your difficulties, you condemn yourself to repeat the same self-defeating patterns in your relationships, not knowing why you do what you do. You become stuck. A clue that you are repeating the old patterns that eventually let you down is when you begin to search anew, after the latest foundering relationship, for something or someone to fulfill your unmet needs. A part of you believes that if only the right person comes along, he or she will fill the gaping void within you—make up for all the love you've missed and by reflection make you whole by sharing with you his or her charm, wit, and wisdom. Paula did just that. The unacknowledged, unintegrated childlike part of herself that didn't want to grow up found a substitute for the father hunger she experienced; she found a man old enough to be her father, who encouraged her dependence but who—like her real father—would also let her down at unpredictable times. She unwittingly reproduced a pattern that had started before age two.

THE WOUNDED CHILD  
IN RELATIONSHIP

When the inner child is not integrated into your total being, it expresses itself in any number of indirect ways destructive to relationships. Not everyone, for example, becomes chemically dependent and forms a reaction against other dependencies (that is, becomes counterdependent) as Paula did. In fact, the opposite is often true. When women first start dealing with their relationship addictions, they often ask, "Why is it that I can be so competent in my work and centered and active in my personal life when I'm on my own, and then, the minute I meet that 'special' other, I become this wimpy, dependent female who can't move without taking her cues from him?"

When people "fall in love," they experience a temporary desire to merge with the object of their love—to "lose themselves" in the other. This is typical. At an unconscious level, falling in love is a universal wish to replicate the primary relationship of the newborn infant with the object of its love, its mother (or primary caregiver).

The problem occurs when the com-

elling, ecstatic quality of romantic love intensifies, when compelling becomes compulsive. Whereas people who are not relationship addicts move out of the in-love phase rather quickly, recognizing the experience for the fleeting fantasy that it is, relationship addicts strive for constant and endless merger, wanting to lose themselves in the other.

#### RELATIONSHIP ADDICTS AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Loss of self is a boundary issue. Personal or ego boundaries are the point at which one person stops and the other begins—boundaries have different degrees of permeability. Healthy people and families have boundaries that are permeable enough to allow for empathy and intimacy *without loss of self*. By contrast, one characteristic of dysfunctional families is the lack of boundary differentiation among its members, which can show up as one of two apparently opposite polarities that are actually two sides of the same coin: enmeshment (intrusiveness, failure to recognize individuality, narcissism, and so on) or emotional cutoff (lack of meaningful communication, emotional withdrawal, disengagement, and so on). For a child in such a home, the struggle is to develop a healthy sense of self—with boundaries neither too rigid nor too permeable—while maintaining a family connection.

When a relationship addict enters a new relationship, her boundaries may be weakened on two scores. First, she may have grown up in a dysfunctional family that prevented the development of strong ego boundaries. Second, the experience of falling in love is likely to have made whatever boundaries she had even more permeable. In the addictive process, she may lose her boundaries completely. She may lose her self.

The more the potential partner triggers the primary childhood relationship—through physical appearance, words, actions, or other nonverbal cues—the more likely a relationship addict is to get hooked. The other person at first maybe unaware of what is happening. As the relationship addict reenacts the early childhood drama, bending over backward to please and to perform, her partner starts to feel stifled and begins to back off.

Humans function differently at different levels of anxiety, and relationship addiction adds enormous anxiety to a person's life. When people are in addiction-free relationships (or free from addictive relationships), they can channel their energy into constructive, self-enhancing activities that help keep anxiety at a reasonably low level. By contrast, when people's dependencies have been triggered, both stress and anxiety increase. Their ability to control their emotions decreases—they become controlled by their emotions and lose a sense of their true selves.

As Paula's story illustrates, when a relationship addict loses her sense of balance because of escalating stress and anxiety, her self-esteem is also affected. While showing an

ever greater need for attention and reassurance, a part of Paula was humiliated at her own dependence. When her partner increased the distance between them, this became an irresistible challenge for her. Like any one dependent on an addictive substance, the thought that she might lose what seemed like an irreplaceable source made Paula even more anxious. The only way she knew how to preserve her supply was to become more controlling and demanding.

Such tactics are bound to make things worse. First, the partner is likely to withdraw, in an attempt to avoid being swallowed up, feeling his or her personal space to be threatened by the addicted partner's intrusiveness. Second, the relationship addict's focus on "we" and her insistence on greater closeness is likely to intensify the common "I" versus "we" struggle between autonomy and togetherness that applies to any relationship. If the relationship addict's partner grew up in a dysfunctional home, the demand for closeness may also trigger the emotional cutoff that is the other pole of lack of boundary differentiation—polarizing the two even further.

#### RELATIONSHIP ADDICTS AND SELF-ESTEEM

The sense of low self-worth triggered by the new relationship challenge typically causes the relationship addict to take one of two extreme positions, either staying fixed at one of these two poles or alternating between them. At one extreme, in reaction to her inner feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem, she may act the part of the self-righteous, innocent victim. In this case she is likely to place full blame on her partner, refusing to accept any responsibility for his or her distancing behavior. At the other extreme, convinced that her partner would treat her differently if only she were lovable enough, she may take complete responsibility for her partner's distancing. A central issue in her life has come full circle; she has recreated her childhood struggle to be loved by her parents, interpreting her inability to get what she needs as a lack in herself. She feels she must *earn* love.

Because of her belief that becoming more lovable is the answer and because of her irrational fears of rejection and abandonment, the relationship addict may try to hide her own perceived inadequacies from her partner. As a result she may become defensive and afraid to acknowledge mistakes and feelings of vulnerability, disowning a part of herself.

This behavior becomes particularly destructive on several scores. First, denying aspects of herself separates the relationship addict even further from her inner core, her sense of self. Second, because she is unwilling to trust her partner with her true feelings, she creates a block to intimacy, which is the key to a healthy relationship. Third, self-love and the understanding that love is not earned are necessary conditions for self-healing. Only when she embraces and loves her wounded inner child can she free the child—and

herself—from the age-old shame and responsibility it has been carrying for what may have been the parents' inability to love or to love well.

#### RELATIONSHIP ADDICTS AND DISOWNED FEELINGS

Sometimes relationship addiction triggers deeply buried early infancy rages like the one that Paula experienced as a two-year-old as she screamed and shook her crib bars to get the attention to which she felt entitled. The relationship addict begins to see the partner as an extension of herself—there only to meet her needs. When the partner refuses to comply, she may become outraged. In her state of mind, it is as if her right arm had suddenly refused to function. Needing an outlet, she will turn this destructive rage either against her partner or herself. Such narcissistic rages are typical and normal in infants and young children but inappropriate for adults.

The young child looks to its caregivers to soothe it and to provide an accurate mirror of its feelings. The mother who responds with empathy when her child falls and hurts itself, for example, validates the child's emotional state. This allows the child to experience fully and let go of its feelings. But a child who grows up in a troubled family that does not readily supply mirroring buries its unmet needs and unexpressed emotions. This is one more way in which a child may experience a psychic wound that can resurface quite destructively in adulthood.

Another way in which feelings resurface later, especially those that were either too threatening or too frightening to be expressed by the child, is through projective identification, a process by which such disowned feelings are unknowingly assigned to the partner. In a kind of unconscious collusion, the partner may then act out or "carry" that feeling for both of them, allowing the person who repressed it to continue disowning it and to separate even further from it. Such was the case in Paula's primary relationship. Trying to fend off her growing inner dependence, she became ever more independent externally. In counterpoint, her partner came to be more and more dependent on his first family, something for which Paula—blind to her own dependencies—showed both disapproval and contempt. He acted out the dependency for both—yet Paula was the more dependent of the two.

Unless something intervenes to change the destructive dynamics of such relationships and the downward spiral of addiction, the relationship continues to deteriorate. Unlike healthier relationships; however, the failure does not necessarily result in an ending—a separation or divorce. Because the partners are usually enmeshed in mutual dependencies, carried primarily by the identified relationship addict, the relationship failure may manifest as physical or emotional illness or in the worst case even suicide.

#### RELATIONSHIP ADDICTION AND WOMEN

It is common knowledge that women are more likely than men to become relationship addicts. This is no great surprise, given both the importance of relationship to women and the effect of socialization on them. Women traditionally have attached much greater significance and higher priority to relationship than men, often willing to make all kinds of sacrifices when the nurturance of an important emotional investment is threatened. Although women's relationship values are an important and crucial social resource, our society grants much lower status to relationship, emotional expression, nurturing, and vulnerability than it does to rugged individualism, self-interest, roughness, measurable output, and strength expressed as power over others.

As a result, women's strengths have been seen as weaknesses. Men have the technological, physical, and financial power in our society. Because of this power imbalance in male-female relationships and in society at large, the dynamics are those of any typical dominant-subordinate arrangement—an analog for the dynamics of addictive relationships. By definition, dominants don't consider subordinates equals. They rely on power, not negotiation, to get what they want. Subordinates, on the other hand, depend for survival on pleasing dominants; therefore, subordinates have to learn as much as possible about dominants in order to please them. Women's dependence and subordination, in other words, are reinforced as normal. Although this is not to imply that a simple cause-and-effect connection exists between our social climate and women's proneness to relationship addiction, its importance as a contributing factor cannot be dismissed.

#### FINDING YOUR TRUE SELF THROUGH YOUR INNER CHILD

Although we share our common humanity, each of us is unique. Like fingerprints, each person's essence—the core self—has special qualities that have never been and will never be duplicated. Each person therefore makes a special, unique contribution to the world and to the lives that she or he touches. We are also resilient; despite setbacks and struggles, we are geared for survival. We carry within the potential and need for healthy and creative growth. According to Carl Jung, we are always on a search for wholeness and completion, yearning for rebirth.

In the addictive process, the fears and scars we carry from our past tend to hide our true, most vital core or self. We see only its reflection, a false self we experience as boring, incomplete, sometimes depressed. We fix on something outside ourselves to change all this. But the initial euphoric phase of a love affair turns into increasing dependence in a process that is filled with peaks and valleys of

alternating pleasure and pain. Despite all this, how we experience ourselves has not changed because we have placed all our hopes on changing the environment instead of ourselves. A popular quip is that true insanity consists of doing the same thing over and over again, yet expecting things to turn out differently. The pain, dependence, and unpredictability subside only when we own our past and empower our true self to leave the forest of fantasy and to create a better present.

Paradoxically, it is only when we let go of external expectations and go within to reclaim our neglected inner child that we can deal more effectively with the outer world. *A fundamental touchstone in recovery from childhood scars and from extreme dependencies is surrender to the idea that we cannot control others.* We attempt to control out of old fears of the unknown. And yet it's a delusion to think we can control others. At best, most of the time we have control over ourselves. This letting go is a universal truth and one that is a cornerstone of Twelve-Step groups.

One of the rewards of reclaiming the inner child is that in doing so we get in touch with the childlike part of ourselves—the part that is most natural, creative, playful, and innocent.

SOCIETY'S  
DEFINITION OF  
ADULTHOOD

In order to survive, children from dysfunctional families take on overly rigid roles—so rigid in fact that they are practically like scripts, filled with parental injunctions and obligations the child internalized early on. Life at home was serious business; adults from such families have often lost the capacity for enjoyment, for play. As shown by Paula's superwoman approach to life, such people seldom allow room for balance—for play, for fun, for time spent aimlessly. Allowing expression to the inner child breathes life into the intense seriousness with which they tackle daily living and relationships.

Getting to know and appreciate your inner child allows you to reclaim those parts of yourself that society has denigrated and disavowed. Our society values being an adult and "acting like an adult." And acting

*In many ways,*

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like an adult means being serious, no-nonsense, productive. Based on a mentality of "time is money," idleness is suspect and success is measured by tangible output that yields a monetary value in the marketplace. Thus, middle-class values create more injunctions and obligations.

In many ways, this model of adulthood supports and echoes the unhealthy climate of a dysfunctional home. As in the dysfunctional family, it is based on a deprivation model, feeding into fears of not getting enough, not doing enough, not being enough. As a result it glorifies hard work—which explains why workaholicism, an addiction, has received so little bad press. Being overtly childlike would be totally inappropriate at work. As in the dysfunctional home, there is an attempt to control others by withholding approval; someone who does not conform to the accepted idea of adulthood is looked on as suspect.

Because of the social stigma attached to "nonproductive" play, play surfaces in various disguises that are somewhat more acceptable. But disguised play works primarily for men, who can replicate into adulthood their competitive and adversarial win/lose childhood games through participation and spectatorship in team sports or by becoming vicariously involved in politicians' sabre rattling, and they can attempt to fulfill their recognition and power needs by driving flashy, powerful wheels. Boys' play is oriented toward individual, competitive activity and performance.

Little girls' play is very different. They are socialized to play with dolls, to play dress up, and to play house. Girls' play, in other words, is training for their traditional female adult roles. Girls' play is often based on cooperation. Girls also tend to play in smaller, more intimate groups than boys do, often just with a best friend, and in private places. If as a result of these differences in their way of being in the world, boys' play leads to men's *play*, while girls' *play* leads to women's *work*.

REPARING THE  
INNER CHILD

Finding and reparing the inner child is predicated on full acceptance of yourself. Here again, our culture has made growth into wholeness particularly difficult for

women. The fairly typical struggle of a therapy client who was just beginning to reframe her childhood experience provides a poignant illustration. At first, this middle-aged woman was very impatient and derogatory when describing herself as a little girl going off on her first day of school. She referred to herself as an "obnoxious little kid," denying the child's right to express its need for nurturance and support. It was as if her self-condemning comments had come directly from her critical and punishing father. By accepting his view, she had not only rejected the child in herself, she had also split off the feelings of this child. When one day she was finally able actually to re-experience the feelings of loneliness, fear, and uncertainty the little girl had felt, she burst into tears of sorrow at having for so long supplied nurturance to others in her life, all the while denying the same tender compassion for herself. She noted, "I care for others, sometimes like a shepherd. I watch and notice and pay attention to their distress. It isn't that I'm just totally accepting because sometimes I point out if I think they're off the mark or something, but I put myself in their place and I understand. With myself, though, I used to be like a lion tamer with a whip."

Society's negative messages concerning women's emotionality and their expression of "selfish" needs feed into the tendency of women to take care of others at the expense of themselves. As a result, as the client's comment expresses so well, women have ministered to others' needs much more than they have to their own, at times becoming so sensitive to the distress of others that they have ceased to act in their own best interests.

As women, we have refined one aspect of empathy to an art—the capacity to enter someone else's subjective world and share the other's experience from that place with openness and nonjudgment. In re-parenting ourselves, now we need to develop the other crucial aspect of empathy—the capacity not to lose ourselves when entering someone else's boundaries. This is the key to healthy relationships. In addition, we also need to develop self-empathy, the ability to be compassionate and empathic with ourselves. We need to transfer our ability to empathize to our own inner child. In other words, we need to look at and feel for our own inner child as we would for another human being. Maybe then we will be able to nurture ourselves. This, however, is a difficult task in a social climate that devalues women.

#### DEVELOPING THE SELF

A major reason why women's experience and roles are not fully appreciated is that traditionally child development theorists have written about "children"—encompassing both genders as if their experiences were completely alike. Furthermore, most traditional child development theories have been elaborated upon and filtered through a male experience. "Woman" is usually footnoted as having been included under the generic "man."

Current developmental assumptions are based on a sepa-

ration-individuation model, which implies that people go through a number of stages of separation in order to form a distinct sense of self or personhood. Developmental theory stresses the importance of separation from the mother in early stages of childhood development, from the family in adolescence, and from teachers and mentors in adulthood in order for the individual to form a distinct, separate identity.

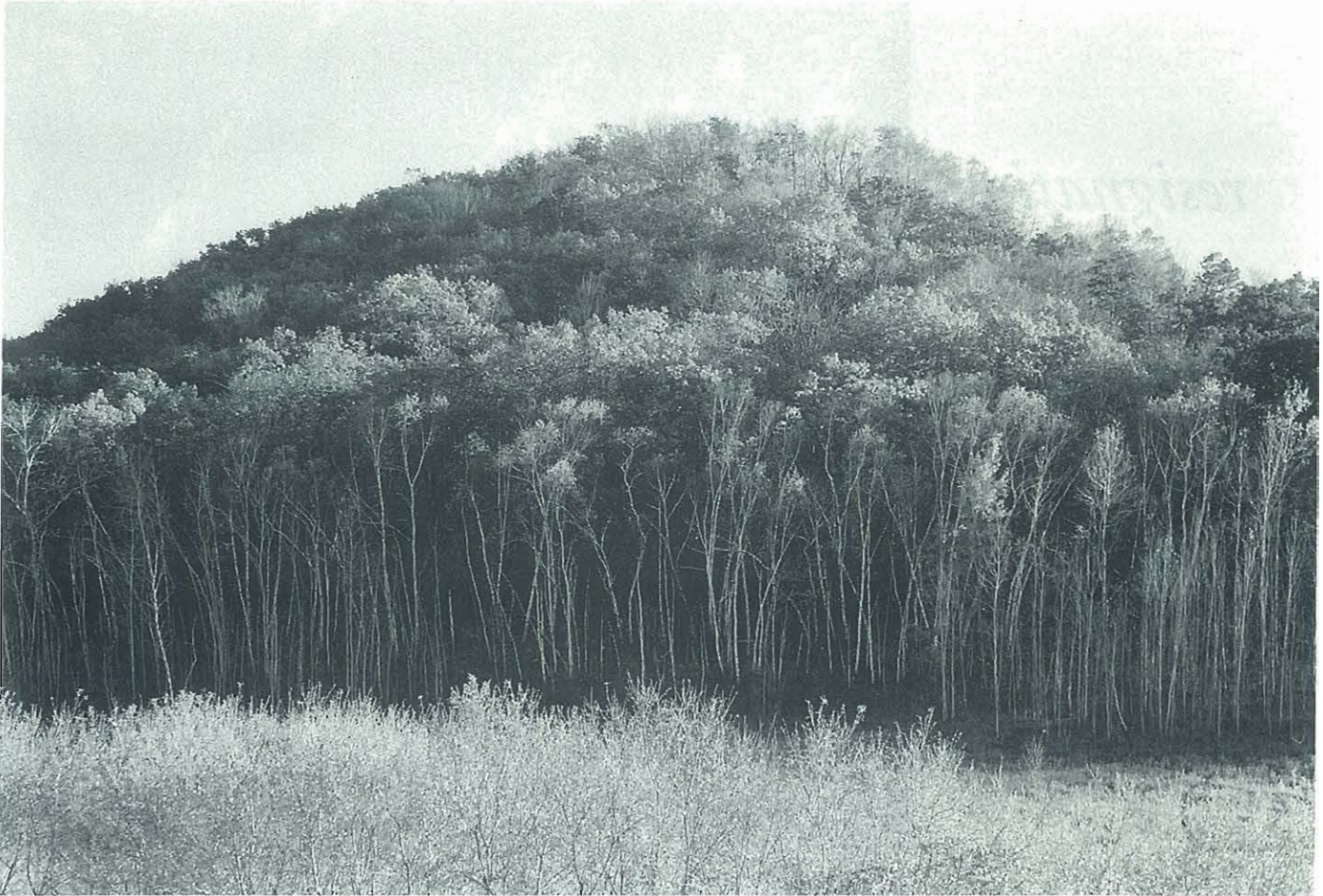
Interestingly, the most popular and widely accepted of such theories—the eight stages described by noted psychiatrist Erik Erikson—places high value on the child's development of autonomy, self-reliance, independence, self-actualization, and on following one's own destiny. Then, in adulthood, the person is expected to move into intimacy and generativity; this, after years of separation and individuation which are the very opposite of intimate relating. In other words, according to traditional developmental theory, people are to develop intimacy without ever having practiced it. By contrast, new theories that focus on women's experience suggest that for women, development takes a different path which is not interrupted but continuous and which is *relational* from infancy onward. The new theories challenge the traditional developmental model as inaccurate and incomplete for *both* men and women, but—because of societal influences—particularly so for women.

