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**Lotus**

**Journal For Personal Transformation**



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

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

# From the Editor..

*Wise men hear and see as little children do.*  
—Lao-tzu

**T**he spirit of play is precious, yet we have difficulty letting play into our lives. Remember times responding to another's delight and sharing peels of laughter? After the waves subside, you wipe your eyes, giggle, and wonder how you were swept away. The effect lingers and influences your mood. Your spirit has lifted. This is the magic of play.

Play is fresh and spontaneous in children and animals. Kids, puppies, and kittens play the same, no matter where they are. Play is a gift of the universe. Even meadows, brooks, rocks, and trees beckon us to play. Play is free and full of life.

Sadly, many of us don't appreciate the spirit of play. We don't let our playmate within come out to play. We have a litany of rules about play, and we tell ourselves,

"I'm too busy to play." "I'm too old to play." "I'm too tired to play."

We tell children, just as we were told as children,

"Don't play in the grass." "Don't play in the house." "Don't play with your food." "Don't play on your bed." "Don't play in the rain." "Don't play with that." "Don't play with them."

These rules build walls around our curiosity, openness, and joyfulness. We miss some of life's mystery, for play connects us with nature and with one another. Play soothes loneliness because playmates respond from a soulful place. During such moments of magic, we know we are not alone. Fred Donaldson in *Playing by Heart* said, "All playmates have two very special gifts to share with us. *You are lovable and there's nothing to be afraid of.*" These are gifts we all need throughout life.

We all seek the experience of being alive. To find it, we must not be afraid of life. Play relieves fear and requires fearlessness. To play we must take risks, explore nature, and expose our softer side. In play we find adventure and tenderness. From play we receive freedom from judgment and spontaneous participation. We open to life's beauty and to our own inner nature.

Fred Donaldson tells us, "The playmate's practice is to 'get back in touch' with ourselves, each other, and our world." We begin with touch. Touch is our primary language and the link between ourselves and our world. We must feel play with our flesh and bones. We must touch and be touched. Children and animals are our teachers. They can show us how and they can free our minds of the old rules about play. We must be a beginner, for there are no play experts. We learn as we play, as we accept the invitation to play and let in the spirit of play.

We need more playmates. Let us discover our playmate within. Let us discover how to be more alive.

Welcome to Lotus.



Mary NurrieStearns  
Editor

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# Letters



The following are some letters from our readers. We encourage readers to share their stories of transformation as they empower, and reading them inspires.

## MORE ADVENTUROUS

I liked your article on perfectionism. I've held myself back too many times because I didn't want to appear foolish or to make a mistake. I wanted to do things excellently right from the start. It never occurred to me that I didn't want to be a beginner but it is true. I couldn't tolerate the frustration that goes with learning something new. The learning process felt so embarrassing to me, like I was showing inadequacy.

Fortunately I've come a long way. I still feel embarrassed while on the learning curve, but I don't let it stop me from developing new skills. I am more adventurous now and each new mastery encourages me to take whatever steps or risks I think are interesting and worthy.

I also like your success stories. It's encouraging to hear about others who are making their lives more healthy and happy.—*Mary Jones, Portland, Oregon.*

## I FINALLY FOUND

I have received my first issue of your magazine and would like you to know how much I enjoyed the articles. I have finally found the magazine I have been searching for. Looking forward to the next issue. Keep up the good work.—*Linda Baker, Imlay City, Michigan.*

## EMBRACES THE SPIRIT

I have recently subscribed to *Lotus*. I love you magazine for the richness it offers in truly integrating topics regarding our mental, emotional, and spiritual beingness. From what I have read, you go right to the core of being. You take a topic in a most gentle and sensitive manner and deliver it with the highest of intention.

I am very grateful for what you have done with your mission statement and purpose. I envision your

TURN TO PAGE 8

*1/2 V ad  
Eupsychia Inc.*

*1/6 H Ad  
Clayton School of Natural Healing*

**Letters**

*Continued from page 6*

subscriptions really taking off. I know word of mouth is one of the best sources of advertisement. I can vouch for my contribution in spreading the word on my end. When I believe in something and want others to benefit from it, too, I do a lot of sharing.

Once again, I extend my congratulations to you and your staff for presenting a magazine centered in healing from the inside out and embracing the spirit in us all.—*Lee Ann Dzelzkalns, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin.*

**S T A N D I N G  
O V A T I O N**

Your magazine is so profound. The second issue which I recently received, Spring 1993, deserves a standing ovation. It does everything you hope it does: "energize, stimulate, and inform readers on their journeys of self-awakening and inspired living."

The articles that I benefited the most from (because of where I am in my stage of growth) were: "Living Your Vision, Standing Up and Speaking Out, Creativity and Aging, Happiness Happens, Trans-forming Our Compost" and "Success Story." However, the other stories, articles and interviews were wonderfully interesting and of benefit and I truly enjoyed them.

I love your front cover design and inside picture with your inspiration by Tao Te Ching. The inside picture is beautiful enough to be framed.

I am moved to share my feeling of your magazine because you deserve to hear it again and again.—*Patricia Stimac, Calumet, Michigan.*

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## Journey Into Wholeness ad

### Letters

Continued from page 8

#### **I N C R E D I B L E M A G A Z I N E**

What an incredible magazine. I devoured the article, *Divorce/Reducing The Trauma*. It made so much simplistic sense, I now have great peace and a solid direction concerning this phase of my life!—*Cindi Antonopoulos, Ada, Michigan.*

#### **G R O W T H F O C U S E D**

Your publication is personable, growth focused and lacks arrogance, a rarity in these days of promotion of self concept and ego enhancement. May your efforts open hearts to healing.—*John Wenz, Raritan, New Jersey.*

#### **I R E C O M M E N D**

I consider your magazine a "True Find" and enjoy reading it from cover to cover. I have recommended it to many of my friends. Thanks for a terrific publication!—*Pam Erickson, Denver, Colorado.*

#### **E X Q U I S I T E L Y S A T I S F I E D**

I want to praise your efforts beyond normal recognition. Thank you so much for following the needs of my life and publishing a periodical that's so exquisitely satisfies my needs.—*Ron Johnson, Augusta, Georgia.*

#### **G O B I - M O N T H L Y**

Hope you go bi-monthly real soon! You know that saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." Well, we are ready!—*Gloria Oliva, Brooklyn, New York.*

**Editor's Note:** It's in our plans and we are working on it!



# DYING OF PERFECTION

G I L L I A N R E E S

I will never forget the days when I could barely brush my hair in the morning without getting so tired I felt I was having a nervous breakdown. I had Chronic Fatigue Immune Deficiency Syndrome (CFIDS), and it was the most frightening experience of my life. It lasted four years.

I was stubborn and didn't want to admit defeat, but when I finally felt like I'd be dead at the end of the year if I didn't do something, I found a Chinese acupuncturist who saved my life—literally, I believe now. He told me I had to exercise in order to get well. What a joke! I could barely get out of bed in the morning. Along with acupuncture and Chinese herbs, he prescribed a daily diet of yoga.

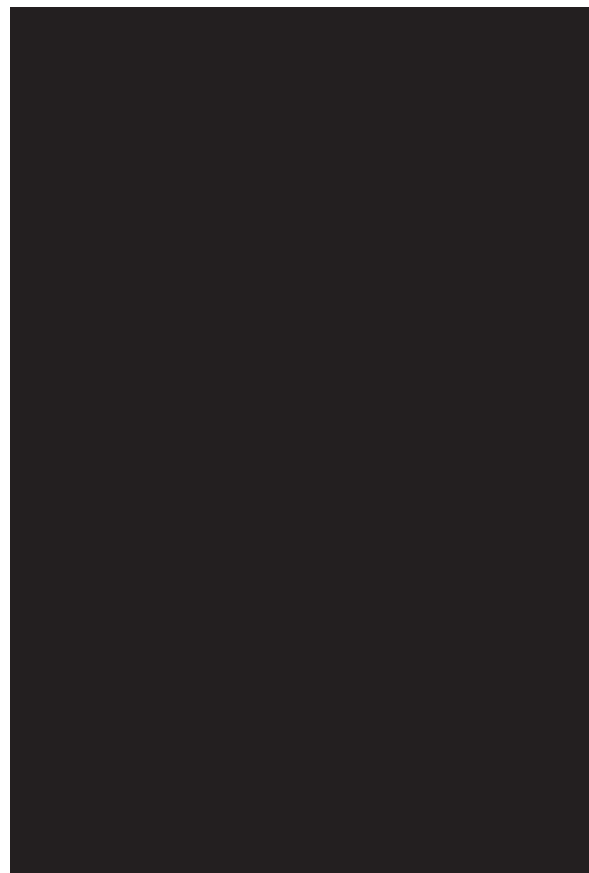
Yoga brought peace and centeredness to my life. Yoga brought an awareness of my body that for years had been off-kilter because of my previous career as a dancer. I had to learn how to practice yoga without needing to be perfect. It was a mistake I'd made more than once before.