For example, in the first of Erikson's eight stages of life, the stage that spans the first year, the central goal is the infant's development of a sense of basic trust. But another important dimension is that the infant—and this is encouraged much more with a girl—begins to act like and be like the main caregiver, usually a woman. Rather than identifying with a static figure, the infant starts to develop a sense of itself as a "being-in-relationship." This is the start of a sense of self that reflects what happens *between* people. In Paula's case, little actually happened *to* her as an infant. Her sense of failure stemmed from that first failed relationship—from what did *not* happen *for* her interpersonally.

Erikson identifies autonomy—which others have called separation and individuation—as the goal of the second stage of childhood (ages two to three). The new theory suggests instead that this is a period when the child uses more mental and physical resources and develops an enlarged sense of how it sees things, including a new understanding of and new configurations in relationship. For little girls, autonomy expresses itself not merely as a "doing," but rather as a "doing *for*"—for the mother and for others. She takes her cue from what Mother is still doing with little children, attending to their feelings and doing things for them. By this age, little boys are taking their cues more from their fathers than their mothers. So action has a specific character; it takes place in relationship. The little girl uses her increased powers and opinions about how and what she wants to do. Rather than needing separation, maintain-

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# EARTH, TEACH ME

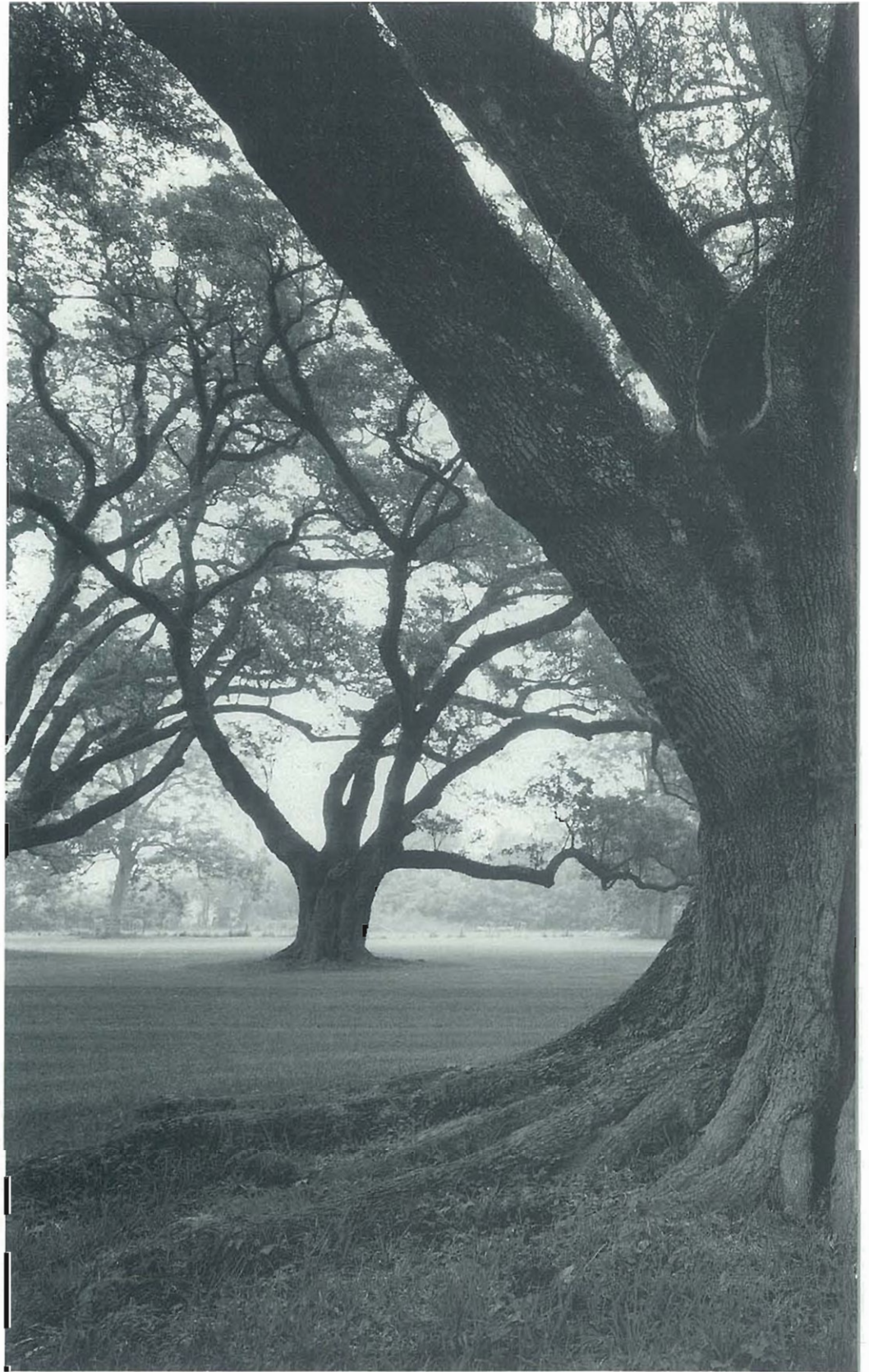


*See the world as your self. Have faith in the way things are. Love the world as your self; then you can care for all things.*

D E A N D A B L O W

*Dean Dablow, is a photographer who has participated in numerous state and national photo exhibitions. Dean is also a professor at the School of Art and Architecture, at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana.*

*Teach me  
resignation  
as the leaves  
which die  
in fall.*







*Teach me*

*courage as*

*the tree*

*which stands*

*alone.* Ute Prayer

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**Psychotherapy is limited because of the model on which it is built. On some mental level it will move people to remain in an addictive society and away from living in process.**

# **Life Beyond Therapy, Living Your Process**

**An Interview with Anne Wilson Schaef**

**Interviewed by Mary NurrieStearns, Editor of Lotus.**

Anne Wilson Schaefer, PhD., is the author of several books including "Codependence," "When Society Becomes an Addict" and her new book "Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science." A former psychotherapist, she is a lecturer, organizational consultant, and workshop leader who trains healthcare professionals throughout the world in the Living Process Facilitation.



**LOTUS:** In your newest book *Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science* you advocate a new model for healing the whole person. You base this model on a way of understanding ourselves that goes beyond present day psychology. What are your views of people and the healing process.

**ANNE:** I see people as a living process. We're not a thing, we're not an it, we're not a machine. In workshops I create an environment where people have an opportunity to live in process and to understand that they are responsible for their lives. I'm not going to take care of them. I am not going to decide what they need or what is wrong with them and neither is anyone else. We have too much looked outside ourselves for our healing. We have inside us everything we need to heal ourselves. As a human being we have an internal process that will heal anything that has happened to us.

**LOTUS:** What is the basis for your work?

**ANNE:** The most basic concept of the work that I do comes from a scientific paradigm. It is not based on a mechanistic model. It comes out of the awareness that we are whole beings. We live in a universe where we need to be fully participatory and realize that we are part of all nature, are connected with all beings and all things. The basic premise of my work has really evolved through working with women and in the black movement. I realized that how psychology looked at people was very limited. Psychology thinks of people as machines, as either broken or functioning like a machine and that you

just need to fix it. I call the living process system an alternative to this mechanistic system we have set up in our western culture.

**LOTUS:** What you mean when you talk about people living with their process?

**ANNE:** I've come to think that we have inside us memories of everything that has happened to us. When you think about this, it is very miraculous that somehow these memories, feelings, and awarenesses don't go away as we grow up. They stay and kind of rumble around inside us. I think this is what Freud called the boiling cauldron of the unconscious. In the past it has been seen as negative that these things aren't finished; these processes sort of hang on. But I see it as very positive. Many things happen to us as children and we don't have what we need to deal with them. For people who have incest experiences or satanic

cult experiences the issue is survival, not dealing with it. Those memories, awareness and feelings stay there. At a point in our life where we're in a safe place and we've reached a level of maturity and awareness where we can deal with these issues, they start coming out. We start having flashes of memory and awareness and these frequently can lead us into a deep process.

**LOTUS:** Are you saying that these flashes, memories, and sensations bubbling up are a part of deep process?

**ANNE:** Absolutely, I think

these are the doors. Often the door will have nothing to do with the memory. I've developed great awe for this work. The door may be a song, a flash of a place or just a feeling of depression, gritchyness or anger that comes up. It could be a dream. These doors often lead into our deep process. Sometimes it's a song. We'll start humming a song and it just keeps coming and coming. Sometimes we'll

*Anne Wilson Schaefer*



watch a movie and we'll start crying or we'll start feeling, afraid. If we stay with the feeling often times it leads us into a deep process. Deep processes are often very intense feelings that come out.

**LOTUS:** So we experience them intensely?

**ANNE:** You can experience them any number of ways. Sometimes I've suggested that people just lie down and see what comes. We ask someone to sit with them, keep them safe in case they go into heavy anger or thrash around. Sometimes body

awareness comes in waves very much like birthing. There will be awareness, feeling, or a few tears, and after a rest period, more will come followed by a rest period. Often these become deeper and more intense. Sometimes people howl and rage and sometimes they're very quiet.

LOTUS: And is that the work of the deep process or the expression of it?

ANNE: Deep process is a mechanism that we have developed as human beings for healing whatever has happened to us. It's there inside, the same as the healing system of the body. When you have a cut, the body brings to it white cells. The body's immune system and the body starts working to heal this kind of wound. We have the same thing on the psychological/spiritual level. To me it's a process of healing that is difficult to describe. We don't really know all of what happens in the process of healing a wound or a cut. The same is true on the psychological/spiritual level. We have these old psychological/spiritual wounds and our being has a way of healing them that bypasses our thinking and our mind. Nobody ever heals from understanding something. This is one of the places that modern psychology has missed the boat. Often our brains, our thinking, and our minds get in the way of the process of healing. They shut it off. We try to figure it out and we try to conceptualize it and we leave the process of the healing. Deep process work will take you wherever it needs to go. You really have to be willing to turn yourself over to get through the process and where it takes you. Usually the process itself has nothing to do with the door which led you into it. I think that's one of the ways our inner being kind of tricks us away from our thinking mind. It tricks us away from thinking we can figure it out because what it's leading us into frequently has nothing to do with what we could figure out. We begin to heal something and the process itself just takes us through it.

You really have to be willing to take a leap of faith to do your deep process work because you don't know where it's going to take you. You don't know what it is about, and you don't know what is going to happen.

LOTUS: You say in your book that deep process is not emotional catharsis. It has a life of its own. Can you elaborate?

ANNE: I think that we believe if you just get the feelings out you're okay. Therapists give you a bar and tell you to beat the pillows or they schedule a grief group and say we're going to deal with grief today. You're encouraged to get feelings out, to cry a certain amount. Giving someone a bar and telling them to get their feelings out is a kind of rape. Our process will come up when we're ready to deal with it, if we respect it. Artificially pulling feelings is a kind of rape of our psyche. Deep process work is not just getting feelings out. Deep process has a life of its own. It has a center, a depth to it. You have to take time to come back out. I think of it as delivering the after-birth. Coming out can take as much time as going into it. It is important to live through the whole process. Experiencing feelings is important, but it's not just being angry or in pain. Often after healing, also people get physically better.

LOTUS: Can you think of other places in our society that facilitate deep process?

ANNE: I really have tried to find other people doing this kind of work. What I have found is pieces. I haven't found anybody really doing this kind of work. I have found usually people claiming they are working with process are eliciting those processes through techniques, breathing exercises or dream interpretation. We don't do any of that in intensive workshops; I feel that is really disrespectful. Here people just share their stories, share their recovery.

LOTUS: You call yourself a recovering psychotherapist. Do you

see ways for deep process work to be compatible with being a therapist?

ANNE: I don't think so. I think the actual form and belief system of psychotherapy is based on a scientific and mechanistic model. I think therapy has been the best that we've had in the past. Psychotherapy is limited because of the model on which it is built. On some mental level it will move people to remain in an addictive society and away from living in process. I think that we are going to have to let go of psychotherapy as we know it now.

LOTUS: Do you think that deep process occurs spontaneously in our lives if we let it?

ANNE: I do believe it does. Very often when we think we're losing it, having a break down, becoming hysterical or something like that, we stop feeling and stop deep process. I've seen most therapists stop it. People will begin deep process and a therapist will touch them, make an interpretation, ask a question or do something to pull them out of deep process. The therapist keeps their illusion of control. I think it is very important to understand that this work is not a technique. Deep process is only a piece of the work. Deep process has to be embodied in the whole living process system. For example, I do my own work in the group. If a deep process comes up for me I'm likely to stretch out and ask for someone to sit with me. I never, in any way, believe that I know more about a person than they know about themselves. I can share with people what I notice; that I notice they're crying, that I notice they're shaking and ask if they have something coming up. The living process system itself is based very much on community and participation and connectedness. It is not based on an authority or an expert mechanic who is going to know how to fix you.

LOTUS: Do you think it is possible for people to begin deep process without going to one of your intensives?

A N N E : Yes I think that people can do it. Many people do deep process work on their own and I think that is perfectly fine. If you're going to go into a process that is very deep, it really helps to have someone just sitting there with you, not interfering. In this culture we're to interpret and take care of. It is very hard to find someone who will just sit with you, not interfere with your process and nor think that they have to protect you. Very often people who are sitting with someone doing their deep process will get things triggered themselves. One way not to do their own work is to get very busy in another's work. We train out all the co-dependence and care-taking that I think is part of the helping professions. Most people in the helping professions believe that they are central to people doing their work. It is helpful to have someone with you because the process goes very deep. You can begin thrashing around. If you're really in the process you're not thinking about keeping safe or protecting yourself with pillows. It is very helpful to have someone with you so that the process has the freedom to go where it needs to go. I think that children do deep process all the time, at their level. I know a little girl who, when she gets frustrated beyond her ability to handle it, sprawls out and cries until she is finished. Then she gets up and she's okay.

L O T U S : If parents were to honor deep process and not interfere with their children, what would they do?

A N N E : Most parents can't tolerate their children dealing with their feelings. If a kid is angry, the parents think they need to control it or do something with it. If the child is in emotional pain, they think they need to do something with it because they can't stand letting the child experience pain. Parents involved in incest and cult abuse don't want their children to remember, to recapture those memories, to deal with their feelings. The whole idea is to shut off

those feelings and not be in touch. Some parents just don't know how and others really don't want their children to deal with their feelings because feelings bring back memory.

L O T U S : You say that you describe God as process and the process of the universe. Will you talk about your understanding of God and spirituality?

A N N E : I have a broad understanding of God and spirituality. What I know is that when I am living out of my process, I am with the process of the universe. The process of the universe is God. I think we've tried to simplify God and make it a man or a woman or a thing and create it in our own image. My experience is that Christian people call God the creator and recovering people call God higher power. Some native people call God grandmother earth and grandfather sky. Elders throughout the world have some awareness of a power of force in the universe that is greater than ourselves. We've tried to segment it not realizing that it has to do with everything. The earth is a living thing. The balance of our relationships with animals and nature is a living process. We ourselves are a living process. God is in us and God is more than us. When we are living our own process we have the possibility of living in tune with the whole process of the universe. I think this is what every major religion talks about. What we've forgotten is that we are spiritual beings. It's not that we have to try to become spiritual beings.

L O T U S : We let ourselves be spiritual in the same way that we let deep process.

A N N E : Yes, we let ourselves become aware that spirituality is not something we have to hunt for, program, find, or manufacture. I think so many of us, especially in western culture, have reduced ourselves down to protoplasm cells. We've cut ourselves from realizing that we are a piece of all creation and we participate in that. I read recently if you're trying to save the trees in the rain forest and realize

that you are the tree in the rain forest that you understand the problem. We have so separated ourselves from this awareness that we are alienated and isolated. This awareness, this knowing is our spirituality. It is a mystery.

L O T U S : As is deep process.

A N N E : In a way. A woman I quote at the end of the book says that the thing missing in her life was mystery and living in process is mystery. It's really living a life of faith. Deep process is just one part. The willingness to live in process each day requires leaps of faith. You have to work through these old traumas, feelings, memories and awarenesses that aren't finished.

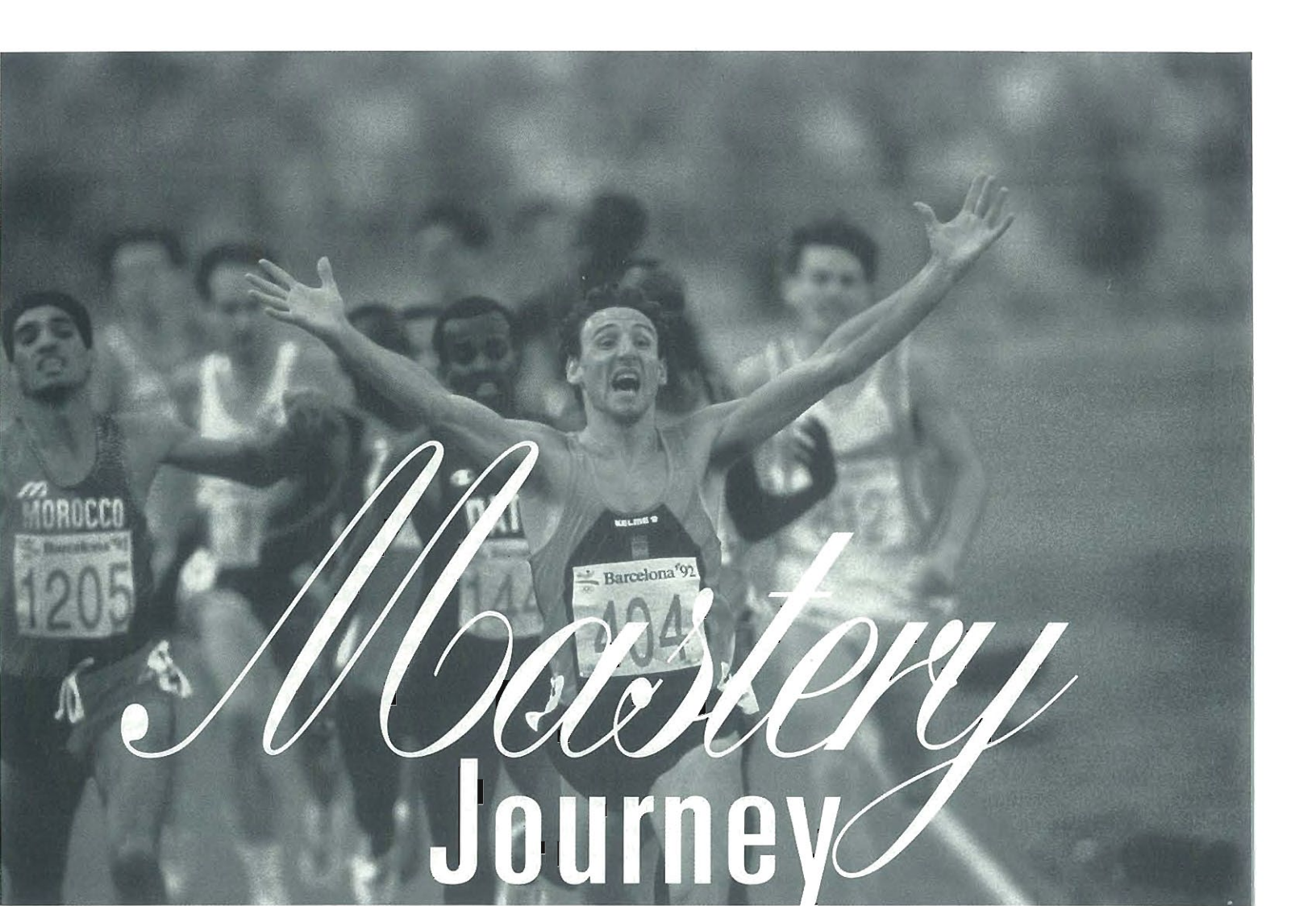
L O T U S : Do you think that there is anyone who doesn't have deep process work to do in our culture?

A N N E : I don't think so. All of us carry around these unfinished processes. I think so much of Freud's work was really trying to describe what had happened to people in this culture. He assumed that we had to have defense mechanisms. I think you do in an addictive society but I don't think, if you live in process, you need to have defense mechanisms. I spent time with native elders all over the world. It is clear to me that the less contact they've had with western culture, the less they need to do deep process work. We have evolved deep process work to cope with the society we are living in.

L O T U S : Why does western society produce adults that require undergoing deep process to reclaim humanness and spirituality?

A N N E : An easy answer is because it is an addictive society. The society we've constructed requires us to develop addictions to tolerate the society. We've shut off from ourselves. We've created a society based on a mechanistic science and this is such a limited view of reality. We aren't machines. The universe is not a machine and doesn't function like a machine. People are now saying that we're coming to an end of an era of a

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# Mastery Journey

G E O R G E L E O N A R D

**I**t resists definition yet can be instantly recognized. It comes in many varieties, yet follows certain unchanging laws. It brings rich rewards, yet is not really a goal or a destination but rather a process, a journey. We call this journey mastery and tend to assume that it requires a special ticket available only to those born with exceptional abilities. But mastery isn't reserved for the super talented or even for those who are fortunate enough to have gotten an early start. It's available to anyone who is willing to get on the path and stay on it—regardless of age, sex, or previous experience. ✦ The trouble is that we have few, if any, maps to guide us on the journey or even to show us how to find the path. The modern world, in fact, can be viewed as a prodigious conspiracy against mastery. We're continually bombarded with promises of immediate gratification, instant success, and fast, temporary relief, all of which lead in exactly the wrong direction.

*George Leonard is the author of nine books, including "Education and Ecstasy" and "The Ultimate Athlete." He served as senior editor at Look magazine, where he earned an unprecedented number of national awards for education reporting. He and is currently a contributing editor for Esquire. He holds a third-degree black belt in the martial art of aikido and is co-owner of an aikido school in Mill Valley, California, where he lives.*



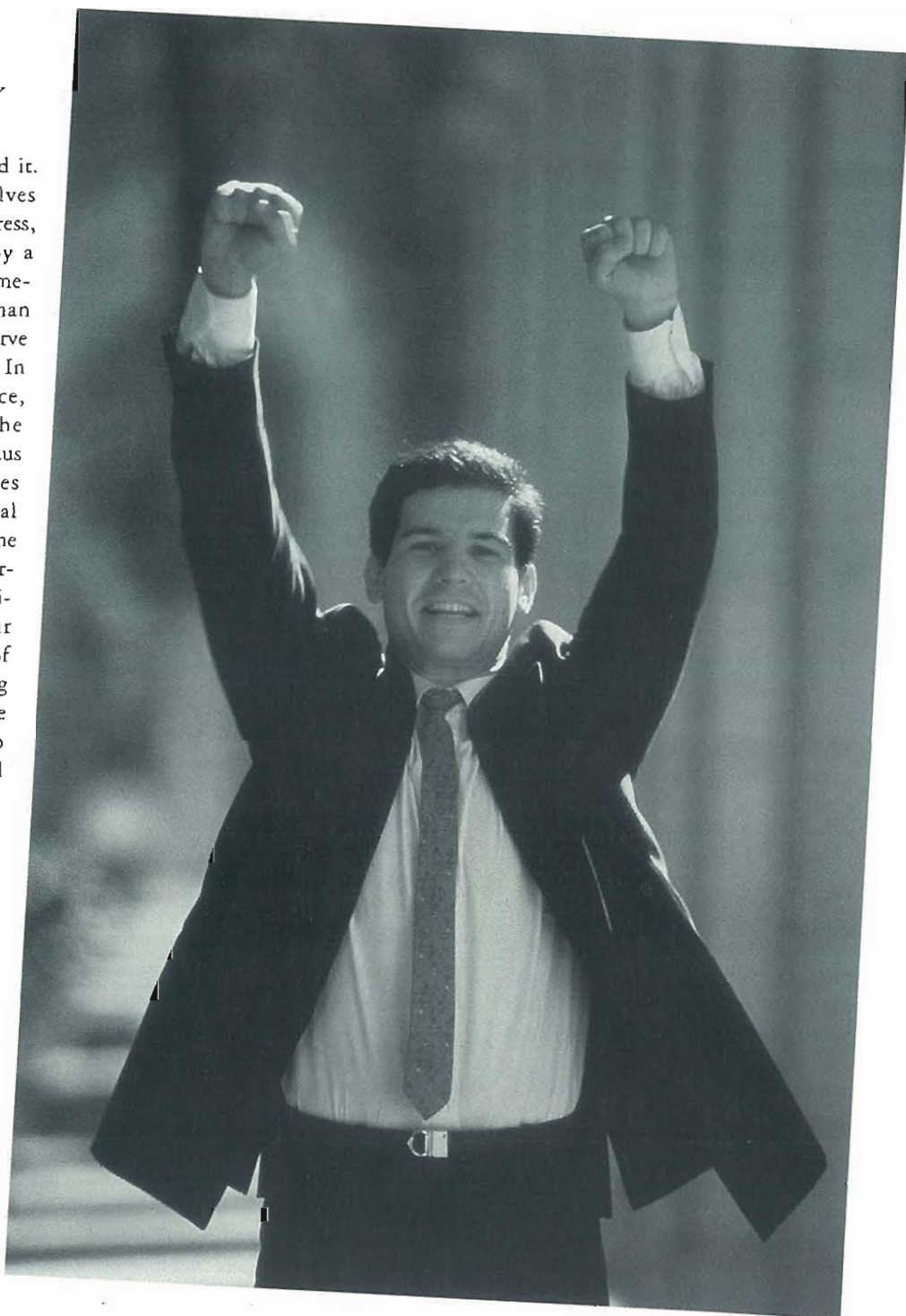
## THE MASTERY CURVE

There's really no way around it. Learning any new skill involves relatively brief spurts of progress, each of which is followed by a slight decline to a plateau somewhat higher in most cases than that which preceded it. The curve above is necessarily idealized. In the actual learning experience, progress is less regular; the upward spurts vary; the plateaus have their own dips and rises along the way. But the general progression is almost always the same. To take the master's journey, you have to practice diligently, striving to hone your skills, to attain new levels of competence. But while doing so—and this is the inexorable fact of the journey—you also have to be willing to spend most of your time on a plateau, to keep practicing even when you seem to be getting nowhere.

Why does learning take place in spurts? Why can't we make steady upward progress on our way toward mastery? We have to keep practicing an unfamiliar movement again and again until we "get it in the muscle memory" or "program it into the autopilot." The specific mechanism through which this takes place is not completely known, but it probably matches up fairly well with

these informal descriptions. Karl Pribram, professor of neuroscience and a pioneering brain researcher at Stanford University, explains it in terms of hypothetical brain-body systems. He starts with a "habitual behavior system" that operates at a level deeper than conscious thought. This system involves the reflex circuit in the

spinal cord as well as in various parts of the brain to which it is connected. This habitual system makes it possible for you to do things—return a scorching tennis serve, play a guitar chord, ask directions in a new language—without worrying just *how* you do them. When you start to learn a new skill, however, you do have to



think about it; and you have to make an effort to replace old patterns of sensing, movement, and cognition with new.

This brings into play what might be called a cognitive system, associated with the habitual system, and an effort system, associated with the hippocampus (situated at the base of the brain). The cognitive and effort systems become subsers of the habitual system long enough to modify it, to reach it a new behavior. To put it another way, the cognitive and effort systems "click into" the habitual system and reprogram it. When the job is done, both systems withdraw. Then, you don't have to stop and think about, say, the right grip every time you shift your racket.

In this light, you can see that those upward surges on the mastery curve are by no means the only time anything significant or exciting is happening. Learning generally occurs in stages. A stage ends when the habitual system has been programmed to the new task, and the cognitive and effort systems have withdrawn. This means you can perform the task without making a special effort to think of its separate parts. At this point, there's an apparent spurt of learning. *But this learning has been going on all along.*

How do you best move toward mastery? To put it simply, you practice diligently, but you practice primarily *for the sake of the practice itself*. Rather than being frustrated while on the plateau, you learn to appreciate and enjoy it just as much as you do the upward surges...

#### A M E R I C A ' S   W A R A G A I N S T   M A S T E R Y

If you're planning to embark on a master's journey, you might find yourself bucking current trends in

*The quick-fix,  
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modern medicine and  
pharmacology. "Fast,  
temporary relief" is  
the battle cry.*

American life. Our hyped-up consumerist society is engaged in fact in an all-out war on mastery. We see this most plainly in our value system. Values were once inculcated through the extended family, tribal or village elders, sports and games, the apprenticeship system or traditional schooling, religious training and practice, and spiritual and secular ceremony. With the weakening or withering away of most of these agencies, value-giving in America has taken a strange new turn.

Our society is now organized around an economic system that seemingly demands a continuing high level of consumer spending. We are offered an unprecedented number of choices as to how we spend our

money. We have to have food, clothing, housing, transportation, and medical care, but within certain limits we can choose among many alternatives. We are also enticed by a dazzling array of appealing non-necessities—VCRs, vacation cruises, speedboats, microwave ovens. Every time we spend money, we make a statement about what we value; there's no clearer or more direct indication. Thus, all inducements to spend money—print advertisements, radio and television commercials, mailers, and the like—are primarily concerned with the inculcation of values. They have become in fact the chief value-givers of this age.

Try paying close attention to television commercials. What values do they espouse? Some appeal to fear (buy our travelers' checks because you're likely to be robbed on your next trip), some to logic, even to thrift (our car compares favorably to its chief competitors in the following ways and is

cheaper), some to snobbery (at an elegant country house, fashionably dressed people are drinking a certain brand of sparkling water), some to pure hedonism (on a miserable winter day in the city a young couple chances upon a travel agency; their eyes focus on a replica of a credit card on the window and they are instantly transported to a dreamy tropical paradise).

Keep watching and an underlying pattern will emerge. About half of the commercials, whatever the subject matter, are based on a climactic moment. The cake has already been baked; the family and guests, their faces all aglow, are gathered around to watch an adorable three-year-old blow out the candles. The race is run and won; beautiful young people jump up



and down in ecstasy as they reach for frosted cans of diet cola. Men are shown working at their jobs for all of a second and a half, then it's Miller time. Life at its best, these commercials teach, is an endless series of climactic moments...

In all of this, the specific content isn't nearly as destructive to mastery as is the *rhythm*. One epiphany follows another. One fantasy is crowded out by the next. Climax is piled upon climax. *There's no plateau.*

THE PATH OF  
ENDLESS  
CLIMAX

Two generations of Americans have grown up in the television age, during which consumerism has achieved unprecedented dominance over our value system. It should come as no great surprise that many of us have the idea that our lives by all rights should consist of one climax after another. So what do we do when our own day-to-day existence doesn't match up? How do we keep those climactic moments coming without instruction or discipline or practice? It's easy. Take a drug.

Of course, it doesn't work. In the long run it destroys you. But who in the popular and commercial culture has much to say about the long run? Who would be willing to warn in their commercial messages that every attempt to achieve an endless series of climactic moments, whether drug-powered or not, ends like this?

The epidemic of gambling currently sweeping across the nation shows how explicit and blatant the campaign against any long-term effort has become. An ad for the Illinois lottery pictured a man scoffing at people buying savings bonds and insisting that the only way an ordi-

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nary person could become a millionaire was by playing the lottery. The very first commercial seen during an ABC special on the crisis in our high schools showed a bull session among a group of attractive young people. The models for this commercial were probably over twenty-one, but could easily have passed for high schoolers. "I'm going for the Trans-Am," one of them said. Another informed her friends that she would take the Hawaiian vacation, and a third said he was going to win the cash prize of \$50,000. While there seemed no doubt in these happy youths' minds that they were going to win the sweepstakes in question, they were statistically more likely to die by

drowning in a cistern, cesspool, or well...

If you could impute some type of central intelligence to all of these commercial messages, you would have to conclude that the nation is bent on self-destruction. In any case, you might suspect that the disproportionate incidence of drug abuse in the United States, especially of drugs that give you a quick high, springs not so much from immoral or criminal impulses as from a perfectly understandable impulse to replicate the most visible, most compelling American vision of the good life—an endless series of climactic moments. This vision isn't just an invention of television. It resonates in the rhetoric about scoring ("I don't care how you win, just win"), about effortless learning, instant celebrities, instant millionaires, and the "number one" finger raised in the air when you score just once. It is the ruling entrepreneurial vision of America, even among young ghetto drug dealers. "Based on

my experience," writes anthropologist Philippe Bourgois who spent five years of living in and studying the culture of East Harlem, "I believe the assertion of the culture-of-poverty theorists that the poor have been badly socialized and do not share mainstream values is wrong. On the contrary, ambitious, energetic, inner-city youths are attracted to the underground economy precisely because they believe in the rags-to-riches American dream. Like many in the mainstream, they are frantically trying to get their piece of the pie as fast as possible."

The quick-fix, antimastery mentality touches almost everything in our lives. Look at modern medicine and pharmacology. "Fast, temporary

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# M E D I T

R U T H F I S H E L

*Ruth Fishel, M.Ed., is presently developing Spirithaven, a healing center for people in recovery. She presents workshops and retreats nationally, helping people in all types of recovery, using the tools of meditation, affirmations, and visualizations. She is author of "The Journey Within: A Spiritual Path to Recovery," "Learning to Live in The Now: 6 Week Personal Plan to Recovery" and "Time for Joy" a daily meditation and affirmations book, calendar, and journal. This article is from her book "Healing Energy." Copyright 1991 by Ruth Fishel. Printed with permission of Health Communications.*



In part meditation is an exercise. It is an exercise we practice over and over again. From this practice we learn many things. It teaches us single-pointed concentration which is about focusing on one primary object, such as the breath, so that all other things become secondary.