In ballet, you learn to ignore the body and its pain, aiming for a perfection that is always just around the corner. Competition, with yourself and others, becomes a way of life. I had never learned differently. With CFIDS I had to.

I had given up dance several years before, after major abdominal surgery and various hip injuries. I started a new career in the frenetic world of entertainment publicity. It was just as competitive as dance, if not more so. I started taking yoga lessons to relieve the stress.

I studied three times a week in a beautiful studio in

TURN TO PAGE 14



*Gillian Rees, Tarzana California.*

# Mt Madonna Ad

# Lesley Graduate Ad Foundation For Shamanic Ad

## *Success Stories*

*Continued from page 12*

Hollywood, California. After a few months, my old hip injury hurt so much that the pigeon pose made me cry. Of course, I never told anyone. Say “I hurt” in a ballet class and—well, you’d just never do it. Pain is a given, because it’s in pursuit of art.

I remember hearing my yoga instructors, unlike my ballet teachers, say, “Only go as far as you can go,” and, “Go at your own pace.” I didn’t listen.

Yoga became part of my competitive lifestyle. It felt meaningless to me unless my body hurt, I had achieved the perfect pose first, and I was better than everyone else in class. Talk about competitive! My expectations of perfection were unconscionably high. Yoga as a conscious spiritual discipline eluded me, so I gave it up.

My life grew more complex. I worked hard, got a job at NBC, and worked even harder. I started approaching my career the way I used to approach dance. Once again, I became obsessed with perfection and pain.

My life got so complex that I lost all sense of balance. I never rested. I thrived on stress, worked late every night, and didn’t take care of my chronic stomach ailments. It was the perfect recipe for CFIDS.

When my doctor suggested yoga as part of my healing, I remembered it as a strong, competitive, painful discipline. But at that point, I would have recited Russian verbs and dyed my hair blue, if I thought it would help me get well.

I went to a wonderfully nurturing yoga instructor and struggled through beginner classes with 60-year-old women who were much more spritely than I. I felt like a stroke victim learning to walk.

Little by little, I began to create a new relationship with my body, seeing it not as a tool for the perfect arabesque or a tireless vehicle that could give me corporate success, but as part of a much greater whole. I had to feel yoga from the inside out, because my body was too weak to experience it any other way. I began to heal.

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## Pocket Ranch Ad

## Avatar Hungate Ad

### *Success Stories*

*Continued from page 14*

After a year, my health vastly improved. I felt human again and infinitely thankful for life. Now that I had progressed to more advanced classes, I couldn't do a class without feeling searing pain in my hips. Had I stopped to listen to my body, I would have heard that my hips weren't the problem. My old nemesis, perfection, was. I was forgetting the lesson that CFIDS had taught me.

Finally, I admitted my "weakness" by telling my new yoga instructor about the hip injuries and my recovery from CFIDS. Asking for help was the hardest part. She showed me how to ease the pain by doing hip-related poses differently and recommended I sign up for a week-long yoga retreat the following Christmas.

In the weeks leading up to the workshop, I argued with myself incessantly. How could I do six hours of yoga a day when I was still healing from CFIDS, and had never taken yoga more than four hours a week? Had CFIDS really given me a different outlook on life or was I just fooling myself by competing in an arena that seemed healthier?

It was clear the first day of the retreat that I was not the best in class. I felt like a wimp. My thighs wobbled like vanilla pudding in earthquake territory. I wasn't the best, or anywhere near it, by the end of the week either.

The instructor specialized in therapeutic yoga. Under his inspired and charismatic tutelage I began to find a new, inner strength that had nothing to do with perfection or competition.

I learned which poses would boost my immune system. I struggled into backbends, and "held" my weakened kidneys in the palms of my hands in shoulder stand. The pain in my hips disappeared and by the fourth day, I felt a long dor-

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# A WAY TO LIVE

C H R I S   M A R Q U I S

I was getting sick a lot. You know, the flu, a cold, then another cold, then the flu again. I wondered if maybe I needed more sleep. Maybe I was partying too much. But what's too much? Most of my friends were at the clubs every night. Of course I was drinking a lot, even when I was home. I decided to cut back on the beer a bit but the colds continued. A friend suggested I get tested for HIV. It was 1988 and a lot of people had AIDS. A lot of people had died and even more people were sick. I wondered what these AIDS people had to do with me.

I thought I'd get the test done just to rule it out. AIDS! What a dumb idea. I didn't know anyone who had it. People like me don't get anything serious. Certainly not that serious. I thought I heard they had a cure anyway. A week later, I was in big trouble. I was a dead man. I was crying in some strange person's office. She had just told me I was positive. I was so dumb, I asked if that was good. She said "No."

I guess I finally found a way out. I couldn't pull the trigger. I couldn't jump off a bridge. I couldn't do it. But I did do it. I got AIDS. Now I was going to die. Hell, I was already dead. The next weeks were a blur. I didn't tell anyone. How could I? How could I not? I was going to die! I threw the cards away that were supposed to be sent to my sexual partners. Do friends stay friends when you tell them? Does your family keep talking to you? This was "pre-Magic" and I was afraid of saying anything to anyone. Should I check out now or wait for the disease to kill me slowly? Who would understand? There had to be someone. I was a walking dead man



*Chris Marquis, Paboa Hawaii.*

and I couldn't talk to anyone. This would have to remain a secret even though I was going insane. Maybe another drink. So much for cutting down.

I finally worked up the courage to tell my cousin. He said he kind of suspected. How come I never suspected? How come I never listened? How could I be so stupid? How could someone give this to me? I was so mad. I was so dead. My life, my death. Now you see me, now you don't. I could see my grave stone. "Here lies a stupid and mad guy who didn't listen. He didn't know." Next I told my parents. They were not happy. They said it was God's punishment for all my evil ways.

After a while, I got into a new kind of routine. Go to the doctor, go home. Go to the doctor, hit the pharmacy, go home. I hear there's another cure. Go to the doctor. How about a support group? Go to the doctor. So sad, so depressing. Is that another rash? How much can this body take? God, my head hurt!

That was so long ago. It seems lifetimes ago. I'm still alive. One day I just decided to live. I decided to grow! I met someone who taught me about nutrition. I found a book about inner healing. I was given a tape to listen to. The "light switch" was turned on. AIDS was my chance to grow. People have been drawn to me with all manner of knowledge to help. Incredible things have begun to happen in my life. I quit taking most of the medications. They really weren't doing much good. I started having acupuncture and massage therapy. I started meditating.

I moved to a quieter neighborhood away from the city. I've found that less tension and anxiety are essential to my health.

I have not been able to work

N O B E L P R E S S A D

L E V I N E W O R K S H O P S A D

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# Encouraging Inner Directedness

*Just trust yourself; then you will know how to live.*  
—Goethe, *Faust*

*To be “inner-directed” means to turn within yourself to find the answers you are looking for. Children who are inner-directed do just that. They trust their own intuition, instincts, and creativity over anyone else’s opinion and learn to make wise “age-appropriate” decisions for themselves. Ideally, this becomes a healthy lifetime pattern. ✂ Inner-directed children grow up to be self-reliant, confident, productive adults who take personal responsibility for their actions and decisions. Inner-directed children don’t blame others for their unhappiness nor do they complain, or feel like victims, when things don’t go smoothly. They simply do what they can to improve what they don’t like and make the best of any situation.*

*Richard Carlson, Ph.D., is the author of several books on psychology, healing, and spirituality, including "You Can Be Happy No Matter What: Four Principles Your Therapist Never Told You," "Healers on Healing," and "For the Love of God." Also he is a nationally known stress-management consultant, who maintains a private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he lives with his wife and two children.*



Obviously, inner-directed children are the exception, not the norm, in our society. Most children, like most adults, learn to be "outer-directed" in their thinking. Outer-directed people feel as though other people are in some way responsible for their happiness. They feel let down and frustrated a great deal of the time because others so rarely live up to their expectations. Outer-directed people are destined to be unhappy because they feel so powerless over their lives.

will not intrude. They practice inner-directed thinking throughout their lifetime—it's as natural to them as brushing their teeth. The more habitual this becomes, the more able they are to pass it on. If your children are inner-directed, they will always show respect toward others—including yourself.