Meditation is the quieting of our minds. As we concentrate on one primary object, the voices that continually go on in our minds become quieter and quieter, less and less powerful and controlling.

Many people live their entire lives not even knowing that the voices that go on in their heads can be stopped, or at least quieted down and stopped for a while. They live their lives reacting to all thoughts and impulses, never knowing that they can be in charge of their lives and can choose their thoughts and their actions.

Meditation is a tool that can bring us to a place within where we can just notice these thoughts and go back to our primary object of concentration.

Meditation is the bridge between your outside world and your inside world.

Meditation reaches us the Spirit-Mind-Body connection.

Bill Wilson tells us that prayer is asking while meditation is listening. We have to be quiet before we can hear.

An excellent definition has been printed on a brochure of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts.

Insight Meditation... Vipassana... is a simple and direct practice... the moment to moment investigation of the mind-body process through calm and focused awareness. Learning to experience from a place of stillness enables one to relate to life with less fear and clinging. Seeing life as a constantly changing process, one begins to accept pleasure and pain, fear and joy and all aspects of life with increasing equanimity and balance. As insight deepens, wisdom and compassion arise. Insight meditation is a way of seeing clearly the totality of one's being and experi-

ence. Growth in clarity brings about penetrating insight into the nature of who we are and increased peace in our daily lives.

As we quiet our minds, we are able to develop equanimity.

Equanimity is the quality of mind and heart that, when developed, allows one to meet every kind of experience with both strength and a softness or fluidity that doesn't get caught up by circumstances. To discover its power within is one of the greatest joys of practice.

Meditation makes it possible for us to quiet down so that we can see. It is the light on our path to change.

## *How to Dress When Meditating*

Wear comfortable, loose clothing. Be sure it is appropriate for the weather. It is best to dress so that you will not be conscious of warmth or cold.

## *How to Sit*

Sit with your back as straight as possible and with your chin tucked down slightly so that the back of your neck is straight. If you can, sit yoga style with your legs crossed. In a lotus or semi-lotus position, you will have the best balance for longer periods of sitting. At first this may seem very uncomfortable and your body might not want to sit that way. You may wish to get a book of yoga exercises and learn how to stretch your body so it can be comfortable in that position. The more you try it, the easier it will get.

If you cannot learn the lotus or the semi-lotus, you can sit crossed-legged, Indian style.

If you are sitting on the floor, it can be very helpful to sit with your buttocks on a small pillow with your legs on the floor. This is good for balance. If you find that you cannot manage this position, you can sit in a chair with your feet on the floor. Be sure your back and your neck are straight and your chin is slightly up.

## *Where to Meditate*

I suggest that you pick a regular place for meditating if this is possible in your lifestyle. Find a peaceful place, a place that makes you feel good. You could put a plant, picture, or favorite saying in your meditation area. In other words, make it your special place. Then just walking by will give you a feeling of peace. It will be a place that makes you smile.

You can also meditate outside, at the beach, in the woods, or in your own backyard.

## *How Long?*

It is suggested that you begin with 20 minutes in the

# A T T E N T I O N

morning and 20 minutes in the evening or late afternoon. If this is difficult and you can only do it once a day, make this time in the morning. This will begin your day with good energy. If 20 minutes seems too long, do less. Even five minutes is a beginning and better than nothing at all.

It is also helpful to meditate at the same time everyday. Find a time for yourself when it is most quiet. Ask that this time be respected by all and that you are not interrupted.

At times of stress or sickness, you can meditate more often. A mini-meditation is wonderful. In the midst of stress at home or in the office, excuse yourself for a few minutes and sit by yourself and meditate. It can be as refreshing and tranquilizing as a full night's sleep.

## *What If I Think a Lot?*

It is absolutely normal to have thoughts. Just notice them and go back to your breathing. You will learn to notice your thoughts and come back to your breathing. By experiencing them, watching them as if you were an observer, your thoughts will just be there and then go away. If you notice yourself planning for something in the future, just notice it and go back to your breathing. If you notice that you are letting in a past memory, just notice that and return to your breathing.

Through this process of watching your thoughts, you will quickly see that you always have thoughts, whether meditating or not. This is a valuable lesson in learning to concentrate wherever you are. You will see how often your thoughts take you away from the present, whether in a conversation with someone, while reading a book or attending a lecture. You will begin to see that you are very often not where you think you are! As you learn to come back to your breathing while in your sitting meditation, you will also be learning how to come back to your conversation, your book or your lecture.

While practicing your meditation, just notice your thoughts and come back to your breathing. Don't resist them or struggle with them. And above all, do not judge or put yourself down for having thoughts. Just notice them, make a mental note of them, and go back to your breathing.

## *Must the Meditation Place be Completely Quiet?*

There will always be noise. There is a wonderful story a meditation teacher told about this. He had planned for a long time to take a day off and go to the woods all alone to meditate. He packed a backpack with his favorite lunch, his favorite book and off he went.

The weather was perfect. He walked deep into the woods and found a wonderful spot with a tree he could lean against. He took his backpack off, settled in comfortably, and began to meditate.

Within minutes, squirrels began to quarrel above him. Acorns and leaves began to fall. Birds became disturbed and began to chirp.

He struggled with thoughts of leaving. He struggled with disappointment and irritation. After several moments of upset, he simply smiled and went back to his breathing. He noticed the noise and went back to his breathing. Soon the noise of the squirrels and the acorns and the birds became part of the moment, part of his meditation. By accepting the noise as a normal part of a day in the woods and that he was powerless over the noise, it no longer had any power to upset him. He became peaceful in the moment.

As with thoughts, just notice the noises and go back to your breathing. Don't try to block them out. Don't resist them. Just hear them and bring your attention back to your breathing.

## *Coming Out of Meditation Gently*

If at any time you wish to come out of meditation, just stop and count to five before you open your eyes. The reason for this is that when you meditate, you are in a deeper state of consciousness. We go from a beta state, our regular awake state, into an alpha state in meditation. By counting to five before you open your eyes, you will come up gently and slowly and then be able to resume your life in beta state without any negative effects.

If the telephone should ring or you have any other disturbances that take you out of meditation sharply, just return to your meditation as soon as you can for five more minutes. Then slowly come out . . . counting to five before you open your eyes.

Stay as long as you wish in any place that you are in, regardless of how much time seems to be passing.

I would also suggest that you have a notebook and pen next to you so that you record feelings and insights when you return to your beta state.

If you begin to leave any meditation, just notice the thoughts that have taken you away. Very gently, without judgment, come back to your breathing. If at any time you feel yourself leaving, it is helpful to ground yourself by feeling the connecting points where your feet touch the floor, your hands touch your body, or your clothing touches your skin. Notice those points of connectedness and come back to your breathing.

Sometimes fear takes us away. We don't want to look. We don't want to change. Just know that whatever comes up is for your higher good. If it is negative or destructive, it is time to see that, feel it, and release it. Know that whatever it is that you don't want to see is holding you back. Freedom is on your path . . . one step at a time. •

# Living With Self-Esteem

**W**henever we see men and women of high self-esteem, we see a high commitment to awareness as a way of life. They live mindfully. ✎ They are concerned to know what they are doing when they act, to understand themselves and the world around them—including the feedback they receive, which informs them whether they are on- or off-course with regard to their goals and purposes. ✎ I call this attitude "the will to understand." ✎ The potential range of our awareness depends on the extent of our intelligence, on the breadth of our abstract capacity, which means our ability to grasp relationships (to see the connection between things). But the principle of commitment to awareness, or the will to understand, remains the same on all levels of intelligence. It entails the behavior of seeking to integrate that which enters our mental field—as well as the effort to keep expanding that field.

Nathaniel Branden has authored several books on self-esteem including bestsellers, "The Psychology of Self-Esteem," "Honoring The Self," and "How To Raise Your Self-Esteem." Dr. Branden is in private practice in Los Angeles where he offers self-esteem seminars and works as a consultant to businesses and other organizations.



The beginning of self-assertion is the assertion of consciousness itself, the act of seeing and of seeking to grasp that which we see, of hearing and of seeking to grasp that which we hear—or responding to life actively rather than passively. This is the foundation of good self-esteem.

THE  
BEWILDERING  
WORLD OF ADULTS

Many children undergo experiences that place enormous obstacles in the way of the healthy development of this attitude. A child may find the world of parents and other adults incomprehensible and threatening. The self is not nurtured but attacked. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to understand adult policies, statements, and behavior, some children give up—and take the blame for their feelings of helplessness. Often they sense miserably, desperately, and inarticulately that there is something terribly wrong—with their elders, or with themselves, or with something. What they often come to feel is, "I'll never understand people; I'll never be able to do what they expect of me; I don't know what's right or wrong and I'm never going to know."

DEVELOPING A  
POWERFUL  
SOURCE OF  
STRENGTH

The child who continues to struggle to make sense out of the world and the people in it, however, is developing a powerful source of strength, no matter what the anguish of bewilderment experienced. Caught

in a particularly cruel, frustrating, and irrational environment, he or she will doubtless feel alienated from many of the people in the immediately surrounding world, and legitimately so. But the child will not feel alienated from reality, will not feel at the deepest level incompetent to live—or at least he or she has a relatively good chance to avoid this fate.

The growing individual who retains a commitment to awareness learns subjects, acquires skills, accomplishes tasks—reaches goals. And of course these successes validate and reinforce the choice to think. The sense of being appropriate to life feels natural.

A commitment to awareness, then—a commitment to rationality, consciousness, respect for reality as a way of life—is both a source and an expression of positive self-esteem.

Often we associate positive self-esteem only with the result—with knowledge, success, the admiration and appreciation of others—and miss the cause: all the choices that cumulatively add up to what we call a commitment to awareness, the will to understand. We, thus, can deceive ourselves about the actual sources of self-esteem.

THE WILL TO BE  
EFFICACIOUS

Where we see self-esteem, we see what I call "the will to be efficacious."

The concept of the will to be efficacious is an extension of the will to understand. It places its emphasis on the aspect of perseverance in the face of difficulties continuing to seek understanding when understanding does not come easily, pursuing the mastery of a skill or the solution to a

*We cannot work on self-esteem directly, neither our own nor anyone else's, because self-esteem is a consequence — a product of internally generated practices such as that of living consciously, responsibly, purposefully, and with integrity. If we understand what those practices are, we can commit to initiating them within ourselves and to dealing with others in such a way as to facilitate or encourage them to do likewise.*

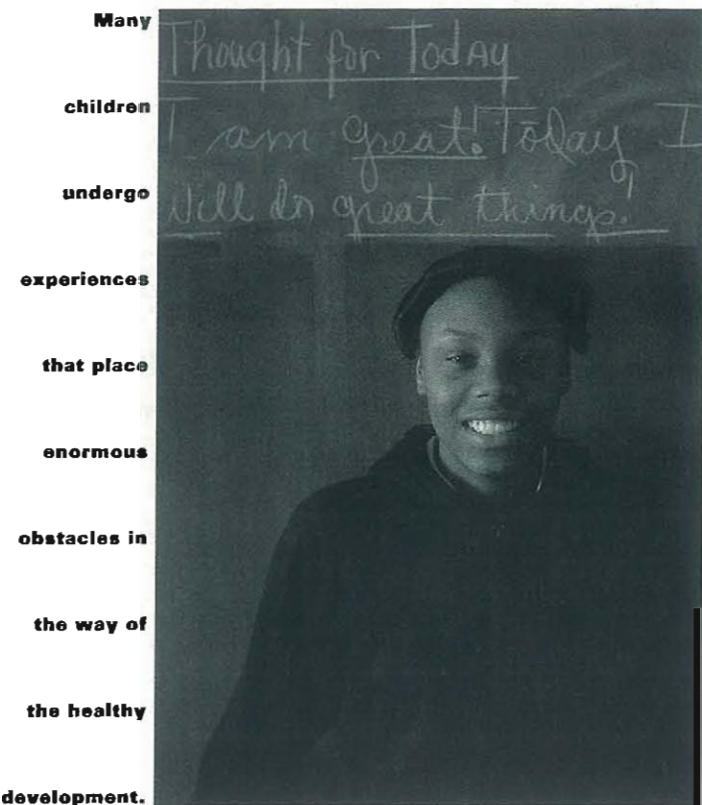
problem in the face of defeats, maintaining a commitment to goals while encountering many obstacles along the way.

The will to be efficacious is the refusal to identify our ego or self with momentary feelings of helplessness and defeat.

Many years ago, I witnessed an encounter between two colleagues, a psychologist and a psychiatrist, which was important for my own understanding of the issue I am discussing. The two men were first cousins and had grown up in similar environments. They shared many painful memories of the behavior of their elders and other relatives.

"You survived all that in a way I didn't," the psychiatrist said to the psychologist. "They didn't get to you. I always wondered what made you persevere. Because I didn't. I gave up in some way."

The psychologist answered, "I do recall feeling quite overwhelmed many times. But somewhere deep in my body was a voice saying, 'Don't give up. Hang on.' Hang on to staying conscious, I suppose. Hang on to trying to understand. Don't give up the conviction that it's possible to be in control of your life. Obviously



those weren't the words I used as a child, but that was the meaning. That's what I clung to."

"The will to be efficacious," I volunteered impulsively. The will to be efficacious—here was a concept that helped me explain something I had observed in my clients and students, the principle to help understand the difference between those who felt fundamentally defeated by life and those who did not.

The will to be efficacious—the refusal of a human consciousness to accept helplessness as its permanent and unalterable condition.

"STRATEGIC  
DETACHMENT"  
KNOWING YOU  
ARE MORE THAN  
YOUR PROBLEMS

It is impressive to see a person who has been battered by life in many ways, who is torn by a variety of unsolved problems, who may be alienated from many aspects of the self—and yet who is still fighting, still struggling, still striving to find

the path to a more fulfilling existence, moved by the wisdom of knowing, "I am more than my problems."

Children who survive extremely adverse childhoods have learned a particular survival strategy that relates to the issue we are discussing. I call it "strategic detachment." This is not the withdrawal from reality that leads to psychological disturbance, but rather an intuitively calibrated *disengagement* from noxious aspects of their family life or other aspects of their world. They somehow know, *This is not all there is.* They hold the belief that a better alternative

exists *somewhere* and that *some day they will find their way to it.* They persevere in that idea. They somehow know *Mother is not all women, Father is not all men, this family does not exhaust the possibilities of human relationships—there is life beyond this neighborhood.* This does not spare them suffering in the present, but it allows them not to be destroyed by it. Their strategic detachment does not guarantee that they will never know feelings of powerlessness, but it helps them not to be stuck there.

Whether as children or adults, having the will to be efficacious does not mean that we deny or disown feelings of inefficacy when they arise. It means that we do not accept them as permanent. We feel temporarily helpless without defining our essence as helplessness. We can feel temporarily defeated without defining our essence as failure. We can allow ourselves to feel temporarily hopeless, overwhelmed, while preserving the knowledge that after a rest, we will pick up the pieces as best we can and start moving forward again. Our

vision of our life extends beyond the feelings of the moment. Our concept of self can rise above today's adversity. This is one of the forms of heroism possible to a volitional consciousness.

THE HEROISM OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

While it may sometimes be necessary, we do not normally enjoy long periods of being alienated from the thinking and beliefs of those around us, especially those we respect and love. One of the most important forms of heroism is the heroism of consciousness, the heroism of thought, the willingness to tolerate aloneness.

Like every other psychological trait, independence is a matter of degree. Although no one is perfectly independent and no one is hopelessly dependent all of the time, the higher the level of our independence and the more willing we are to think for ourselves, the higher tends to be the level of our self-esteem.

LEARNING TO  
DISCRIMINATE

No one can feel properly efficacious (that is, competent to cope with the basic challenges of life) who has not learned to differentiate between facts on the one hand and wishes and fears on the other.

The task is sometimes difficult because thoughts themselves are invariably touched or even saturated with feeling. Still, on many occasions we can recognize that the desire to perform some action is not proof that we should perform it, running out of the room in the midst of an argument when we become upset, for example. And the fact that we may be afraid to perform some action is not proof that we should avoid performing it. Going to a physician for a checkup when there are signs of illness is another example.

If we make a purchase we know we cannot afford and avoid thinking about impending bills we will not be able to pay, we have surrendered our

consciousness to our wishes. If we ignore signs of danger in a marriage and then profess to be bewildered and dismayed when the marriage finally explodes, we have paid the penalty for sacrificing consciousness to fear.

### OUR UNDERLYING INTENTION

As far as our self-esteem is concerned, the issue is not whether we are flawless in executing the task of distinguishing among facts, wishes, and fears and choosing consciousness over some form of avoidance. Rather, the issue is one of our underlying intention.

When we describe a person as "basically honest," in the sense meant here, we do not mean that he or she is impervious to the influence of the wishes and fears, but rather that there is a pronounced and evident *desire* and *intention* to see things as they are. We cannot always know for certain whether or not we are being rational or honest; but, we can certainly be concerned about it, we can certainly care. We are not always free to succeed in our thinking but we are always free to try.

The accumulated sum of our choices in this matter yields an inner sense of basic honesty or dishonesty—a fundamental responsibility or irresponsibility toward existence. From childhood on, some individuals are far more interested in and respectful of such questions of truth than others. Some operate as if facts need not be facts if we do not choose to acknowledge them, as if truth is irrelevant and lies are lies only if someone finds them out.

The task of consciousness is to perceive that which exists, to the best of our ability. To honor reality—the perception of that which exists—is to honor consciousness; to honor consciousness is to honor self-esteem.

### INTEGRITY

Where we see self-esteem, we see behavior that is consistent with the individual's professed values, convictions,

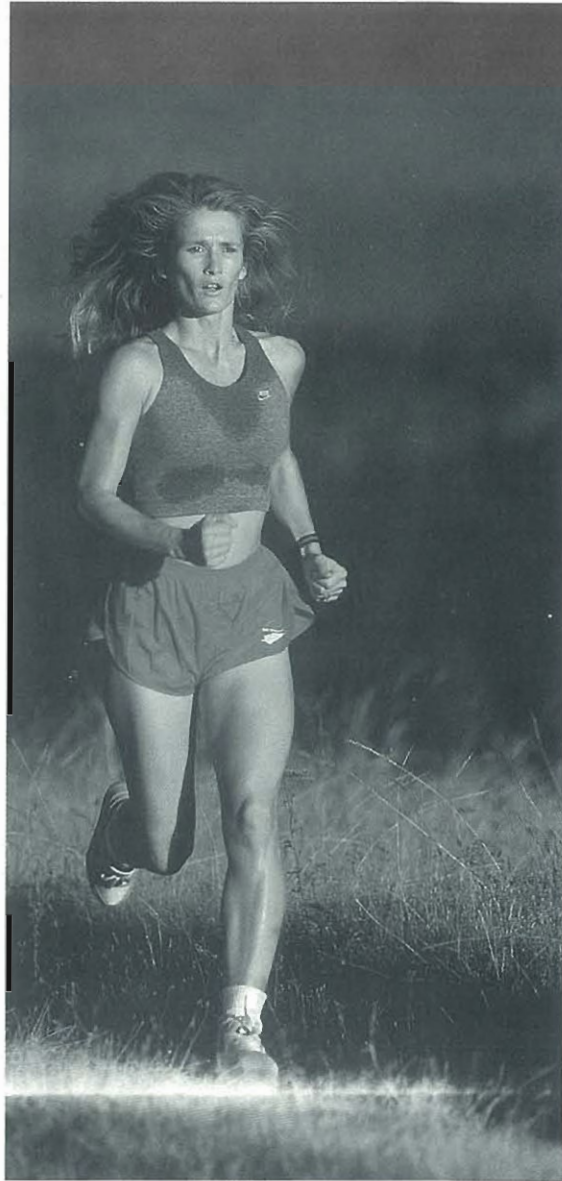
and beliefs. We see integrity.

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

In their eagerness to dissociate themselves from philosophy in general and ethics in particular, psychologists are often uncomfortable with anything that sounds like a reference to morality in the context of psychotherapy or psychological well-being. In consequence, they can miss the obvious fact that integrity is in effect one of the guardians of mental health and that it is cruel and misleading to encourage people to believe that practicing "unconditional positive regard" toward themselves will bring them to undiluted self-love, irrespective of the question of their personal integrity.

### VALUES, PRINCIPLES, AND STANDARDS

Sometimes an individual seeks to escape from the burden of integrity by disavowing, or professing to disavow, all values and standards. The truth is human beings cannot successfully regress to a lower level of evolution; we cannot draw back to a time before thinking in principles and long-range planning were possible. We are conceptual beings, that is our



**"When I finally allowed myself to face fully my own responsibility for my life, I began to grow. I began to change. And my self-esteem began to rise."**

nature, and we cannot function successfully as anything less. We need values to guide our actions. We need principles to guide our lives. Our standards may be appropriate or inappropriate to the requirements of our life and well-being, but to live without standards of any kind is impossible. So profound a rebellion against our nature as the attempt to discard all values, principles, and standards is itself an expression of impoverished self-esteem and a guarantee the impoverishment will be ongoing.

Let us acknowledge that the issue of living up to our standards is not

## HOW DOES HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM MANIFEST?

There are some fairly simple and direct ways in which healthy self-esteem manifests itself in our being. These include:

- *A face, manner, way of talking and moving that project the pleasure one takes in being alive.*
- *Ease in talking of accomplishments or shortcomings with directness and honesty, since one is in friendly relationship to facts.*
- *Comfort in giving and receiving compliments, expressions of affection, appreciation, and the like.*
- *Openness to criticism and comfortable about acknowledging mistakes because one's self-esteem is not tied to an image of "perfection."*
- *One's words and movements tend to have a quality of ease and spontaneity since one is not at war with oneself.*
- *Harmony between what one says and does and how one looks, sounds and moves.*
- *An attitude of openness to and curiosity about new ideas, new experiences, new possibilities of life.*
- *Feelings of anxiety or insecurity, if they present themselves, will be less likely to intimidate or overwhelm one, since accepting them, managing them and rising above them rarely feels impossibly difficult.*
- *An ability to enjoy the humorous aspects of life, in oneself and others.*
- *Flexible in responding to situations and challenges, moved by a spirit of inventiveness and even playfulness, since one trusts one's mind and does not see life as doom or defeat.*
- *Comfort with assertive (not belligerent) behavior in oneself and others.*
- *Ability to preserve a quality of harmony and dignity under conditions of stress.*

## THEN, ON THE PURELY PHYSICAL LEVEL, ONE CAN OBSERVE CHARACTERISTICS SUCH AS THESE:

- *Eyes that are alert, bright, and lively.*
- *A face that is relaxed and (barring illness) tends to exhibit natural color and good skin vibrancy.*
- *A chin that is held naturally and in alignment with one's body.*
- *A relaxed jaw.*
- *Shoulders relaxed yet erect.*
- *Hands that tend to be relaxed, graceful, and quiet.*
- *Arms tend to hang in a relaxed, natural way.*
- *Posture tends to be relaxed, erect, well-balanced.*
- *A walk that tends to be purposeful (without being aggressive and overbearing).*
- *Voice tends to be modulated with an intensity appropriate to the situation, and with clear pronunciation.*

Notice that the theme of relaxation occurs again and again. Relaxation implies that we are not hiding from ourselves and are not at war with who we are. Chronic tension conveys a message of some form of internal split, some form of self-avoidance or self-repudiation, some aspect of the self being disowned or held on a very tight leash.

I asked a variety of psychotherapists of different theoretical orientations by what fairly simple criteria they would intuit a client's self-esteem. Interestingly, there was a high level of agreement among us.

always simple. What if our standards are mistaken or irrational?

## A CODE OF VALUES

We may accept a code of values that does violence to our needs as living organisms. For example, certain religious teachings implicitly or explicitly damn sex, damn pleasure, damn the body, damn ambition, damn material success, damn (for all practical purposes) the enjoyment of life on earth. This acceptance of life-denying standards is an enormous problem and one I have written about in *The Psychology of Self-Esteem* and *Honoring the Self*.

Here, I will simply observe that once we see that living up to our standards appears to be leading us toward self destruction, the time has obviously come to question our standards, rather than simply resigning ourselves to living without integrity. We may need to summon up the courage to challenge some of our deepest assumptions concerning what we have been taught to regard as the good.

## SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Where we see self-esteem, we see self-acceptance. High self-esteem individuals tend to avoid falling into an adversarial relationship with themselves.

If we are to grow and change, we must begin by learning self-acceptance. In my experience, self-acceptance is not an easy concept for most people to understand. The tendency is to equate self-acceptance with the approval of every aspect of our personality (or physical appearance) and with the denial that any change or improvement might be desirable.

To be self-accepting does not mean to be without a wish to change, improve, evolve. It means not to be at war with ourselves—not to deny the reality of what is true of us right now, at this moment of our existence. We deal here with the issue of respect for and acceptance of the facts—in this case, the facts of our own being.

To accept ourselves is to accept the fact that what we think, feel, and do are all expressions of the self *at the time they occur*. So long as we cannot accept the fact of what we are at any given moment of our existence, so long as we cannot permit ourselves fully to be aware of the nature of our choices and actions, cannot admit the truth into our consciousness, we cannot change.

Accepting what I am requires that I



approach the contemplation of my own experience with an attitude that makes the concepts of approval or disapproval irrelevant: *the desire to be aware.*

### UNCONDITIONAL SELF-ACCEPTANCE

There is still a deeper level on which we need to understand self-acceptance. Self-acceptance, in the ultimate sense, refers to an attitude of self-value and self-commitment that derives fundamentally from the fact that I am alive and conscious. It is deeper than self-esteem. It is a pre-rational, pre-moral act of self-affirmation—a kind of primitive egoism that is the birthright of every conscious organism. Yet, human beings have the power to act against or nullify this deep self-affirmation.

An attitude of self-acceptance is precisely what an effective psychotherapist appeals to or strives to awaken in a person of even the lowest self-esteem. This attitude can inspire a person to face whatever he or she most dreads to encounter within, without collapsing into self-hatred, repudiating the value of his or her person, or surrendering the will to live. Thus, a person might be unhappy about experiencing poor self-esteem, yet accept it along with the self-doubts and feelings of guilt. "I accept them as part of how I experience myself right now."

Self-acceptance at this level is unconditional. Self-esteem is not and cannot be.

When I endeavor to communicate the concept of self-acceptance to clients in therapy, I am sometimes met with protests. "But I don't *like* the way I am. I want to be different." Or, "I see people I admire—people who are strong, confident, assertive. That's the way I want to be. Why should I accept being a nonentity?"

We can note here the two fallacies already mentioned: the belief that if we accept who and what we are, we must approve of everything about us, and the belief that if we accept who

and what we are, we are indifferent to change or improvement.

### SELF-ACCEPTANCE FACILITATES CHANGE

I recall a female client who insisted that she could not possibly feel anything but self-loathing because of her inability to refuse any man's sexual overtures. I asked her if it was really true that she saw herself as a woman who could not say no. "Yes," she replied tearfully. I asked her if she was willing to accept that fact. "I hate it!" she replied.

I said that since it was true that was how she saw herself, was she willing to accept that truth and acknowledge it? After some initial reluctance she said, "I accept the fact that I see myself as a woman who can't say no."

When I asked her how saying that made her feel, she replied, "Angry."

Then I asked her if she could accept the fact that she feels very angry when she acknowledges perceiving herself as a woman who can't say no.

She said indignantly, "I *refuse* to accept the fact that I am that kind of person!"

I asked her, "Then, how can you ever hope to change?"

I guided her through several psychological exercises aimed at facilitating her acceptance of her present state. Essentially they consisted of helping her experience that this was the way she was *right now*. After a while, she reported a change of feeling; she gave up the sense of fighting herself. She began relaxing into the feeling that "at this time in my life, this is part of who I am."

"This is so strange," she remarked. "Nothing has changed. I still have the problem. But I feel calmer. I've stopped shouting at myself. It's just... a fact about me. I don't like it, but it's a fact. I acknowledge it. Not just with words, but, you know, really accepted as true. Nothing has changed, and yet I feel as if I have more self-respect."

Then she made the most significant statement. "And as I begin to accept the reality of what I've been doing, how I've been living, it seems as if it would be much harder to go on doing it—I mean, to go on doing things of which I disapprove. Things that are humiliating. Perhaps that's why I've resisted accepting it. As soon as you stop fighting and accept, something begins to happen."

### THE POWER OF SELF- RESPONSIBILITY

Working with clients in psychotherapy, I am intrigued by catching the moment at which growth suddenly seems to spurt forward. I often see that the most radical transformation occurs after the client's realization that *no one is coming to the rescue*. "When I finally allowed myself to face fully my own responsibility for my life," more than one client has said to me, "I began to grow. I began to change. And my self-esteem began to rise."

In reality, we are responsible for our choices and actions, not responsible as the recipient of moral blame or guilt, but responsible as the chief causal agent in our lives and behavior.

I do not mean to imply that a person never suffers through accident or through the fault of others, nor that a person is responsible for everything in life that may happen to him or her. We are not omnipotent. But self-responsibility is clearly indispensable to good self-esteem. Avoiding self-responsibility victimizes us with regard to our own lives. It leaves us helpless. It is just this view from which many people need to emancipate themselves if they are ever to evolve to a non-tragic sense of life.

There is self-empowerment in declaring (and meaning!):

"I am responsible for the attainment of my desires and goals."

"I am responsible for my choices and actions."

TURN TO PAGE 73

# Getting Beyond

**Your**

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*Many people feel trapped by their past. They think they are doomed by events that took place in the earliest stages of their childhood. ✿ Some people imagine that the birth experience was so traumatic that it completely determined the course of their life; for them, the biggest problem they have is that they were born. ✿ Some believe they are victims of their conditioning or how their parents treated them; they see this as the predominant determining factor in the life they now lead. ✿ There are those who believe they are extensions of their genes and that what primarily determines their life experiences is their genetic code. ✿ Others assign the determining factor of their lives to their astrological makeup or to their numerology. ✿ Still others attribute the determining factor of their lives to their social, ethnic, or racial background. ✿ Some say it is their gender that mostly determines their fate.*

# *When you enter a state of transcendence, you are able to create a new life, unburdened by both the victories and the defeats of the past.*

Robert Fritz is founder of DMA and the developer of the Technologies for Creating Curriculum. He lives in Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts.



There are many theories, built primarily on the assumptions of the reactive-responsive orientation, that promote the idea that you are for the most part fixed in your life pattern and that you can only make changes—if changes are at all possible—by somehow dealing with the predetermined nature you carry within you.

Different theories suggest dealing with the determining factor by understanding it, overpowering it, denying it, manipulating it, experiencing it, accepting it, repressing it, surrendering to it, dialoguing with it, appeasing it, or integrating it.

Those in the reactive-responsive orientation find this notion of “determining factors” appealing because it attributes causality to circumstances beyond their direct control.

When you shift to the orientation of the creative, you begin to move along the path of mastering causality. You become the predominant causal force in your life, which is a natural and desirable situation.

This shift is made by evoking senior forces, such as fundamental choice, primary and secondary choices, structural tension, aspiration to your true values, and being true to yourself.

These senior forces always take priority over lesser forces, such as

willpower manipulation, conflict manipulation, and structural conflict.

There is another force inherent in the orientation of the creative that is senior even to mastering causality. This senior force I call *transcendence*.

## TRANSCENDENCE

Transcendence is the power to be born anew, to make a fresh start, to turn over a new leaf, to begin with a clean slate, to enter into a state of grace, to have a second chance.

Transcendence makes no reference to the past, whether your past has been overflowing with victories or filled with defeats. When you enter a state of transcendence, you are able to create a new life, unburdened by both the victories and the defeats of the past.

Transcendence is more than just the accurate realization that the past is over. *It is also a realignment of all dimensions of yourself with the very source of your life.*

The story of Charles Dickens's character Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* illustrates power of transcendence. Guided by the Christmas Spirits, Scrooge was able to see his past, his present, and his probable future, and he was then given a second chance at life. When Scrooge awoke on Christmas morning, the very fact that he was still alive was the gift that provided new possibilities—including a new way of living that, up to that point in the story, had seemed improbable and even impossible.

Another major character in the story is Tiny Tim, the lame and sickly

yet uncommonly wise child who symbolizes natural human goodness. Scrooge developed a special relationship with Tiny Tim during the night with the Spirits. When Scrooge asked the Spirit of Christmas Present whether Tiny Tim would survive, the Spirit replied, “If these shadows remain unaltered, I see a vacant chair beside the hearth and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved.”

Scrooge's reaching out to Tiny Tim and Tiny Tim's reaching out to Scrooge were catalysts in Scrooge's transcendence. In fact, by his transcendence, he was able to save Tiny Tim's life, just as Tiny Tim was able to save Scrooge's life. Scrooge was able to redeem himself through his relationship to an innate love of the natural human goodness as symbolized by Tiny Tim.

When you reestablish your relationship to your natural goodness, you give a new life to what is highest in you.

From the moment he awoke on that Christmas morning through the rest of his life, Scrooge was truly changed. The change was not merely a superficial change in behavior. Rather it was a change in his entire life orientation. Scrooge realized the preciousness of each moment and his ability to aspire to the greatest good in each moment.

Had Scrooge merely had a “peak experience,” he would have experienced no fundamental change in orientation. Although a peak experience might have temporarily changed his

behavior, in time he would have reverted to his old, miserly ways.

Because Scrooge's change was orientational, he was fundamentally a new person, as if he had been born anew. From that point on, his past was irrelevant and the nature of his change filled each subsequent day of his life.

Not all changes of orientation, even desirable ones, contain the power of transcendence. It is possible for you to have a change of orientation and still continue to exist in a linear, cause-and-effect system. Transcendence operates outside such a system. Transcendence evokes the power to start from scratch, outside the realm where previous causal actions are in play. Because transcendence is an ever-new state of being, once you enter into it, each new moment is alive with fresh possibilities—possibilities that may never have seemed possible before.

#### TRANSCENDENCE AND THE CREATIVE ACT

Through the creative act you reach beyond yourself, beyond your identity, and beyond your own life because you are working with two kinds of laws: the law of *cause and effect* and the law of *transcendence*.

First, when you create, you increase your ability to use causes to produce effects. (Cause and effect is sometimes called the "law of karma.") But this law is not the senior force in the creative process.

Second, beyond the time-space continuum and beyond its causal aspects, when you create, you are experiencing the law of transcendence. In this realm, past causal factors are not in play. When you turn to a new canvas or initiate any act of creation, at that moment the past is literally over. As you stand poised before the blank sheet of music paper or the uncut piece of marble, the new moment yields new possibilities beyond anything you might ever have imagined before.

As a creator, past cause and effect are no longer dominant factors. You are in a state of transcendence, for in that moment *anything* can happen. You are not trapped by previous actions you have taken. You are not forced to extricate yourself from unwarranted situations.

The past, of course, has its function in the orientation of the creative. It supports you in learning how to master cause and effect, which is an important aspect of the creative process, because what you are able to do with a period of transcendence is create new cause and effect. Your years spent in school or in other learning situations in no way limit the visions you can conceive and the results you can create. The past simply and only *helps* you.

In the creative orientation, mastering the law of cause and effect supports the experience of transcendence. It prepares you adequately to bring into reality the transcendent experience.

Through the creative act you bring into reality the play of your own *life force*.

To talk about transcendence by saying, "I am nothing but a channel" or "I am nothing but a tool of God's will" is a misunderstanding of the relationship between you and that special moment focused through you as creator. The notion that human action is inessential in the creative process distorts the power, beauty, and unique preciousness of the individuality of the human spirit.