A friend of mine is one of the most inner-directed people I know (and one of the happiest). He might visit his grandmother less often than his brothers or sisters but when he does, he *really* wants to be there. While his siblings are complaining about "having to be with grandmother," he is off enjoying himself. Recently, I had the occasion to speak with his grandmother and it was immediately obvious to me that my friend was her most treasured grandchild. When I asked her why he was so special to her, she replied with conviction, "Because I know that when he is here he really wants to be here. I know that he really loves me—and I love him." And while I'm sure that my friend's brothers and sis-

*As nice as it is that your children want to please you, approval-seeking can become a way of life. Let them know frequently that they don't need your approval to gain your love.*

If we believe that someone or something outside ourselves has created our unhappiness, it follows that we will seek out something external to make us happy. The unfortunate result of such thinking can be a reliance on alcohol, drugs, and other "external" substances to "cure" our unhappiness. Because genuine happiness can only come from within, living an outer-directed life is inconsistent with being happy. If you want your children to be happy, self-confident, self-reliant, non-judgmental, blame-free individuals, the first step is to encourage inner-directed thinking as much as possible from this day forth.

Inner-directed thinking is an attitude toward life. It involves the recognition that each of us is unique—that each individual must decide from within, on a moment-to-moment basis, what is right. Only you can know the direction you must take and you must take responsibility for that direction.

Inner-directed people respect themselves and others as well. They acknowledge individuality and rarely impose their viewpoints on other people. They will kindly offer assistance when requested or needed but

ters love their grandmother, it isn't in an inner-directed way, but more out of obligation and duty.

Inner-directed thinking is an overall attitude toward life; becoming more inner-directed is as easy as changing a few habits in the way you think and behave. Below you will find a few suggestions for making the transition. The more you are able to change your own life, the more likely your children will be able to do the same.

### **T H R E E   S T R A T E G I E S   T O E N C O U R A G E   C H I L D R E N T O W A R D   " I N N E R - D I R E C T E D N E S S "**

#### ***1. Make seeking your approval insignificant.***

All children intuitively have the need and desire to please their parents. As nice as it is that your children want to please you, approval-seeking can become a way of life. Let them know frequently that they don't need your approval to gain your love. If you want your children to be more inner-directed, begin with their relationship with you. Do they come running to you to find

*When your children  
compare themselves to  
someone else, gently  
remind them that  
what other people do  
is irrelevant.  
Encourage them to be  
themselves—to love  
and respect  
who they are.*



out whether they should feel good or bad about something? If they do, they are in the early stages of an approval-seeking lifestyle.

When children learn that they need external input to determine how they should feel or act, the tendency will not be limited to you. They will apply the same logic in their relationships with friends, teachers, other parents, and eventually in their intimate adult relationships and in their careers. Children who need lots of approval will let other people decide what they should do, how they should act, what preferences to have, and even what they are good at. I have seen many extremely talented children get frustrated with their writing, scholastic efforts, art, or athletic performance because they were basing their self-worth on what someone else thought of their performance.

The need to seek approval starts at home and it can begin to subside at home. No matter how important this is to your children, it's never too late to reverse the trend. If your children are old enough to understand, you can begin by admitting that you might have been part of the problem—that you meant no harm, but somehow you delivered the incorrect message that they need your approval before they could feel good about themselves and their efforts. I know this sounds dramatic—how many parents openly apologize to their children?—nevertheless, it's a good idea. Impress upon your children that you love them, not for what they do or how well they do it, but for who they are. Let them know that you love them unconditionally, that they are special, unique, wonderful human beings. You are proud of them simply because they are alive.

You can begin to change how you interact with your children in subtle but important ways. If, for example, your child says to you, "Mom, Johnny said I was a stupid-head." Instead of replying, "That wasn't very nice of him," try something like, "It doesn't matter what Johnny thinks; it only matters what you think—and I know that you know that you are terrific." Or if your child says, "Dad, if I don't make the baseball team my friends will laugh at me," respond with, "I hope that you are as proud of yourself as I am. You can feel good about yourself no matter what happens, it doesn't matter even 1% what anyone else thinks—you are a winner and I know that you know that—whether you make the team or not. I'm proud of you for making the effort. If you make the team, great; if you don't, that's okay. You'll do something else." Take the pressure off your children to live up to the expectations of others. Impress upon them how special they are to you—before they accomplish anything at all.

Back up this communication with new behavior of your own. Commit yourself to being less concerned with what others think of you. If people don't like what you're doing—that will be okay with you. You can still learn from what other people think, but you don't have to be upset by it. Not even one little bit!

I can't think of anything more important to teach my children than to do things simply because they love to. If my children try something that doesn't work out for them, and they loved doing it, then they didn't fail! To the contrary, they are winners. They have spent some precious moments of life doing something that will nurture and support them. Hopefully, they can learn



from any mistakes they made, but they won't be immobilized by them.

## 2. *Don't compare them to others.*

Encourage your children not to compare themselves to others. Inner-directed people aren't concerned with how they stack up. They compete only with themselves. Inner directed people never equate their self-worth with a win-loss ratio or some competitive performance.

Children who spend valuable moments of their lives comparing themselves with others, who are always looking over their shoulder to see "how they are doing," are looking in the wrong direction. Constantly comparing yourself is a lifelong prescription for frustration. There will always be someone better and there will always be someone who isn't as good—inner-directed people say "so what" to both. They know that effective living has more to do with turning inward and being proud of just who you are.

Inner-directed people *know* that they are special and unique. This is not being conceited, for they know that everyone else is special and unique, too. Why should someone who is unlike anyone who has ever lived be concerned with how he or she is doing in comparison to another?

The easiest way to help your children stop comparing themselves with others is first to stop doing it yourself. It's nothing more than a habit. When the urge comes up, remind yourself that there is no value in continuing. Then, when your children compare themselves to someone else, gently remind them that what other people do is irrelevant. Encourage them to be themselves—to love and respect who they are. If they want to get better at something, wonderful, but ask that they do so only for themselves, not to be "better than someone else."

## 3. *Encourage them not to take things personally.*

Few people have mastered the art of not taking things personally—but those who have are extremely happy! Taking things personally is one of the most common reasons for becoming upset and unhappy. Luckily, this common tendency stems from a relatively simple misunderstanding.

When you take a moment to reflect on your life, you will notice that any frustration, anger, disapproval, regret, disappointment, or other immobilizing feelings that you might experience have come from inside yourself, not from life itself or from other people. This is why everyday experiences will affect you differently, depending on how you feel. For example, a broken window can be either "a broken window," a simple unfortunate event, or it can be "front page news," something that ruins your entire day. The degree of upset you feel depends on what's going on inside you at the moment.

The same is true for all of us. When we are angry, we

see an angry world. When we are happy, we see a happy world. When we are insecure, we tend to feel envious or jealous. What we see and how we react to life often has little to do with what we are actually seeing—and everything to do with how we are feeling. It simply makes no sense then to become overly upset over someone else's reaction to us. Their reaction came about as a result of how *they* were feeling—not from anything we said or did. I'm not suggesting an "avoidance attitude," not taking responsibility, but rather a new perspective on why people react the way they do.

If you can teach your children this perspective, you can help them to eliminate the frustration that usually results when someone is "upset" with them. Teach your children to learn from their mistakes and listen to what people have to say (even when they are upset), but teach them also that they don't need to take others' disapproval personally.

Again, look to change yourself as a wonderful place to start. As you begin to take these upsets less personally, your children will learn to follow suit.

## S P O N T A N E I T Y

Inner-directed people are spontaneous—they don't follow rigid, pre-set guidelines for living. They are committed to truth—and understand that the truth can change from moment to moment. For example, an inner-directed child may be looking forward with great anticipation to a baseball game on Saturday. But when Saturday arrives, he gets a call from his best friend asking him to go along with him and his father to the city park. If the trip to the park sounds like more fun to him and he decides to bypass the game, he is expressing spontaneity. If you as a parent forbid your son from changing his mind (all in the name of consistency—"you made plans and you're going to stick to them"), you are telling your son not to trust his feelings, not to be spontaneous.