Without human choice and action, many magnificent results would never have been produced. When Beethoven created his symphonies, he may have been influenced by his higher intuitive perception, *but it took Beethoven to compose this music. This was Beethoven's creation, and this music did not exist before Beethoven wrote it.*

By your presence on this planet, you make possible creations that would otherwise not be possible. They become possible because they come from your concept, from what

## STEPS IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The steps in the creative process are simple to describe, but they do not constitute a formula. Instead, each step represents certain types of actions. Some aspects of the creative process are active, some are more passive. Different aspects call for different skills. You may have developed some of these skills already and find that other skills are not as easy at first. Each time you create a new result, you are involved in a unique creation. While your ability will develop over time with experience, every new creation has its own individual process.

### 1. CONCEIVE OF THE RESULT YOU WANT TO CREATE.

Creators start at the end. First they have an idea of what they want to create. Sometimes this idea is general and sometimes it is specific. Before you can create what you want to create, you must know what you are after, what you want to bring into being. Your original concept may be clear or it may be simply a rough draft. Either will work well. Some creators like to improvise as they create, so they begin with a general concept. A painter may not know exactly how the final painting may look, but he or she has enough of a concept to make adjustments during the creative process so that the painting in progress will come closer and closer to what the artist wants. Other painters know exactly what the final painting will look like before they pick up a brush. Georgia O'Keeffe said, "I don't start until I'm almost entirely clear. It is a waste of time and paint if I don't. I've wasted a lot of canvasses, so I like to be pretty clear."

Knowing what you want is itself a skill. Our traditional educational system does not encourage you to know what you want. Instead you are encouraged to choose the "correct"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 63

response from narrow choices that life seems to offer. Frequently this has little relationship to what you really want. Because of this, many people develop an ambivalence toward what

ments, that you can never really view reality objectively. But in the same university, the art department teaches those students to draw portraits of models. This drawing skill helps students learn first to see, and then rep-

This is another skill in which students are taught to identify and represent reality correctly. When they write down the music that was played, it is not a matter of "interpretation." If the student correctly identifies what was played, he or she gets



they want. And why not? It is hard to be enthusiastic about the choices most people are left with. But as you develop your own creative process, conceiving of the results you want will become meaningful and interesting.

2. KNOW WHAT CURRENTLY EXISTS.

If you were painting a painting, you would need to know the current state of the painting as it developed. This would be important knowledge. If you did not know what you had created so far, it would be impossible for you to add more brush strokes or change what you had done so as to bring the painting you wanted into being.

Knowing what currently exists is another skill. While this may sound deceptively simple, in fact most of us have been encouraged to view reality with particular biases. Some people make reality seem better than it is, some make it seem worse than it is, and some minimize how good or bad it can be. One of the most important abilities creators have is the ability to be objective about their own creations. There is a notion, popular in many university philosophy depart-

resent, what they are looking at. Even though each art student may have his or her own style of portraiture, anyone from the philosophy department could identify the model by looking at any of the drawings of the model.

In music conservatories, students are taught to identify rhythms, harmonies, and intervals by hearing them. This skill is called ear training.

an A. Students who do not correctly identify what is played get less than an A. Music students learn how concrete the perception of music can be. This is another example of training designed to enhance the ability to view reality objectively.

In a similar way, you need to develop the skill of viewing reality

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62



Conceive  
of the  
result  
you want  
to  
create.  
Know  
what  
currently  
exists.  
Then  
take  
action.

objectively. For many people reality is an acquired taste. At first glance you may have uncomfortable and disturbing experiences. If you were in a problem-solving mode, you would take action to restore feelings of balance and well-being. The most common way people do this is by misrepresenting reality. They may lie, rationalize, or distract themselves from what is going on. But as you learn to master your own creative process, you develop a capacity for truth. Good, bad, or indifferent, you will still want to know accurately what is going on.

### 3 . TAKE ACTION .

Once you know what you want and know what you currently have, the next step is to take action. But what kind of action do you take? Creating is a matter of *invention* rather than of *convention*. Education emphasizes convention, so you may have had little experience with inventing. Inventing is another skill that can be developed. When you take an action that is designed to bring your creation into being, the action may either work or not work. If the action works, you can continue taking it or discontinue taking it. Sometimes it will be useful to continue, sometimes it will not be useful to continue. You will know what to do by watching the changes in the current state of the result. All the actions, the ones that work and the ones that do not work, help to create the final result. This is because creating itself is a learning process, learning what works and what does not work. The stock-in-trade of a creator are the abilities to experiment and to evaluate one's experiments.

Invention is not all trial and error. As you invent actions to bring your creations into being, you begin to develop an instinct for the actions that work best. Creators are able to develop an economy of means. This generally happens over time, and the more you create, the more chance you have to develop your own instincts.

Some of the actions you take will help you move directly to the result you want, *but most will not*. The art of creating is often found in your ability to adjust or correct what you have done so far. Many people have been encouraged to "get it right the first time" or even worse to "be perfect." This policy can lead to profound inexperience in the adjustment process. Instead of making the most of what you have done so far in order to bring your creation into existence, you may be tempted to give up any time the circumstances seem against you. Sometimes people encourage others to "stay with it" and develop "determination and fortitude" in reaction to habitual quitting. But this manipulation hardly ever works. Without an ever increasing ability to adjust the actions you take, trying to "stay with it" can seem like banging your head against a wall. After sincere attempts to "stay with it" fail and fail again, the path of least resistance is to quit. You may have thought your habitual giving up was a serious character flaw. But this is probably not the case. It is not fortitude, willpower, or determination that

enable you to continue the creative process, but learning as you go.

### 4 . LEARN THE RHYTHM OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS .

There are three distinct phases of the creative process: germination, assimilation, and completion. Each phase has its own energy and class of actions.

*Germination* begins with excitement and newness. Partly this germinational energy comes from the unusualness of the new activity.

*Assimilation* is often the least obvious phase of the process. In this phase the initial "thrill is gone." This phase moves from a focus on internal action to a focus on external action. In this phase you live with your concept of what you want to create and internalize it. It becomes part of you. Because of this, you are able to generate energy to use in your experiments and learning. The drama of the first blush of germination is over, but this new, quiet energy of assimilation helps you form the result.

*Completion* is the third stage of creation. This stage has a similar energy to germination, but now it is applied to a creation that is more and more tangible. In this phase you use the energy not only to bring to final completion the result you are creating but also to position yourself for your next creation. In other words, this stage leads also to the germination of your next creation.

### 5 . CREATING A MOMENTUM .

Many of the theories describing creativity these days have a tone of "beginners luck." For professional creators there is a different tone, that of ever-increasing momentum. Not only is the creative process a reliable method for producing the results you want, it also contains seeds of its own development. Who do you think has a greater chance for successfully creating the results they want, those who have done it for years or those who are novices? It is true that some first-time novelists write masterpieces but this is the exception, not the rule. Even Mozart, perhaps the most gifted composer in history, developed and grew in his art. The music he wrote in his thirties was far more advanced than what he wrote in his twenties or in his teens. The more music he wrote, the more he was able to write. His increasing experience gave him the momentum typical of the creative process. If you begin to create the results you want today, you are more prepared to create the results you want ten years from now. Each new creation gives you added experience and knowledge of your own creative process. You will naturally increase your ability to envision what you want and your ability to bring those results into being.♦

you have learned, from your experiments, from your historical past, and from what you can aspire to.

I can't think of anything more divine than the creative act. All the myriad dimensions in which you exist converge in a single extended instant during the creative process.

### THE PRODIGAL SON

Another story that exquisitely illustrates the principle of transcendence is the parable of the prodigal son.

In this story there was a father who had two sons. One of his sons left home and went astray, while the other was a "good boy" who stayed at home and worked with his father.

One day the prodigal son remembered his home and decided to return to his father without any expectations of what might happen to him or how he would be received.

When he arrived home, his father, who had thought the boy was dead, was so overjoyed to discover his son alive that he celebrated the homecoming with great festivity. Not only did the father accept the prodigal back with all the rights of a full son, but he celebrated his love for his son far more than if he had never left at all.

The "good" son, who had remained at home all these years, was outraged at the father's acceptance and rejoicing over the prodigal. When the "good" son came to the father to protest what he was doing, the father tried to explain his actions by saying, "You see, I thought he was dead ... but he's alive. I thought he was dead, but he lives."

The father and his two sons represent three separate and distinct aspects of yourself. The father represents the source of your life; the good

*Getting beyond  
your past is more  
than just the  
accurate realization  
that the past is over.*

*It is also a  
realignment of all  
dimensions of  
yourself with the  
very source of  
your life.*

son is the part of you that has been aligned to that source; and the prodigal son is the part of you that has become misaligned with your source, the part of you that has gone astray from being true to yourself and true to what is highest in you.

There is a point at which the prodigal, reactive, and rebellious part of you remembers your source and desires to return to it, as did the prodigal son in the parable.

Furthermore, as in the story, your source longs to be reunited with all of you and reaches out to you, as the father reached out to receive the prodigal.

But the "good" part of you—the part of you that has tried through the years to respond appropriately, to be

true to yourself, and to do the right things—rejects the reunion of all the parts of yourself.

*It is not the prodigal aspects of yourself that deny your full integration but the part of you that has been responsive, the part of you that has tried to be a good person.*

Most people assume that it is their prodigal side—their indiscretions, failings, compromises, lies, dishonesty, opportunistic behavior, selfishness, hatreds, prejudices, jealousies, pettiness, greed, egotism, laziness, destructiveness, negativity, and rebelliousness—that keeps them from reuniting with what is highest in them, their source.

On the contrary, the immediate natural tendency of the prodigal part of yourself is to want to return "home" to your source and be realigned with it.

It is not your prodigal side that prevents you from forgiving yourself but the "good," responsive part of you that rejects your innately strong longing to be one with yourself.

When the prodigal son remembered that he could return home he did so without any expectations — unconditionally.

When you awaken to your deepest longing to be whole, you return to wholeness without making demands, without setting up expectations, without establishing any conditions. Similarly, as the father rejoiced over the return of his prodigal son, so your source welcomes you home without conditions, tests of sincerity, expectations of contrition, explanations, or repayment.

This unconditional love that the father (source) has and his great longing for your return is the very power that enables transcendence to occur. "I thought he was dead ...and I find he's alive."

## ONE-WAY BARGAINS

In order to have the return of the prodigal complete and whole, the two sons needed to reconcile. However, there was a twist in the story. In the beginning of the parable the father and the son who stayed at home were aligned whereas the prodigal son was misaligned. When the prodigal returned home, however, he and his father became aligned, but the good son became misaligned. How did this change come about?

The good son had made what may be called a "one-way bargain" with the father. In a typically reactive-responsive way, he assumed that if he did all of the "right things" and adhered to the "right standards" and followed the "right precepts," he would be rewarded by his father. He was shocked to see his brother, who had not followed the "right path," being welcomed, honored, and celebrated.

Many people make similar one-way bargains. Typically in this unilateral bargain, one person assumes that if he or she follows certain practices, others (or perhaps even the universe itself) must reciprocate in some way.

In a one-way bargain the other party never really agrees to the bargain and often does not even know of it.

A classic example of a one-way bargain is found in the early stages of many relationships, when one person unilaterally decides not to date any other people, with the implicit demand that the other person in the relationship do likewise. This is a one-way bargain if the other person never makes that agreement.

There are those who attempt to live "good" lives as a one-way bargain with the universe. They decide that if they are "good," the universe must reciprocate and be good to them. The trouble is, the universe did not make that agreement with them.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the good son's actions were part of a one-way bargain, tied to the rewards he expected from his father. But that

was not an agreement the father had made with him.

If the good son had been righteous because he wanted to be, rather than for the reward he expected from his father, his actions would have been their own reward. The parable implies, however, that the good son was good for an ulterior motive. *In a typically reactive-responsive way, the good son did what he thought he had to do, not what he truly wanted to do.*

The part of you that created one-way bargains with yourself is like the good son. If you find it difficult to forgive yourself for not having been true to yourself in the past, one reason might be because you have made such a bargain.

## BEING PERFECT

Many people demand perfection of themselves and others. But we exist in an imperfect reality in which, ironically, the only perfection that can be found is in its imperfection.

Viktor Frankl points out in *Man's Search for Meaning* that the saints did not reach sainthood by trying to be perfect.

No one can forgive you but yourself—including forgiving the "good" part of you that has sought perfection and made it hard to forgive yourself until now.

When you come home to yourself without expectations, demands, ulterior motives, or one-way bargains, a fundamental change in the underlying structure of your life takes place. Its path of least resistance now leads you into a state of transcendence, in which total integration of your life cannot but occur.

While the goal of responsiveness in the reactive-responsive orientation is an impossible-to-reach perfection, the natural tendency in the orientation of the creative is transcendence.

## THE POWER OF THE SOURCE, THE POWER OF THE PRIMAL SELF

What enables transcendence to supersede the power of cause and

effect is that in the structural play of forces, transcendence is a senior force and, like all senior forces, takes priority over lower forces.

*Nothing is more powerful than the very source of life itself.*

Your life source strives for expression through you. This is analogous to the great power of the unconditional love that the father had for both the prodigal son and the good son. The natural tendency of this power is to be fully expressed, so the longing of the father in the parable is the longing of unconditional love for its fullest expression. Since this love is unconditional, it demands nothing in return.

At the same time your primal self has the longing to be reunited with its source, as the prodigal longed to return home. "Primal," as I use the word, refers not to the needy, selfish, pained, angry, sexual, or infantile characteristics that are ascribed to it in some psychological systems; I use the word, rather, as the Kabbalists use it, to describe the "primal will to good." Primal, in this context, refers to the deepest longings of human nature to reunite with its life source.

Sometimes this longing is called the soul urge because it exists at a level deeper than your psychological makeup, deeper than your conscious thoughts, deeper than your intuitive perceptions, and deeper even than the structures that are predominantly in play in your life. Saint Augustine referred to this longing when he observed, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

## TRANSCENDENT STRUCTURE

The relationship of attraction between these two forces—the source and the primal self—is itself structural in nature and generates a path of least resistance that leads these two forces to reunite.

Since neither of these forces is time-dependent, their integration can happen at any moment, even at moments that logically would seem incongruous.

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# Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

## *Follow Your Bliss*

By Hal Zina Bennett, Ph.D. and Susan J. Sparrow  
New York: Avon Books, 1990  
\$7.95 Paperback

Drawing from a rich heritage of American spirituality, Dr. Hal Bennett and Susan Sparrow quote Henry David Thoreau:

*Direct your eye inward, and you'll find  
A thousand regions in your mind  
Yet undiscovered.*

Bennett and Sparrow instruct people at their workshops to explore these inner regions and to discover roots that take us to the deepest core of our "spiritual essence." Once there, we might very well *rediscover* facets of our Inner Self that had receded during childhood into a dark, fathomless realm governed by primal fears.

How to journey inward and stake our claims in this psychic terrain is the subject of *Follow Your Bliss*, a book that balances simplicity and depth quite well and outlines an Eight-Step Program to discover, accept, refine, follow, and eventually to apply the "gift" of bliss in our everyday interactions, relationships, and careers.

On the surface, there is nothing new in advising one to access his or her innermost being and living this self-knowledge openly and mindfully. But, as Bennett and Sparrow (and others) are keen to note, there continues to be resistance to this learning process. Why? Their workshop experiences with many adults who have suffered provide the answer: "They resisted going into their inner worlds because to do so was to relive the awful pain of their youngest years, pain that they wanted to put behind them."

Bennett and Sparrow are certain that most humans are capable of activating what they call a "Homing Device," which will indeed put us in touch with our "inner guide" and open us up intuitively. To home in on this wisest dimension of human being requires our acknowledging and, if need be, reliving past pain and moving on to both

changes of mind and behavior. The authors also instruct persons to develop an "observer mind" in order to note continuously every movement of body and mind and to strip away all those accretions that comprise what they refer to as the "Mask Self."

The Mask Self, they reason, is a formidable obstacle to our "inner resources." They tell us why "They are often hidden from us by a self-imposed mask. This mask, which we created very early in our lives in response to painful interactions, confusions, or simply misunderstandings with the people around us, was originally used as a shield." Also on this crucial topic they write "Although we originally adopt the Mask Self for our own survival, we can actually lose our true identity through it. The Mask Self can become so familiar to us that we begin to believe that it *is* our true self."

Perceiving beyond the masks can result in our becoming "self-directed." Listening to those voices from within is a sacred activity of ancient origins, the authors inform us. Their insight here bears careful attention. "The use of inner guides is probably as old as human consciousness itself. It is a part of the ancient and storytelling traditions, which have been valued in every society as a way of revealing truths that can't be communicated in more linear terms."

Of course, Bennett and Sparrow remind us throughout *Follow Your Bliss* that we must first work through our masks, address the painful matter of what they call the "Essential Wound" (which derives usually from childhood traumas and negative experiences), forgive those persons who hurt us, and always to take responsibility for our perceptions. Inner guides are not infallible, they tell us, but by following the eight steps that they outline in the book, we can heal our wounds and realize experientially that bliss is ours to have and to hold.

## *Whole Child/Whole Parent*

By Polly Berrien Berends  
New York: Harper & Row, 1987  
\$12.95 Paperback

In his forward, M. Scott Peck (author of *The Road Less Traveled*) refers to *Whole Child/Whole Parent* as a "deeply reli-

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gious" book that is a mystical and psychological classic. I withhold comment on its possible stature as a classic (not using the word "classic" lightly), but I will refer to the book as a unique blend of spirituality and practicality that most parents with receptive minds can learn from.

A mind that is full is not necessarily mindful.

In other words, Berends does not set out to fill your mind with parental attitudes, techniques, rules, suggestions, and other child-as-object platitudes. Rather, she seems to be an exemplar who takes to heart the Zen saying, "Search not for the truth; only cease to cherish opinions."