I'm not suggesting that a child should never stick to the plans; sometimes that's right, as is showing a commitment to others (including you), but beware of the hidden message here. I would much rather waste a few baseball game tickets than my child's self-confidence. Nothing is more important for self-esteem than how a child feels about himself and his ability to follow his own inner guidance. Spontaneity is a special part of being a child; it is a tendency inherent in all of us. If you want your child to grow up happy and self-confident, allow room for spontaneity—even if it throws you off schedule once in a while. •

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EWING GALLOWAY

# Know Your Boundaries

C H A R L E S   W H I T F I E L D

*A boundary or limit is how far we can go with comfort in a relationship. It delineates where I and my physical and psychological space end and where you and yours begin.*



Charles L. Whitfield is a psychotherapist in private practice in Baltimore Maryland. He is a nationally known speaker and is author of "Co-Dependence" and "Healing the Child Within."



Being aware of our boundaries and limits is useful in our relationships. In fact, this awareness is crucial to having healthy relationships.

A boundary or limit is how far we can go with comfort in a relationship. It delineates where I and my physical and psychological space end and where you and yours begin. Boundary is a concept that provokes a real experience within us. Therefore, in my relationships with people, places, and things, the boundary is real. My boundaries and limits are real. The other's boundaries and limits are real.

In describing boundaries, Paine and Hunt say, "Interaction with others occurs at boundaries—yours and theirs—where you end and they begin." The easiest way to understand healthy functioning of boundaries is to think of the role of cells. The cell wall is a semipermeable membrane. When it functions correctly, the cell wall keeps poisons out, lets nutrients in, and excretes waste. It also defines the existence of the cell by separating it from other cells. Healthy cells have an intelligence that knows whether to be a stomach cell or a brain cell.

"Healthy cells demonstrate good contact at their boundaries by discriminating between nutrition and poison, and by positioning and duplicating themselves. The healthy person must do the same. To have a semipermeable membrane, to know when to allow in and when to keep out means you have a choice in your life, and means you will be an active rather than a passive participant in it. To manage contact well is an expression of self, integrity, and freedom."

A similar example is the body's immune system which functions to maintain the boundary of the body's unique individuality, distinguishing and keeping out what is "not me" and holding in place what is "me."

Having an awareness of boundaries and limits helps me discover *who I am*. Until I know who I am, it will be difficult for me to have healthy relationships whether they may be casual acquaintances, friends, close relationships, or intimate relationships.

Without an awareness of healthy boundaries, it will be difficult for me to sort out who is unsafe to be around, which may include people who are toxic for me and even some people who may mistreat or abuse me.

The boundary marks or delineates the differences between me and the other. Without boundaries, it would be hard to define my self. Without them, it would be hard to know myself. Without boundaries, I may not feel that I have a self. And without boundaries, I can't have a healthy self. So by being aware of and having healthy boundaries, I can define and know myself, know that I have a self, and have a healthy self.

#### MY INNER LIFE

A key to my boundaries is *knowing my inner life*. My inner life includes my beliefs, thoughts, feelings, decisions, choices, and experiences. It also includes my wants, needs, sensations within my body, my intuitions, and even unconscious factors in my life. If I am unaware of or out of touch with my inner life, I can't know all of my boundaries and limits. When I am aware of my inner life, I can more readily know my boundaries.

The actively co-dependent person tends to be fixed in either few or no boundaries, *boundarylessness*, or the opposite, *overly rigid boundaries*.

And they often flip-flop between these. Because they focus so much of their attention outside of themselves, they tend to be less aware of their inner life and thus less aware of their boundaries.

#### FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Another key to having healthy boundaries is flexibility and adaptability. When we are able to be flexible and adaptable in any relationship—without being mistreated or abused—we can know ourselves in a deeper and richer way. And we can let go more easily into the experience of that relationship to enjoy both its fun aspects and its growth points.

In our day-to-day experience we have many opportunities for growth. That growth includes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms of our awareness, experience, and consciousness. Awareness of our boundaries helps us in that growth.

Not being sufficiently aware of their inner life, co-dependent persons may be so flexible and adaptable that they are flexible and adaptable even when they are being mistreated or abused. Unaware of their True Self—their Child Within—and its crucial inner life, they let people mistreat or abuse them. They are unable or unwilling to set boundaries or limits and stick with them. And so they suffer unnecessarily. Setting healthy boundaries and limits is a way to deal with and prevent unnecessary pain and suffering.

#### WHAT BOUNDARIES ARE NOT:

1. Set by any other or others.
2. Primarily hurtful or harmful.
3. Controlling or manipulating.
4. A wall.
5. Part of triangles with persons.

CHARACTERISTICS  
OF HEALTHY  
BOUNDARIES

**Presence.** To have boundary health—and to sense the usefulness or non-usefulness of a boundary—a boundary has to be present in my *awareness* to some degree. If it is not present in my awareness, then I may not be able to set it or, if I choose, to let it go.

**Appropriateness,** based on my inner life. This begins to delineate some useful reasons why I may need the boundary. I set the boundary or let it go based on what I am experiencing right now in my inner life. My inner life includes my beliefs, thoughts, feelings, decisions, choices, wants, needs, intuitions, and more. So knowing what is coming up in my life is crucial in my setting healthy boundaries and having healthy relationships.

**Protective.** The boundary is useful to help protect the well-being and integrity of my Child Within.

**Clarity.** I am clear about the boundary with myself and with the other or others with whom I am setting the boundary or limit.

**Firmness.** To get what I want or need, how firm do I want my boundary or limit to be? I am in charge of how firm I want them to be.

**Maintenance.** Do I need to maintain or to hold firm on a specific boundary, or limit for a period of time, to get what I want or need? Or do I need to relax the boundary or limit to get what I want or need?

**Flexibility.** To get what I want or need, how flexible do I want my boundary or limit to be? To have healthy boundaries, I need also to be flexible—when appropriate—for my healthy, individual human needs and wants. To have healthy relationships, I need to *let go* of my boundaries and limits when appropriate.

**Receptive.** Would it be useful or enjoyable for me to *loosen* the boundary a bit and let another person, place, thing, behavior, or experience in?

NOT SET BY ANY  
OTHER(S)

Healthy boundaries are not set by others. I set my own boundaries and limits, according to and based on my own inner life.

It may take a while to learn this un-characteristic because throughout my life I may have had others tell me what to do or how to feel. And other people, such as those in my family of origin and from whom I may have learned, may have modeled unhealthy rather than healthy boundaries for me to learn from. Some members of my family may still be influencing my life in a painful way, including doing so on *my boundaries*. As I recover, I can become more aware of all of these dynamics and begin to set my own boundaries by myself, wherein I can begin to let go of their pain that is actually not mine.

NOT PRIMARILY  
HURTFUL OR  
HARMFUL

Healthy boundaries are not primarily hurtful or harmful. I do not set out to hurt or harm another when I set the boundary, nor do I do so when I let go of a boundary. While it is not on purpose that I hurt or harm others, my setting a boundary may nonetheless be painful to them. At times it may also be painful to me.

Two crucial questions in helping to sort this one out are First, how hurtful to myself or to the other will it be in the long run if I do not set the boundary or limit *now*? If I don't set the boundary now, will my hurt and resentment build and eventu-

ally destroy our close or otherwise valued connection?

NOT CONTROLLING  
OR MANIPULATING

Neither is setting a healthy boundary, or limit, controlling or manipulating of another. My definition of "manipulate" is when a person tries to influence or get something from another *indirectly*.

When controlling or manipulating, I am usually less aware—or perhaps even unaware—of my inner life. I may be invasive of the other or dominating. All the while I may feel scared, ashamed, guilty, or angry, and end up feeling drained or exhausted. I may end up feeling fused or enmeshed with the other, actively co-dependent.

By contrast, by setting a healthy boundary or limit, my purpose may include protecting the well-being and integrity of my True Self. I am aware of my inner life, and I am not usually invading another's inner life or outer life.

While I may have any feeling in association with setting the boundary or limit, I usually feel comfortable. I may feel some discomfort setting it at first, and frequently so will the other. I am assertive, but not aggressive.

NOT A WALL

A healthy boundary is not a wall. A healthy boundary provides me with my healthy human needs, which may include time and space where I can be alone—away from others, noise, or other distractions. However, it does not wall me off from people, places, things, and experiences unless I consciously choose not to be in relationship with them right now. An example of the latter would be a recovering co-dependent person who chooses not to be in relationship anymore with a toxic or dysfunctional person. Or a recovering alcoholic who chooses not to be in relationship

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# The Long Way Round

S U E M O N K K I D D

*Transformations come only as we go the long way round, only as we're willing to walk a different, longer, more arduous, more inward, more prayerful route.*

Sue Monk is the author of "God's Joyful Surprise" and is a editor at Guidepost. The following is excerpted from "When the Heart Waits: Spiritual Direction for Life's Sacred Questions," by Sue Monk Kidd. Copyright 1990, by Sue Monk Kidd. Printed by arrangement with Harper San Francisco, a division of Harper Collins Publishers.