Of course, no one can write a book that is opinion-free, especially about parenthood and childhood, but Berends is like the mystics of ages past—"free of preconceptions" on the path towards self realization. As such, the spiritual principles she outlines on the topics of wholeness, spirit, happiness, freedom, unity, beauty, truth, and love are not only personal reflections of her own experiences as parent, by symbolic indicators of what she perceives in a larger sense, God as love and intelligence.

"Love-intelligence," she writes, "*takes place where the tendency of life to reveal itself is fulfilled in the essential nature of the individual to see what is being revealed.*" (italics the author's)

A focal insight in the book concerns what she calls "Me, Inc.," a "mistaken idea of wholeness" which involves "seeing ourselves as separate selves" (in a sea of oneness) and further thinking that each self somehow stands off alone. "*To Me, Inc. as parent,*" Berends reasons, "*the child is necessarily either an annex or an accomplishment.*" (italics the author's) In other words, parents often rob their children of wholeness by trying to make themselves whole—an erroneous enterprise that is likely to distract a child from his or her spiritual nature and lead to parent-transmitted limitations of all kinds (e.g., fear, opinions, etc.)

What is the alternative to Me, Inc?

Berends: "Parenthood is a time when we are pushed to discover the nature of the whole and our oneness with it." She is calling upon parents to embark on this path of discovery with their children as fellow seekers and learners, as well as loving guides if their own perceptions of reality as one is "whole-seeing." Also, she recommends that preparing the way for children to continue learning as "seeing beings" is best carried out *by staying out of the way.*

From the beginning children are "perfect consciousness," she points out. For them to nurse on *our* consciousness—which they most certainly and unavoidably will—we must realign our lives with reality by freeing ourselves to see and experience God as love and intelligence and to mirror this knowledge in our every thought and action.

By freeing ourselves to perceive lovingly what *is* can lead to "true freedom." Berends writes with beauty and simplicity on this:

True freedom is not freedom from anything, but there is much bondage to be avoided along the way. While there is a need for protection and comfort, there must be freedom from fear. At the same time that there is a need for guidance and teaching, there must be freedom from domination. At the same time that there is a need for reproof and correction, there must be freedom from guilt and blame. At the same time that there is discernment, there must be freedom from classification and comparison.

Parents who are truly free will enable their children to be truly free. Reading *Whole Child/Whole Parent* can assist on this path towards freedom.

*We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love*

By Robert A. Johnson  
San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1983  
\$8.95 Paperback

"One of the great paradoxes in romantic love is that *it never produces human relationship as long as it stays romantic.*" (italics the author's)

When you read *We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love*, the meaning of the above statement will have expanded in your consciousness; for these words, and many others, by Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson, would surely have delighted Jung himself, so based on sagacity and perception they are.

The cumulative impact of his insights concerning Western romanticism can be likened to a *rude reawakening*. I have never read a better book on the tragic mismatch between love and romance, divine love and human love, masculine and feminine, inner ideals and outer realities, the spiritual and physical, the goddess and woman, "living death" and death as transformation, conscious and egocentric suffering, the "dance of illusion" and simple, mindful living, and love as object and as ongoing process of consciousness.

This book should stay with you for a lifetime. Johnson writes with marvelous clarity about *Tristan and Iseult*, sharing a Jungian interpretation "that focuses on the symbols in the myth as sources of psychological insight." This symbolic focus is masterful and illuminative. He retells the myth, which dates back to the Middle Ages, and parallels the narrative with commentary that establishes how "courtly love" has been distorted (mostly by men out of touch with their feminine side) into strange, muddled hybrids of romantic love that have "overwhelmed our collective psyche and permanently altered our view of the world."

The myth cannot be retold here, but one might get some sense of its epic qualities by thinking of such love stories as *Romeo and Juliet* or Jami's Sufi romance, *Jusuf and Zulaikha*. In briefest terms, it can be related that Tristan becomes enamored of Iseult the Fair and she him, and through foul means or fair, they intend to keep their vow of love to each other. Of course, they die in the end.

But the tragedy is not their death, Johnson writes. The tragedy is that Tristan, especially, committed himself only to passion and seemed to lose sight of the very woman he so ardently idealized. He "projected" the cosmic drama spin-

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ning around in his love-struck cranium onto this woman and despite her unavailability would not settle into a loving relationship with another woman—another Iseult in the story—who representing the "earth feminine" wished to love him as a human being. "Tristan's tragedy," Johnson writes, "is that he refuses to love while he is yet alive, and so he has no human life or human love. This is how his life becomes a 'living death.'"

It is awesome, Johnson thinks, how this myth of romantic love has permeated Western civilization and clings to our collective psyche to this day. Look about (and within) and one should begin to perceive that so much of the suffering of persons in marriages and so-called relationships is

*unconscious*—which explains, Johnson points out, why romances are indeed tragic entanglements that lead nowhere.

Suffering is inevitable, but if love were conscious, suffering could be as well. Johnson shares a powerful insight here:

To suffer consciously means to live through the 'death of ego,' to voluntarily withdraw one's projections from other people, to stop searching for the 'divine world' in one's spouse, and instead to find one's own inner life as a psychological and religious act. It means to take responsibility for discovering one's own totality, one's own unconscious possibilities. It means to question one's old patterns—to be willing to change. All of this involves conflict, self-questioning, uncovering duplicities one would rather not face. It is painful and difficult.

Those words should be framed in our consciousness. And, readers, so should the rest of this wonderful book, *Wz*.

We need to put the love back in romance and see the person we're loving as just that. . . a person.

*Witness to the Fire: Creativity and the Veil of Addiction*

By Linda Schierse Leonard  
Boston: Shambhala, 1989

\$14.95 Paperback

"The Night darkens the spirit, but only to illumine it."—St. John of the Cross.

The above words occurred to Linda Schierse Leonard in a detox ward—certainly at a time when the Night had darkened *her* spirit. She had asked herself the question, "Is there meaning in addiction?"

Some time later the Night illumined her spirit, and she answered her own question with the writing of a book that honors the creative potential in all of us—*Witness to the Fire*.

While held "hostage" in that detox ward, thoughts began to take shape about how the psyche of the addict and the creative person are characterized by a "parallel process."

In the creative process, there is also a sort of 'possession,' a giving oneself over to the call of creativity. This kind of possession can be negative and narrowing, but it can also be deepening and transformative. In the process of creating, both sides are often felt. Their tension must be borne if one is to actualize the vision. The addict tries to escape the tension of existence. The creative person honors the tension by living in it and creating out of it.

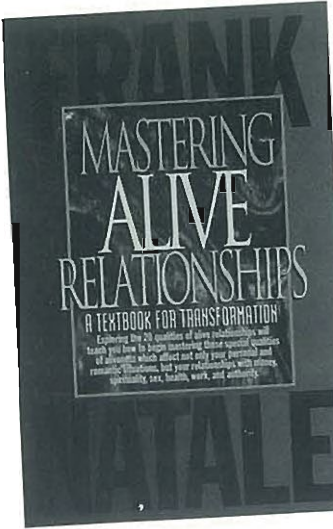
Leonard has chosen to create out of that tension. The striking originality of her book, with its Jungian perspective (and a fair dose of existential philosophy), bears witness to the creativity that is possible once all that is bad and good in this chaotic modern age is integrated into our whole being. Most of the chapters of the book are devoted to "archetypal figures of addiction." Writing about both literary works and authors, she relates in painstaking detail the psychological dynamics of such archetypes as The Moneylender, The Gambler, The Romantic, The Underground Man, The Outlaw, The Trickster, The Madwoman, The Judge, The Killer, and The Hostage.

The book is divided into three parts, each signifying stages of the addictive process: The Flight, which refers to being seduced; The Fall, the "descent into darkness"; and The Creation, "where the wounds are accepted, understood, and transformed."

One might be astounded at the number of writers who, besides

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being recognized as among the greats in American letters, were also known addicts (especially under the tragic influence of alcohol). But the two writers whom I think especially illustrate her point about creativity being either a vehicle towards transformation or an endless passage through hell are Jack London and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

London wrote what Leonard calls a "classic study of the drinker in denial," *John Barleycorn*. The alcoholism the novel describes paralleled London's life. Yet in private correspondence he would not admit to being an alcoholic. The Trickster had won the day in fiction and in life. Not until he discovered Jung did London finally begin to intuit "that even his darkest nightmares could be revelations of spiritual meaning." Still, tragically, he lived a short life (about forty years). Leonard writes, "He was not able to live in the tension of his conflicting desires in a way that could enable him to reconcile them to a greater whole."

As for Dostoevsky, he portrayed in his novels many of the archetypes that Leonard discusses: The Underground Man in *Notes from Underground*; The Gambler in *The Gambler*; The Killer in *Crime and Punishment*, among others. But the addiction that most consumed him, gambling, finally gave way to the Creative Daimon in his crowning literary achievement, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Towards the end of his life, Dostoevsky experienced a spiritual transformation.

And so can we all, Leonard believes, if we but recognize the archetypes in our own psyche and share them with other addicts in a community setting (her choice being AA and its Twelve Steps, though other recovery programs might work well too, she writes).

To read *Witness to the Fire* is to engage our mind in an intellectual exercise that might lead one to say

yes to life, to creativity, and to the Higher Power we give many names but know in our hearts is One.

*The Future of the Body: Explorations Into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*

By Michael Murphy  
Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1992  
\$30.00 Cloth

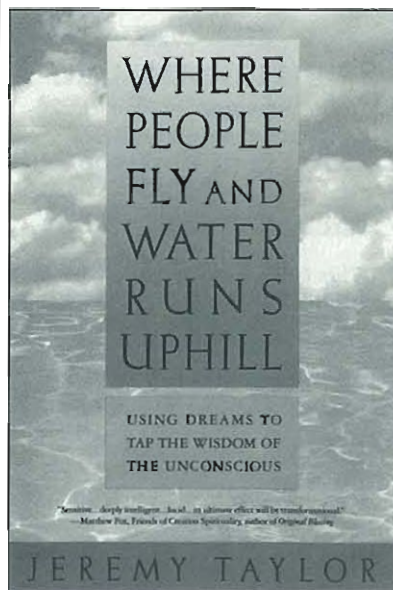
"I have no doubt whatever that most people live, whether physically, intellectually or morally, in a very restricted circle of their potential being. . . much like a man who, out of his whole bodily organism, should get into a habit of using and moving only his little finger. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon, of which we do not dream."  
—William James

Despite thirty years of extensive research into metanormal capacities, Michael Murphy wrote in the first sentence of his epochal book, *The Future of the Body*, the following words: "We live only part of the life we are given." This brief statement mirrors in meaning the above quote by James. We haven't started feeling the rest of our body, so we're still wiggling our "little finger."

It has been said by various mystics throughout the ages that mindless evolution is impossible. It must be conscious or development stalls. Unfortunately, as Murphy seems to intuit, too many human beings who have responded to the literature of mystical genius are too caught up in thinking that evolution will occur through sheer mental exertion. But Murphy offers six hundred pages of cross-cultural documentation from contemplative traditions, medical science, sports, anthropology, psychical research, and the arts that make clear that bodiless evolution is impossible too. Evolution requires the *interaction* of body and mind, not by separate routes or by de-emphasizing one or the other.

Murphy writes about "extraordi-

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**REVIEWS**

nary types of embodiment." Although he leans heavily on scientific evidence, he is just as receptive to what has been called "mystic empiricism." He knows well that claims simply cannot be dismissed because of resistance among scientists. Taken all together, the "evidence" he includes reflects universal, cultural, and personal dimensions, and on a deeper level there are consistencies strongly indicative of a "transcendent reality."

A random sampling of examples of "transformative capacity" is in order: subtle sight (e.g., perception of luminous presences), telepathy, telekinesis, remote viewing, movement in "extra physical worlds," sports feats, incorruption (e.g., corpses not decaying), religious stigmata, spiritual healing, control of autonomic processes, martial arts, charisms (extraordinary physical phenomena) of the Catholics, ecstasies of various sacred traditions, and so on.

On the surface, metanormal functioning might seem far removed from our experience, since, after all, Murphy is mostly referring to cases of a tiny minority of people who are not immune to the cultural influences of their locale. He recognizes the strong pull of culture, but he is envisioning something more encompassing, something that might be seen "as emergent features of human development." He is not deluded into thinking that the many capacities he discusses are equated with enlightenment; he is cautiously optimistic, though, about human potentials being brought out and developed within integrated frameworks (flexible institutions). I reemphasize his caution, as attested to in this passage:

Differences in the availability of metanormal attributes is a blessing, it seems to me, another sign that a comprehensive whole-

ness informs living systems. We are tilted in the right way, as it were, toward a balanced growth. In this respect, our species as a whole may have a fortunate orientation toward the future, though any one of us can lose our way through misguided practice, destructive social reinforcements, our darker motives, or sheer perversity.

"There will be no further human development unless some of us work to realize it," he writes. *The Future of the Body* outlines in detail how people have realized human development, which should provide impetus to the rest of us to reorient our minds back to our bodies and endeavor to live the Greek ideal, *mens sana in corpore sano* ("a sound mind in a sound body").

*Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get on with Your Life*

By Dr. Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon  
New York: Warner Books, 1990  
\$19.95 Cloth

The pain that people have inflicted on each other since time immemorial continues, it would seem, unabated. But perhaps the times we live in now, though still marked by widespread physical and psychological abuse, are truly changing. There are strong indications of trends that show the receptivity of people to the idea and ideal of rising above their denials of being abusers and of being abused and working towards behaviors of compassionate awareness. As Dr. Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon have observed, more and more persons are wanting to break out of the vicious cycle that results in abuse begetting abuse and victims begetting victims.

There are no easy paths, the Simons are making quite clear in their book, *Forgiveness*. Pain that

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## Getting Beyond Your Past

In the structure of cause and effect, which gives rise to events sequentially related to other events, it seems that the only possible step each new action can lead to is the next action in the cause-and-effect sequence. It therefore seems impossible for a change to occur that is unrelated to what already exists in the cause-and-effect chain.

And yet, as if miraculously and independently of normal causality, you can transcend your circumstances, your history, and the dominant structures that have been in play in your life, as well as every other aspect of your past and present.

You can come home to yourself.

### TRANSCENDENCE IN CIVILIZATION

Transcendence is not merely a personal principle; it can occur in civilization as a whole.

When we consider the causal forces at work in history, we might conclude that at present our civilization has a probable future of destruction, decay, and disintegration. However, in each individual on this planet there is the deepest longing to reunite with what is highest in him or herself. Thus, transcendence for the planet as a whole becomes more and more possible as the individuals who make up civilization shift from a reactive-responsive orientation to the orientation of the creative, in which transcendence becomes the norm.

During its history, our planet has been characterized mostly by reactive-responsive people acting within the framework of structural conflict and being led through the path of least resistance from circumstance to circumstance, mostly driven by those circumstances and hardly ever having a real vision of what they truly wanted to create.

But at this moment in our histo-

ry, a new door is opening into an era motivated by vision, energized by aspiration, rooted in current reality, forged by each creative act, and leading to a transcendence of civilization as a whole.

As people learn to master their own creative process, they have the potential to be the predominant creative forces in their own lives.

In organizations, as people become fluent in creating and put that fluency to use in the service of what they most deeply want and love, a new breed of leaders will begin to emerge, leaders as creators, transforming the meaning of the relationship of the individual to all of human endeavor and building a civilization unlike any before.

When historian Theodore White was asked what he thought was the force with the most power to shape history, he said, "The idea."

The idea that is currently in the air, the insight that is ripe, the principle that is the most powerful catalyst of our age is that each individual can be the predominant creative force in his or her own life.

Once you have discovered this principle for yourself, there is no turning back. Your life will be changed forever. •

*From The Path of Least Resistance by Robert Fritz. Copyright 1984, 1989 by Robert Fritz. Printed with permission of the author.*

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author of *Your Erroneous Zones*

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stays harbored in the mind usually manifests in behaviors that damage health, relationships, and self-esteem. One of the Simons, Suzanne, can especially attest to this headlong rush down a dead-end street and feeling stranded when there is nowhere else to go. She grew up with an incestuous father who abused her, as well as a brother and sister. She has experienced the six stages of healing that precede the "discovery" of forgiveness: denial, self-blame, victim, indignation, survivor, and integration. And she is still on the healing path of forgiveness, an example to all who read this book.

Dr. Simon—whose extensive background includes work in personal growth, values clarification, and self-esteem—has formulated, along with Suzanne, a long-term program that includes twelve "clarification strategies," among them being "naming names," "non denial statements," "getting unstuck," and "needs identification." These strategies should strike one as both wise and practical, and their meanings should be deepened by the many personal examples of those who have been abusers and abused (though, for me, Suzanne's recall of a painful childhood is most poignant and illuminative).

There is some debate among self-help professionals about whether forgiveness is warranted in extreme cases (e.g., incest, physical torture, or

excessive verbal assaults). I tend to agree with the Simons that forgiveness is necessary. A headstrong and heart-hardened stance of not forgiving just adds kindling to an inner toxic fire that will possibly consume one in pain, hate, and fear and keep one at an evolutionary impasse, with no hope of further development.

Among the most important insights in the book are the definitions of what forgiveness *is* and *is not*. For instance, they write that forgiveness is not forgetting, condoning, absolution, "a form of self-sacrifice," and a "clear-cut, one time decision." Forgiveness *is not* self-righteous. From their vantage point, forgiveness *is* a combination of healing, looking inward, developing self-esteem, letting go of emotions linked to past traumas, liberating oneself from desires to punish, "freeing up" positive energies, and consciously making plans to move beyond former "grudges and resentments" and "hatred and self-pity."

Sidney and Suzanne Simon wish to help people who are part of that throng of "walking wounded" to traverse a path of healing that will enable them to, as they put it, become a "believer in life." The following summation conveys the vital message of *Forgiveness*:

Forgiveness is not an action.  
It is a discovery. Forgiveness is  
not a goal. It is the gift we

receive because we have pursued other goals, including improved physical and mental health, positive self-esteem, more nourishing friendships, more fulfilling intimate relationships, greater insight into our own behavior, and much more.

*Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow*

By Marsha Sinetar  
New York: Dell Publishing, 1987  
\$8.95 Paperback

Marsha Sinetar—an organization psychologist who practices mediation and corporate "change-management"—is a living exemplar of the "do-what-you-love premise." Her personal story of how she moved from public education to industry and from the city to a rural community is uplifting, as are all of the many stories she tells of people who have changed their jobs and their lives and have reaped both financial and spiritual rewards.

But the one story in *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow*—a book destined to be an enduring classic—that seemed to be a preeminent example of what Sinetar calls "vocational integration" concerns Mother Teresa:

It seems that Mother Teresa was in Ethiopia, around the time of the worst droughts and famine. She was caring for the needy, blessing dying children, although people were dying around her at alarming rates. A reporter who happened on the scene asked her if she didn't get discouraged seeing, day after day, so many people die despite her efforts to help them. She briskly replied, "We are not here to be successful. We are here to be faithful."

Sinetar's response: "Her total commitment was enough to keep her on the path, and she did not need out-

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## Living With Self-Esteem

"I am responsible for how I deal with people."

"I am responsible for the level of consciousness and conscientiousness I bring to my work."

"I am responsible for the decisions by which I live."

"I am responsible for my personal happiness."

Much more remains to be said about the conditions of successful self-esteem—more than can be covered here. What I have offered are some general observations concerning the fundamentals.

### THE ROOTS OF SELF-ESTEEM ARE INTERNAL

Self-esteem is rooted internally — in mental operations — rather than in external successes or failures. This is an essential point to understand.

The failure to understand this principle causes an incal-

culable amount of unnecessary anguish and self-doubt. If we judge ourselves by criteria that entail factors outside our volitional control, the result unavoidably is a precarious self-esteem that is in chronic jeopardy. But our self-esteem need not be affected or impaired if, in spite of our best efforts, we fail in a particular undertaking, even though we will not experience the same emotion of pride that we would have felt if we had succeeded.

Further, we need to remember that the self is not a static, finished entity, but continually evolving, creating; an unfolding of our potentialities, expressed in our choices, decisions, thoughts, judgments, responses, and actions. To view ourselves as basically and unalterably good or bad—independent of our present and future manner of functioning—is to negate the facts of freedom, self-determination, and self-responsibility. We always contain within ourselves the possibility of change.

We need never be the prisoner of yesterday's choices. •

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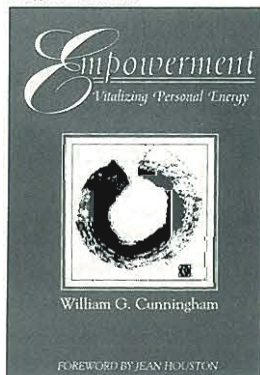
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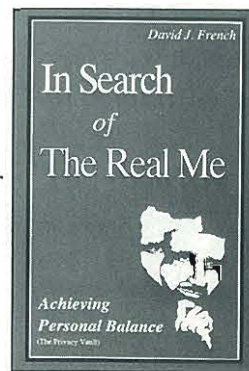
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## Mastery

relief" is the battle cry. Symptoms receive immediate attention; underlying causes remain in the shadows. More and more research studies show that most illnesses are caused by environmental factors or way of life. The typical twelve-minute office visit doesn't give the doctor time to get to know the patient's face, much less his or her way of life. It does give time for writing a prescription.

A pioneering study by Dr. Dean Ornish and his associates in San Francisco has proven conclusively that coronary artery disease, our number one cause of death, can be reversed by a long-term regimen of diet, moderate exercise, yoga, meditation, and group support. No drugs, no operations. This program has been criticized by some doctors as "too radical." If this is radical, then what do these doctors consider "conservative"? Is it a bypass operation that will split your chest wide open, that has a 5-percent chance of causing death, a 30-percent chance of causing neurological damage, a 50-percent chance of being unnecessary; an operation which might have to be repeated after a few years and which costs \$30,000. But all that doesn't seem to matter. At least it's a quick fix.

### LOVING THE PLATEAU

Early in life, we are urged to study hard so that we'll get good grades. We are told to get good grades so that we'll graduate from high school and get into college. We are told to graduate from high school and get into college so that we'll get a good job. We are told to get a good job so that we can buy a house and a car. Again and again, we are told to do one thing only so that we can get something else. We spend our lives stretched on an iron rack of contingencies.

Contingencies, no question about it, are important. The achievement of goals is important. But the real juice

of life, whether it be sweet or bitter, is to be found not nearly so much in the products of our efforts as in the process of living itself, in how it feels to be alive. We are taught in countless ways to value the product, the prize, the climactic moment. But even after we've just caught the winning pass in the Super bowl, there's always tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. If our life is a good one, a life of mastery, most of it will be spent on the plateau.

### THE FACE OF MASTERY

The look of deep concentration on my father's face as he did the work he loved is not unlike the expression that can be seen on the face of almost anyone on the path of mastery—even in the throes of physical exertion. Sports photography as we know it has been captured by the "thrill of victory/agonies of defeat" school. Again and again, we're shown climactic moments (prodigious exertion, faces contorted with pain or triumph), almost to the exclusion of anything else. But it seems to me that mastery's true face is relaxed and serene, sometimes faintly smiling. In fact, those we most admire in sports seem at times to enter another dimension. Besieged by opposing players, battered by the screams of the crowd, they make the difficult, even the supernatural, seem easy, and manage somehow to create harmony where chaos might otherwise prevail.

Goals and contingencies, as I've said, are important. But they exist in the future and the past, beyond the pale of the sensory realm. Practice, the path of mastery, exists only in the present. You can see it, hear it, smell it, feel it. To love the plateau is to love the eternal now, to enjoy the inevitable spurts of progress and the fruits of accomplishment, then serenely to accept the new plateau that waits just beyond them. To love the plateau is to love what is most essential and enduring in your life. •

From *Mastery: Keys to Success & Long Term*

Fulfillment by George Leonard. Copyright 1991 by George Leonard. Printed with permission of the Publisher, Duston.

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## The Role of Courtship

superficially harmonious courtship leading to a later relationship during which that same rug is pulled out from under us.

Bella, now married almost fifty years, told us about an incident that occurred during her courtship with Adam that set the tone for their marriage. "Adam's father," she said, "was a handsome, tyrannical Russian whose way of controlling his feisty, beautiful wife was to turn stonily silent whenever there was a hint of conflict between them. Early on when Adam and I had one of our first big quarrels, Adam turned his back on me and absolutely refused to discuss the matter. An image of his father passed before my eyes. I knew that I couldn't go through life with someone who would behave that way but I was very much in love with him, so I said, 'Look, if we can't talk, we can't get married because I won't marry you unless I know that whenever we come up against the hard places we can discuss them and work them out.' He knew I meant it. And even though talking is not easy for him and he usually needs some time to calm down and get his thoughts straight, we have been able to talk things through ever since—if not immediately then soon enough."

Adam and Bella had established a way of communicating that served them well throughout their married life. Early in their relationship, Bella decided not to ignore the crucial issue of Adam's refusal to discuss things that were difficult. She confronted Adam with her feelings and thoughts while at the same time respecting his need to have time to come to terms with

his own feelings first. Because she didn't attack him and provoke his defensiveness, he was willing to look at the problem at hand and make the necessary changes to alleviate it. Today they have a relaxed and loving relationship, the result of the healthy communication patterns established during their courtship period. •

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## Compassion

fering. When reflecting in depth on the nature of suffering, it is always beneficial to search for an alternative—to see whether it is possible to ever get rid of suffering. If there is no way out, just reflecting on suffering will make you feel depressed and that is not helpful. If there is no possibility of getting rid of the suffering, then it is better not to think about it at all.

After describing the origin of suffering, the Buddha spoke of the cessation of suffering and the path that leads to the cessation. When you realize that it is possible to eliminate the root that gives rise to suffering, that awareness will increase your determination to identify and reflect on suffering at all different levels, and that will inspire you to seek liberation.

After reflecting on the nature of suffering and feeling convinced that there is a path that leads to the cessation of suffering, then it is important to see that all sentient beings do not want suffering and do want happiness. Everyone has the right to be happy, to overcome suffering. When reflecting on ourselves, we find that we have a natural desire to be happy and to overcome suffering, and that this desire is just and valid. When we see that all living creatures have the natural right to be happy and overcome suffering and fulfill their wishes, we ourselves have a spontaneous feeling of self-worth. •

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## REVIEWS

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ward signs of approval or achievement to keep her energies and love flowing."

Throughout this inspirational book Sinerar reminds us that such "outward signs" as money, social approval, and fame are far less important than choosing work that we truly love and that is a conscious expression of everything in life we value most. She encourages us to have faith in our abilities to engage fully in what we are best at, to develop independent thinking that leads to "tenacious creativity," and to be joyful on a vocational path that nevertheless requires determination, carefully planned risk-taking, and making tough choices that will change our "self-view" (especially if negative).

The book doesn't offer get-rich quick schemes, unless one accepts her concept of "inner wealth," wherein we can discover all those riches that lead to self-actualizing thoughts and actions. In the best tradition of practical spirituality, Sinerar does offer sound advice regarding the psychological excavation that will be necessary to reveal those treasures beyond the dark side (in the Jungian sense). But there will be barriers to cross, she warns us—forgotten traumas, delusions, fears, and so on.

"Self-honesty, awareness, and an ongoing inward listening," she writes, "can open our hearts to our inner predispositions and talents, and thereby help us with our growth and development." From this psycho-spiritual foundation, we can arrive at "Right Livelihood," which "embodies self-expression, commitment, mindfulness, and conscious choice."

But, again, she places emphasis on barriers, two in particular. One she refers to as the "Big R: 'Resistance'" and the other as the "Big S: 'Shoulds.'" Resistance involves everything from obsessively seeking comfort, fear of risking disapproval, sidestepping challenges, living beneath your potential, doing what you hate, taking to heart how other people define you, and thinking you don't deserve better because of

your own low self-worth. On the topic of Shoulds, she is in large part referring to the many cultural constraints on our lives and to the parental "scripts" we have inherited and accepted, mistaken though they might be.

The work on oneself (inner work) that Sinerar discusses throughout *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow* will one day, after years of effort, lead to vocational integration, but more importantly, both you and the job will be right for each other, and your transformation will possibly influence others to take a similar journey. •



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## Life Beyond Therapy

society constructed on a very limited concept of reality.

LOTUS: If we were a society of people living in process, how would we be as a society?

ANNE: The closest I can come is living a life of faith. I trust that if I stay present in myself and if I am aware of people and the earth around me, and am aware that I am participating in a wholeness much greater than myself, I will have humility and compassion rarely seen in our society.

LOTUS: You're talking about a shift in the view that we're the center of the universe.

ANNE: Yes and my decisions would be made based on my awareness that I am connected with all things. We would make our decisions based on our awareness that we are one with the environment we need to interact with. We cannot exploit it and destroy it, and so you come out of a whole different place for making your decisions. Native people around the world talk about seven generations from now. You make your decisions based on the needs of the grandchildren and your grandchildren's grandchildren. In a mechanistic western culture, we base our decisions on the immediate, and almost always on an exploitive and not cooperative economy. I think if we were to begin to live in process, we would find ourselves asking different kinds of questions.

LOTUS: Talk about relationships, how do you see relationships?

ANNE: We've done with relationships as we've done with the rest of society. We've tried to make our relationships static. We establish them. They become fixed and they will always stay that way or the other person has betrayed us. In a living process system, relationships are seen

as a process that changes, goes up and down, comes and goes. I know a couple who have been married for years and years and years. They do their deep process work and are living in process. They are more alive than they've ever been in their whole lives. They're enjoying their children and grandchildren immensely. They don't need as much time together as they pay attention to their own needs. They need time on their own to do the things they enjoy. They need alone time to live out things they are not able to when they are around each other, such as art and their own work. As they become more whole, they spend less time together and they're closer.

LOTUS: So the benefit of deep process work is more life, more liveliness, more expression.

ANNE: Yes. We had a ten-year reunion of people who have in living in process. Each person said what the work meant to her. Almost every person said in one way or another this has given me my life. I am now living my life for the first time ever. They're not living my vision, they're living their life.

LOTUS: What would you like to say in closing?

ANNE: This book has been the longest and most difficult I've ever written. It's very hard to communicate some of these ideas. I know they will be read by mechanistic minds and in some ways I feel okay about that. What I have enjoyed most about doing this book is reliving the awe I have for this work. I think it is truly awe-inspiring. What I've seen happen to people as they do their work is wonderful. What I see happen to myself when I participate is beyond belief. When I do an intensive, I leave rested. Because I am not responsible for other people's work, I don't have to do it for them. I don't have to figure them out. I don't have to be the one that is knowledgeable. I don't even have to know what is going on. And I am so aware of the awe I have

in seeing people heal from experiences that I could never have even imagined. Secondly, I was taught that people never healed from these experiences, yet I've seen people heal physically, spiritually, and emotionally in ways that I just never thought possible. It is awe-inspiring work. I have a feeling of great humility that I can have the opportunity to do this work and talk about it and share. More and more, I've realized how uncentral I am, and that is very good. •

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*Continued from Page 19*

## Facing Aging

spective, enabling us to transcend many everyday irritations with a balancing peace and joy.

Our resistances to the changes that are called for in the second half of life can be formidable and may have roots deep in our family patterns. How our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents handled their lives and aging processes influences us. Cultural anthropologist and author Angeles Arrien spoke of the combined wisdom that comes to us from indigenous peoples around the world. They feel that the ancestors are watching each one of us, very interested in our choices—in our life direction. The old ones stand by our shoulders and whisper amongst themselves, "Oh, maybe this will be the one who will break the harmful family patterns; maybe this one will bring forth the good medicine in our family line—the loving, the true, and beautiful—to gift mother earth."

If we do break negative family patterns, we should be prepared to overcome the guilt that may emerge if we claim for ourselves a new and better way. Experiencing our anxiety and taking the time to listen to ourselves with compassion invites a positive change.

Taking a new path can encour-

dead-end of self absorption and stagnation, components of unsuccessful maturing. Moving beyond our fears puts us in touch with our inner power, and we assess our life choices with greater truthfulness, clarity, and potency. We are freer to choose the positive path leading to an abundant future. •

From *What are you Doing with the Rest of Your Life*, Published by New World Library. Copyright 1992 by Paula Hardin.

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## Healing

ing relationships with the important people in her life is the most important thing.

The third stage, whose goal is initiative, is described by Erikson as one in which the four- and five-year-old child develops a sense of purpose and expanding mastery. Girls by this time, however, are receiving society's insistent message that they are to start focusing their natural attunement to others on the well-being, growth, and development of men. Depending on the social and ethnic background of the family, even the mother herself may encourage and model this way of being, encouraging the girl's turn toward the father. Despite its complexities, the girl's strong relationship and connection with her mother and other females continues. Yet the ascendancy, value, and power of the father are underscored while psychologically the mother is devalued. Recall the client who referred to herself as an "obnoxious little girl" because at first she could not see herself other than through the derogatory, unloving filter of her father's criticism.

Erikson identifies the fourth stage, between ages six and eleven, as having industry as its goal. Supposedly children are in a state of latency—when sexuality is on hold. Yet when it comes to relationships, girls are very active during this period, especially in their relationships with other girls.

They often also show an active interest in boys and men, but boys are either not interested in them or are openly contemptuous of them. Girls at this age often sit together "just talking," much of the time about relationships in their lives. However, isolated and alone, Paula, without siblings and separated from her parents by her rage and their alcoholism, buried herself in her studies, spending much of her time poring over books in the library.

*Women's experience is not one of individuation through separation, but one of differentiation through relationship.* What the new model of development emphasizes is that the direction of growth is not toward the breaking of early emotional ties but "toward a process of growth within relationship where both or all people involved are encouraged and challenged to maintain connection and to foster, adapt, and change with the growth of the other."

As mentioned earlier, although this model of a "self-in-relationship" is profoundly validating for women, it can also create for them the dangers of fostering the growth of others at the expense of self. The "woman on a pedestal," whose praises have been sung since before Beatrice led Dante into heaven, is not merely a romantic fiction created by men. Based on women's way of being in the world, it is an expectation imposed on them by men.

To give just one of many current examples of the penchant of women for becoming midwives to men's higher selves at the expense of their own, we can look at a study done in the preceding decade on the dynamics of men and women's support groups. A research team found that when women were placed in women-only groups, discussion focused on feelings, emotions, and personal experiences. In an eight-week period, the leadership role rotated among the group members. When men were placed in men-only groups, the leader emerged within the first two sessions

and remained the dominant person throughout the eight-week period. In the men's groups, discussion centered on activities, competition, and skills. When men and women were placed in mixed groups, the men became the leaders and dominated the sessions. Content also changed. The discussion became less competitive and focused less on activities and skills. There was also more discussion of feelings by the men. The women, however, discussed their feelings less often. Basically, the women became facilitators for the men. The investigators concluded that the mixed groups had benefited the men, but not the women.

It is time for us as women to reframe our sense of interpersonal obligation. It is time for us to change our frame of reference from *responsibility* to *response / ability*; it is the difference between an impulse and a deliberate choice, between the *obligation to react* or *to take charge* and the *ability to respond*. Many of us learn to make this distinction as our children grow. At first, because they are totally dependent on us, we feel responsible for them. As they grow more and more self-sufficient, gradually we learn—sometimes from them—that what they need from us is the *ability to respond*. They no longer need us to respond for them; they value our willingness to respond to them.

But it's not children who are of concern here—it's our partners. For ages, we have accepted responsibility for other adults, especially men (while feeling accountable or responsible to society or to men for the discharge of that obligation). It is time for a shift, time to filter our responses through our own subjective experience. If we are to be responsible to anyone, let it be to ourselves first. •

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