When I was a child, a woman named Sweet worked for our family. She cared for my brothers and me as if we were her own. One day, when we were playing at my grandmother's house, we discovered a wheelbarrow full of rain water. Swimming through it were hundreds of tadpoles.

We raced inside and asked Sweet for three jars. As she was handing them out, my grandmother appeared in the door. "Girls don't catch tadpoles," she said with a laugh. "Sue, you come along with me and I'll teach you to play 'Chopsticks' on the piano." My brothers dashed off to the wheelbarrow, and I ended up at the piano bench.

A few days later, Sweet and I started out on one of our frequent walks to the city park about four blocks from my house. The park was the best of places, and I was anxious to get there. But that day Sweet took my hand and started in the wrong direction. "We're taking the long way round," she told me.

The long way? The words fell like a curse on my ears. Why would we deliberately go the long way? I made a small scene, but Sweet didn't relent. Off we went the long way. Not four blocks, but eight!

We had walked at least six when she stopped beside a ditch swollen with water and tadpoles. She pulled a Mason jar from her pocket, one with nail holes in the lid. "Now aren't you glad we took the long way round? Ain't no tadpoles the short way," she said.

Inside my head I heard my grandmother's words, "Only boys catch tadpoles." Only boys. I hesitated, but Sweet nudged me with the jar. Soon I was elbow-deep in the brown water, chasing after the rich, darting life before me. I was reveling in a new universe and it was one of the grander times of my girlhood. It was the day I learned to challenge the tight, tidy categories of what was expected and possible in my world. Like the tadpoles, I was molting into a new being.

But when I grew up and left home, I began once more to be hammered into tight, tidy spaces of traditional expectation. I learned to conform to roles and wear all sorts of masks that hid my real self. I forgot all about the tadpole experience.

One day I read a poem by Henry David Thoreau, America's solitary walker, entitled "Among the Worst of Men That Ever Lived." The last line of it struck like the bow of a ship hitting a tiny island submerged in my

memory. The line read, "We went on to heaven the long way round."

Dear God, I thought, *the long way round*. The words brought back that long-lost walk to the park, the tadpoles, and Sweet's lyrical voice singing to me, "Now aren't you glad we took the long way round? Ain't no tadpoles the short way." The lesson was fresh upon me again: be your true, unfettered, God-given self, regardless of the expectations hammered into you.

It seemed to me that Sweet and Thoreau had touched upon the same genius. Transformations come only as we go the long way round, only as we're willing to walk a different, longer, more arduous, more inward, more prayerful route. When you wait, you're deliberately choosing to take the long way, to go eight blocks instead of four, trusting that there's a transforming discovery lying pooled along the way.

"Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried," Thoreau wrote at age twenty-five. He decided to turn away from the "lives of quiet desperation" he saw all around him and march to his own "different drummer," to go to heaven the long way round. On February 8, 1857, Thoreau wrote this in his journal, "You think I am impoverishing myself by withdrawing from men, but in my solitude I have woven for myself a silken web or chrysalis, and nymph-like, shall ere long burst forth a more perfect creature."

In his commentary on Thoreau's work, Robert Bly says that "agreeing to a waiting period is part of it." It's part of the process of leaving the petty life, the false life, the old life.

The universe is offering an invitation. A call to waiting. A call to the mysteries of the cocoon. I discovered that in the spiritual life, the long way round is the saving way. It isn't the quick and easy religion we're accustomed to. It's deep and difficult—a way that leads into the vortex of the soul where we touch our innermost transformative powers. But we have to be patient. We have to let go and tap our creative stillness. Most of all, we have to trust that our scarred hearts really do have wings.

#### THE INSTANT SOCIETY

We live in an age of acceleration, in an era so seduced by the instantaneous that we're in grave danger of losing our ability to wait. Life moves at a staggering pace. Computers yield up immediate answers. Pictures develop before our eyes. Satellites beam television signals from practically anywhere, allowing far-away images to appear instantly in our living rooms. Complex life issues are routinely introduced, dealt with, and solved in neat thirty minute segments on television.

Space travel, fax machines, instant coffee, disposable diapers. In ways large and small, we're all encapsulated



in a speeding world. We're surrounded by express lanes, express mail, express credit. There aren't just restaurants, but "fast-food" restaurants; not simply markets, but "jiffy" markets. Faster is better. Ask most anyone.

The modern person tends to live by appointment calendars. I'm embarrassed at how huge my calendar used to be. I had two pages for every day so that I could "design" time the way I wanted—segment it, save it, manage it, stretch it. Since we have designer clothes and designer chocolate, I suppose it's inevitable that we would want designer time, too.

We keep dreaming up ways to conserve time and make it hassle free. I recently saw an exercise bike with a computer attached so that people can get fit while they work; and last week, while thumbing through a catalogue, I noticed a video entitled "Discover Yourself in Less Than Thirty Minutes."

A study conducted in Pittsburgh timed clerks in major fast-food restaurants to determine which chain served a hamburger, fries, and a soft drink the quickest. The winner took forty-six seconds; the loser, a slow three minutes. Apparently such information is important to a society that places its highest premium on the quick and easy.

*Quick* and *easy* are magical words with enormous seductive powers. Advertisers know that if they put them on a product it sells better—whether the product is instant potatoes, instant money, or instant relief. We're told that we can walk off ten pounds in two weeks, melt off five inches in five days, or just take a pill and do it overnight. We've been lured by promises of getting new glasses in an hour, an oil change in thirty minutes, and a pizza in twenty.

Is it any wonder that we're

*What has happened to  
our ability to dwell in  
unknowing, to live  
inside a question and  
coexist with the tensions  
of uncertainty? Where is  
our willingness to  
incubate pain and let it  
birth something new?  
What has happened to  
patient unfolding, to  
endurance? These things  
are what form the  
ground of waiting. And  
if you look carefully,  
you'll see that they're also  
the seedbed of creativity  
and growth—what  
allows us to do the  
daring and to break  
through to newness.*

fine-tuned from an early age to seek out the instant fix? We want life to respond like our microwave ovens.

Last week, my daughter plopped down on the den floor in front of the television to do her homework. She held the remote control in one hand and her math book in the other. "I hate math," she said. "It's so hard." Then, in a moment of mischievous whimsy, she aimed the remote at her homework and pressed the fast-forward button. "Wouldn't it be great to just speed up the hard stuff?" she said. Ah, yes. I know that little fantasy well.

#### SHORTCUT RELIGION

It was inevitable that the lure of the quick and easy would seep into religion. Our churches have filled up with people looking for sudden and painless paths to change and growth—for what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace."

A lot of us have spent our lives in shortcut religion. We haven't been willing to face the fact that while the spiritual journey is joyous and full, it's also long and hard. It asks much—too much sometimes.

Anthony Bloom reminds us that the aim of prayer is nothing less than a "deep change in the whole of our personality." As Thomas Merton says, our commitment is to become "a completely new person." Such extraordinary movements of re-creation don't happen spontaneously or without effort and pain.

When my son was fourteen, he experienced an episode of leg pains that kept him awake at night. The doctor pronounced them as "growing pains." I didn't know that such things actually existed. But I sat by Bob's bed in

## Sacred Circle Ad

the darkest part of the night and rubbed his shins while he moaned and ached. One night he looked at me and said, "It hurts to grow."

I smiled, unaware then that he was offering me a profound life truth. "But you always said you wanted to be six feet tall," I reminded him.

"Yeah," he muttered, "but I'd like to do it without all this."

He wanted what we all want: a shortcut, some way to bypass the misery and still be six feet tall. To grow up spiritually means having growing pains in the darkest part of the night.

Some Christians (even some churches) have responded to this difficult truth by trying to create shortcuts—promises of easy grace, push-button answers to complicated problems, illusions that we can go to church and work to bring in the kingdom out there in the world without entering the fiery process of bringing it into our own soul.

A woman who used to work at a fast-food restaurant once commented that the people who lined up at her register sometimes reminded her of people lining up in church on Sunday morning. They seemed to be looking for the same thing—a quick and easy way to reduce the hunger inside. "Mac-faith," she called it.

What has happened to our ability to dwell in unknowing, to live inside a question and coexist with the tensions of uncertainty? Where is our willingness to incubate pain and let it birth something new? What has happened to patient unfolding, to endurance? These things are what form the ground of waiting. And if you look carefully, you'll see that they're also the seedbed of creativity and growth—what allows us to do the daring and to break through to newness. As Thomas Merton observed, "The imagination should

be allowed a certain amount of time to browse around."

Creativity flourishes not in certainty but in questions. Growth germinates not in tent dwelling but in upheaval. Yet the seduction is always security rather than venturing, instant knowing rather than deliberate waiting.

I once visited a church where the preacher invited people with heartaches and problems to come to the altar. "God will take care of what's bothering you right now," he proclaimed. Not a word about the desert that lies between our wounds and our healing, our questions and our answers, our departure and our arrival. Nothing about the slow, sacred rhythms of spiritual becoming or the spiral of descent and ascent that make up waiting.

When it comes to religion today, we tend to be long on butterflies and short on cocoons. Somehow we're going to have to relearn that the deep things of Life don't come suddenly. It's as if we imagine that all of our spiritual growth potential is dehydrated contents to which we need only add some holy water to make it instantly and easily appear.

I received a letter recently from someone who was feeling impatient about taking the long way round. She wrote, "Pole vaulting is so much more alluring than crawling."

We live in a spiritual environment that tends to emphasize full-blown newness and a sense of "arrival" in the mere time it takes to walk the length of a church aisle. Walking an aisle can be a marvelous thing, as long as we acknowledge that the aisle doesn't end at the altar but goes on winding through life. We seem to have focused so much on exuberant beginnings and victorious endings that we've forgotten about the slow, sometimes tortuous, unraveling of grace that takes place in the "middle places."•

M. MAAS/IMAGE BANK

# Releasing Anger Appropriately

J O H N L E E

*When the anger is not released openly, it comes seeping and bursting out in inappropriate ways, at inappropriate times, and often with the wrong people.*

*John Lee is the author of "At My Father's Wedding" and The Flying Boy." He is also nationally known for his workshops on anger. The following is from "Facing the Fire," by John Lee. Copyright 1993 by John Lee and Bill Stott. Used by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.*



To understand why anger release makes us feel better, we have to understand how the emotions work. To understand how the emotions work, we have to understand what they are.

The emotions are energies of different kinds.

We inherited many of these energies—anger, lust, joy, hunger, rage, fear, affection, combativeness, well-being—from our animal forebears. When an animal feels hunger, it “knows” to eat. When it feels fear, it “knows” to protect itself by fighting or fleeing. When it feels lust, it “knows” to procreate. When it feels affection, it “knows” to bond or nurture or protect. When it feels something, it does something about it. Animals don’t block or postpone or suppress the energy working in them. They use it up.

And this, ideally, is what we should do. When we feel something—anger or any other emotion—we should express it. If, of course, we can do so in a safe and appropriate way.

My yelling in the car made me feel better because it released the anger in my body. Paratroopers feel better screaming “Geronimo!” when they throw themselves out the plane door because the screaming releases some of their fear and tension. Elephants trumpet when they enter into battle.

Just as emotions are natural, so is their physical release.

When their release is inhibited, trouble starts.

**A N G E R , F E A R ,  
R E S E N T M E N T ,  
H A T R E D , D E S P A I R**

...and all the so-called “negative” emotions are unhealthy when they get caught in the body. They form blocks or knots of stifled energy.

The body knows what is healthy and what isn’t, and it wants to

**A lot of people know that their health depends on being in touch with their emotions, but they’re still trying to do it from the neck up. They’re talking the talk, but they haven’t gotten their bodies involved. They say, “Hey, I feel great! I’ve put it all behind me—turned the page. I’m living one day at a time.” But notice how tense their jaws are, and their shoulders, neck, arms, hands. You can hear the tightness in their throats.**

release these feelings. But the well-socialized human mind usually won’t let it. The mind commands the body to hold those feelings in. The mind says the feelings don’t exist, or shouldn’t exist for this or that reasonable reason. The mind tries to pray the feelings away or numb them with addictions.

But the mind can’t release the feelings. This is not something you can do with your head. A lot of people know that their health depends on being in touch with their emotions, but they’re still trying to do it from the neck up. They’re talking the talk, but they haven’t gotten their bodies involved. They say, “Hey, I feel great! I’ve put it all behind me—turned the page. I’m living one day at a time.” But notice how tense their jaws are, and their shoulders, neck, arms, hands. You can hear the tightness in their throats.

Their heads are talking. Their bodies are saying something else—“My feelings are safely tied down.”

When the mind prevents the body from releasing its “negative” feelings, the body does what it has to: it suppresses the feelings. It stuffs them into a convenient corner, some place where the body isn’t strong enough to reject them. People store their anger variously in their lower back or stomach or jaw or vocal cords or forehead or neck or shoulders or legs or genitals.

A lot of men in this country can’t have a full-out orgasm or be wide-open intimate because their centers—their bowels, genitals, butts, and lower backs—are too tight with the anger stored there. If a man’s gotten angry two thousand times and not done anything about it except stuff it down into his body, how do you expect him to respond when a woman wants to be intimate with him on a sweet night in May? He’s so frozen, there’s no way into him.



So: the mind prevents the body from releasing its “negative” feelings, the body stores the feelings because it has to, and then... ?

Then the body lets the feelings out any way it can, because it has to try to get rid of what’s unhealthy. The mind won’t let us express the feelings directly, so the body lets them out indirectly. If the feeling is anger, the body lets it out in passive aggression, in sarcasm and ridicule, in misplaced anger in total, no-holds-barred rage.

When the anger is not released openly, it comes seeping and bursting out in inappropriate ways, at inappropriate times, and often with the wrong people. Many people get rid of some of their anger, as well as their tension and sadness and lust, while having sex. An enormously popular and socially approved way of letting our anger seep out is by being a sports spectator. At a baseball, basketball, or football game it’s perfectly all right to shout, “Kill the bastard! Maim him! Stick it in his ear” even though the real target of our fury isn’t on the field but is our spouse or boss or dead parent.

Seeping and bursting is nature’s way of keeping us alive. Most of us have stored a lifetime of anger inside ourselves that we can’t recall and most likely would deny. The pressure of that anger is such that if we didn’t “let off steam” in the inappropriate ways we do, we’d probably be dead of stroke or cancer at twenty-two.

### T H E R E ’ S A B E T T E R W A Y

A better way of releasing anger than by having it seep or burst out is by consciously and openly expressing it—or rather, allowing your body to express it. Because—again—your anger is in your body, and your body is designed to deal with it.

While you must release the anger in a physical way, this does

not need to be loud or violent.

If your anger is suppressed, however, you will probably need to take more drastic action to get it out. But whatever you do, however intense and energetic it is, it definitely shouldn’t be and *won’t* be in the least dangerous or hurtful to you or other people. I’m going to recommend shouting in cars, pounding pillows, kicking sofa cushions—those sorts of things.

Everything I recommend will be safe.

But I know from experience that even safe emotional-release work is deeply threatening to most people. I want to talk about the resistance we have to doing it.

### W H A T K E E P S U S F R O M H E A L T H

There are many reasons why we are reluctant to do emotional-

release work. Here are the three big ones:

1. *Ignorance.* We don’t know what emotional-release work is, and we don’t know how to do it.

2. *Sophistication.* We think we’re too good to scream in our car or pound pillows.

We are not too good. Our wish to be “good” causes many of our problems. It makes us pretend to feel what we think we should feel, and it cuts us off from what we really do feel and who we really are.

People who consider themselves too sophisticated to do emotional release work are talking from their heads, not their bodies. They are denying that they have bodies. They think that because they are intellectually sophisticated, they are emotionally sophisticated, too. But they are not.

In fact, no one is emotionally sophisticated. Emotions aren’t

sophisticated. Emotionally we are all infants. We are one with the elephants, lizards, and protozoa.

Our emotions just are, and we are fools not to deal with them as they are and in ways that are responsible and safe.

### 3. *Fear.*

This is the *biggest* reason.

We know in our bones that anger equals pain, and we're afraid that if we express our anger, we'll hurt somebody or ourselves.

We are right to be afraid of anger, given our histories. When someone tells us it's okay to express our anger in a safe way, we say "Sure," but we don't believe it. How can there be a safe way?

When people in an anger workshop see a huge bearded man pounding on a cushion with both hands as hard as he can and screaming out his anger, or moaning and sobbing, they feel themselves tense the first couple of times. They feel their bodies freeze as they used to when they were children and the anger in the room was meant to hurt someone. If the workshop's competently done, they are totally safe, but they may have to see several people express anger, maybe in several workshops, before their bodies stop shutting down.

Our bodies shut down because what comes out in an anger workshop or when someone is screaming and sobbing in his car, we experience as a potential loss of control.

Emotional-release work frightens us because...

## EMOTIONAL RELEASE EQUALS LOSS OF CONTROL

And those of us who grew up in dysfunctional families—which is to say, nearly all of us—have never dared to lose control. Our world has always been too dangerous for us to let ourselves be spontaneous or who we really are.

Emotional-release work fright-

ens us, then, because it goes against everything life has taught us. Emotional-release work says, "Let go. Let loose." Our life has taught us, "Hold in. Hold on. Hold back."

**If we are always  
"in control," life  
can't happen to us.  
We can't let  
ourselves go.**

Many of us are so constrained that if we're told to do something as safe as make an ugly face, screwing our features up in a distorted way, we can't do it. We can't let go control of the face that our parents and our society and our own aspirations have made us wear, not even for a few minutes among people we trust. We need too much to be in control and show ourselves as the person we *want* to be: good, happy, upbeat, well-adjusted, trustworthy, loyal, faithful, friendly, the 100 percent Scout.

When I asked Walter, a mid-thirtyish account executive for a major Dallas corporation, to make an ugly face, he refused. He said my request was silly, and he'd be even sillier if he went along with it, and he didn't care to look silly. I pointed out to Walter that he had come to see me because his wives (he'd had two) had left him, complaining that he insisted on managing every aspect of their lives. He still wouldn't make a face.

Emotional-release work encourages us to lose control for a number of healthy reasons. If we can't give

up control, we're going to spend our lives managing everything, trying to maintain the illusion that we *can* control other people, our environment, and ourselves.

If we are always "in control," life can't happen to us. We can't let ourselves go. We can't learn to swim because we won't give ourselves over to the water. We can't ride a bike because we fear falling. We'll have trouble getting to sleep because we fear helplessness. We can't let ourselves have an orgasm. We can't dance with the wind. We can't cry. We can't feel. We can't die.

Emotional-release work encourages us to lose control—but *in safe and appropriate circumstances.*

Which means, *under control.*

One time I was doing anger work at an outdoor men's retreat. I asked Roger, a two-hundred-pound construction worker, to pound a stick on the ground as hard as he was angry at his mother. Roger yelled, "I'm totally mad, Ma!" as loudly as he could, and on the word "Ma" or just after, the stick hit the ground with a tremendous thud. Yell, thud. Yell, thud. Yell, thud.

Roger kept this up for several minutes—he had lots of anger in him, and he was strong and in great shape. Those of us looking on were getting a bit hypnotized when he turned to me and said in a whisper, "John, would you move back a step?"

I was standing a little close. He was afraid he might hit me!

Even in the middle of his anger, while he was apparently a raging lunatic, Roger knew just what was going on.

He was out-of-control but in control. Just as I had been when I was screaming in my car.

He and I were *safely* out-of-control.

And that's what emotional-release work makes possible.

Once you learn—not only in your

head but in your body—that emotional-release work is safe, you'll be on your way to knowing that appropriately expressed anger, yours or other people's, is nothing to be afraid of.

Once you're comfortable with your own anger, you'll stop shutting down when other people are angry in an appropriate—even a semiappropriate—way. You'll know that their anger is just a feeling inside themselves and the sooner they get it out, the better.

### *T H E T O O - M U C H - A N G E R F E A R*

If you're afraid your anger or sadness is too enormous to be released safely, don't worry. Hundreds of people have told me things like, "John, I can't let my anger out because if I ever did, I might tear the building down." Most of these people did the emotional-release exercises I suggested and far from destroying a building, never so much as made a mark on a wall. (The walls we should worry about, incidentally, are those our anger has built in us that separate us from the people we love.)

The point is, no anger is too big to be released safely, so long as the person releasing it isn't already out of control from emotional disorder, drink, or drugs.

### *T H E F I N A L F E A R*

The final fear—and the hardest one to beat—is the fear of separation. A good many people are afraid of doing emotional-release work because they realize their anger toward someone—a parent, a former spouse, a disobedient child grown up—is the only thing that connects them to that person. If they lose the anger, they lose the person and have to deal with the grief of that loss.

I'm particularly sympathetic to this fear because I had it so strongly myself. As I've told you, the first time I was handed a pillow and told

to hit it as hard as I was angry at my father, I held the pillow for a minute and then gave it back. I couldn't hit it.

I knew that if I punched the ghost face on the pillow, it would start leaving me. I'd have to realize that my father had never been there for me. I'd have to grieve for my abandonment, my lost childhood, the father I'd never had. I'd have to give up the hope that the father I hated would someday love and accept me.

Before I could release my anger, I had to become strong enough to be alone and be myself. I'm still finding out what this means; I'll always be in the process of finding out. Most of us will be. But before I began the process, I was just another rebellious son whose existence centered on hating his father and defying his wishes. Like Will, a young man who stood up during a men's wilderness gathering and said, "If I didn't have my anger at Dad, I couldn't fight him. And that's all I know how to do, fight him. I don't know how to love him."

I've worked with lots of divorced people whose lives are still focused on their ex-spouses. Nothing is left of the marriage but their anger and the grief underneath it, and these people won't give up their anger because between anger and grief, they prefer anger.

What they fear most is facing their grief, facing their abandonment, facing the unfairness of the world. Their anger is their last defense, and many of them won't give it up.

If you won't give it up, you can't release it.

Until you've overcome your fear of the hole at the bottom of your being, you won't be able to get your anger out. So long as you're waiting for someone to give you that apology you deserve and know you'll never get, so long as you're trying

### *A S H O R T , S A F E E X E R C I S E*

Please go to a mirror now and make ugly faces for three minutes. Don't evaluate or analyze the faces you make. Just *make* them—and look, feel, wonder, laugh, be afraid, be annoyed. Try really to let go and lose control. As you make the faces, move your jaw around and from side to side; most of us store a lot of tension in our jaw. While you're making the faces and after you finish, you'll probably find you yawn a good deal. That's *very* good. Yawning and laughing are two of the nicest ways to release suppressed emotions.

After three minutes of making faces, stop.

Good. Notice you stopped just when you wanted to. You didn't go on forever. You didn't go over the edge. Your face didn't freeze in a hideous position.

Now consider taking this exercise a step further. Find a good friend or partner to make faces at, each of you taking three minutes while the other watches. Again, make the ugliest, most out-of-control faces you can. Yawn, showing all your teeth, fillings, and tonsils.

Notice how you feel: silly, shy, reluctant, ridiculous, whatever. Notice also that the other person stayed, didn't run out the door screaming or call a SWAT team.

After making faces, alone or with a partner, notice how you feel. Isn't your face more relaxed? Losing control a little has its benefits. Being "silly" from time to time is good for you—or anyhow, not nearly as bad as many of us fear.

to change anybody other than yourself, you're going to be obsessed with anger. •

# Taking Risks

P A U L H W O S C H I N S K Y

*The subject of risk can send shock waves through our brains. Then, when something bad really does happen—as in the stock market crash of October 1987—a lot of fear is generated. Risk is almost always considered a negative factor and associated with impending doom and loss. Yet, risking has two sides, just like the polarities health/illness, life/death, and light/shadow. It is impossible to experience one except in the context of the other. To laugh is to risk being the fool. To reach out is to risk involvement. To hope is to risk despair. For every “up,” there is the possibility of a “down.”*

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Usually, though, we tend to see only the downside of risking. Even the dictionary deals with risk as “undefined danger.” Why not also look at it as “undefined opportunity”? The Chinese nicely combine the two perceptions in their definition of a crisis as a “dangerous opportunity!” In so doing, they acknowledge both the up- and the downside simultaneously—a wise perspective, since that is the way life works.

Money inspires a lot of fear. We worry about how we will get it, and then after acquiring some, we worry about losing it. We constantly feel insecure, as if what we have might be taken from us at any moment. But what is security anyway? The dictionary definition simply reinforces fear by characterizing security as “freedom from fear [or] anxiety... anything that gives or assumes safety.” Yet where does security really come from? The great samurai swordsmen were never afraid to die because they were secure in death. Their security came from within.

For us, too, security must come from within. We must not let a desire for external security keep us from experiencing life. I recall Alan Watts’s remark about the “wisdom of insecurity.” To risk is to come alive. Risks create change, and change promotes growth and acts as a safeguard against boredom.

*What, then, is the nature of risk?*

Where there is life, there is movement and change. With change, some of which is unforeseeable, there is the potential for danger. This potential is also, however, opportunity. Whether we see danger or opportunity depends on our perception of risk, and we all tend to perceive and respond to risk dif-

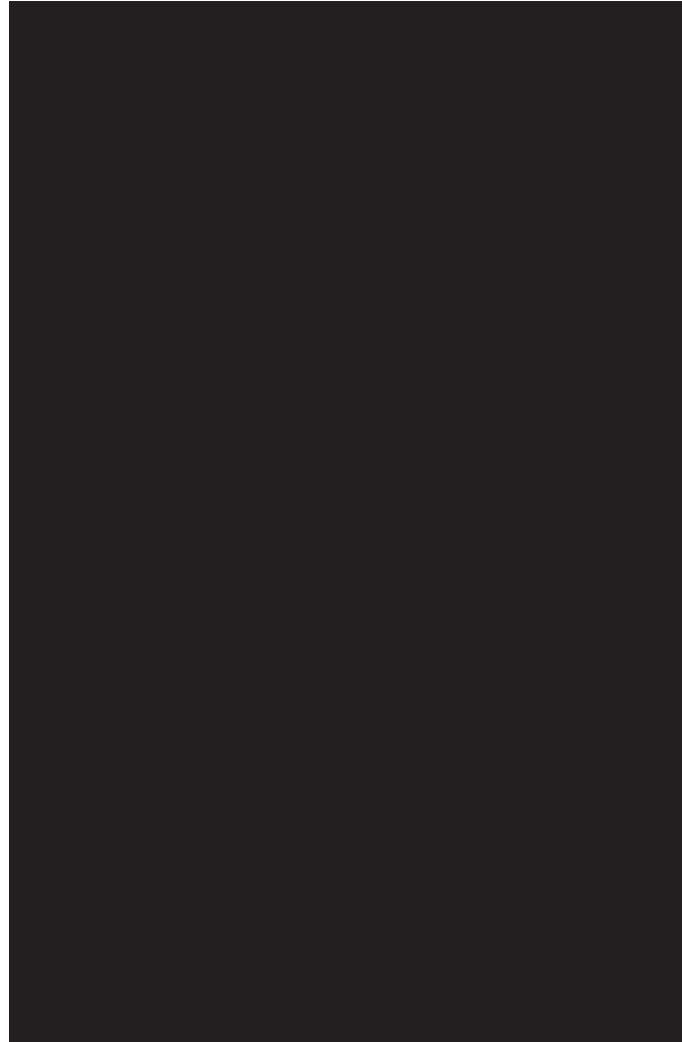
ferently. It is this variety of perceptions that “makes for horse races.” Remember, whenever one person sells a stock, there is a buyer who is betting on the other side. Each of them sees the same world differently.

*What makes us respond as we do?*

Our attitude toward risking is

learn to risk in order to reach that higher level of achievement. An environment of rivalry also promotes risk taking. Further, those who learn a strong sense of self-worth are often willing to risk beyond the norm.

Because risk taking is driven from within, it is very much con-



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probably determined by how we experienced life as we were growing up. In fact, researchers theorize that risk takers come from certain environments. For example, those growing up in families where there is great difficulty or uncertainty, economic or otherwise, learn that they must risk to achieve. Similarly, children whose parents have high expectations quickly

nected to who we are. As a result, we will learn more about ourselves as we move through this area of learning toward being fully in charge of what happens to us—the point of empowerment.

**WE ARE OUR OWN  
BEST RISK  
MANAGERS**

All of life involves choices, and

choosing inherently involves risk-  
ing, which in turn involves feeling.  
The more aware we are of our  
resources and of the interconnect-  
edness of all things, the broader our  
range of options becomes. Since risk  
is unavoidable, it is essential to  
learn how to work with it to  
achieve goals. We cannot abdicate  
the ultimate responsibility for the  
management of our lives. We can  
delegate, but we are responsible for  
the results. As Harry Truman used  
to say, "The buck stops here."  
Which leads us back to the issue of  
empowerment. Taking an invento-  
ry of resources makes us aware of  
how much we have going for us.  
However, power does not come  
from resources; it stems from know-  
ing who we are and being able to  
act from that place in ourselves.  
Acting involves taking risks using  
our total resources. If we know we  
are a particular quality and we act  
accordingly, we can take all sorts of  
risks that would not have felt pos-

*Power does not  
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ourselves.*

sible to us earlier. We can do this  
because *our ability to risk is inner dri-  
ven.*

However, even after we've got-  
ten in touch with our resources and  
connected them to who we are, we  
may choose not to take a given risk.

The important thing is to have  
explored the options.

#### A S P E C T S O F R I S K I N G

We react to risk with either fear  
or exhilaration; sometimes we feel  
a combination of the two.

Sky divers are clearly enthusias-  
tic about throwing themselves out  
of an airplane at several thousand  
feet. Others get chills just thinking  
about it. Actually, the sky diver  
probably feels both emotions  
simultaneously.

One thing is sure, however.  
Whenever we take risks we feel *very  
alive*. Feeling alive is a part of  
wealth. Risking is a part of life and  
living. We must not hide from the  
risk that growth necessarily  
involves.

Probably the greatest risk any of  
us ever take is when we "invest"  
ourselves in an effort such as a mar-  
riage, relationships generally, a job,  
or healing. We bet everything on



the outcome because it is so important to us. The process gets our attention and energy, and we become intensely alive.

When I decided to marry, for instance, I really had no idea what I was going to experience. Looking back, it was the single most important decision I ever made and one on which many other things have depended. Marriages so often end in divorce nowadays, which takes a terrible inner toll on the partners and severely affects any children. Yet, when I married, I knew about divorce intellectually but never gave it a thought. I saw only what I now refer to as the “upside of risk.” I saw the life-giving aspects of a close relationship.

Soon enough, I discovered that to realize that potential would take maturity, inner work, and faith. In retrospect, I see that getting married was the biggest risk I have taken to date; it was entirely a non-financial risk; and it has been important to my wealth.

### CONNECTIONS ARE IMPLICIT IN RISKING

Risking can have far-reaching effects. At the very least, an exploration of risking connects us with who we are and choose to become. I have observed the following general attributes of risking:

Link 1. Risking is a connective activity. In a marriage, it illuminates who we are, making both us and our spouse a bit more conscious of our true selfhood.

Link 2. When we risk, we touch the lives of others. Marriage or performing a rescue are obvious examples of this effect. On the financial side, when we make a risky investment, we are financially backing other people and thus connecting with them. When we give to a charity, we are doing the same thing, which is why I always consider such gifts as investments.

## A SAMPLING OF RISKS

Life presents seemingly endless occasions for taking risks. Here are some typical examples.

- Marriage or the risk of making a commitment to a key relationship. This risk is so great for some that they never take it.
- Initiating a divorce. This is a big risk, for it generally means going into the unknown again, which always generates fear.
- Changing careers—again the feeling of traveling new roads. How will it be? What are the dangers?
- Telling an employer that his or her policies are poor—another major risk.
- Smoking, drinking, overeating, or otherwise misusing our bodies.
- Facing (or not facing) one’s own death. People dying of a terminal disease frequently will not risk acknowledging what is happening to them. Yet, those who work with the dying say that there is healing in dying, provided the process is conscious. Unfortunately, the risk is too frightening for many of us.
- Physically rescuing another person. Perhaps you heard about the man who jumped into freezing water to save someone whose plane had crashed into a river upon takeoff. Such incidents happen over and over.
- Following one’s intuition or heart instead of logic. The life of Mother Teresa is a case in point. She so connected with the quality of love—who she is—that she probably never saw the risks involved in what she has done to express that quality.

Link 3. Sometimes when we take a risk, we place others at risk. Smoking and drinking are clear examples. So is driving a car or flying an airplane. These activities hold the potential for an adverse link with someone else.

Link 4. Our willingness to take risks affects our ability to make financial investments and thus our financial resources as well. As the old lady in New York said, “If you don’t ‘speculate,’ you can’t ‘accumulate.’” *Our financial and non-financial risks are deeply connected.*

Link 5. Some risks are non-elective; they are forced on us. Consider what would happen if your spouse divorced you. Suddenly you would be on your own. If you had children and were granted custody, you would become a single parent, a scary prospect for some. With one connection broken, you would reach out for new ones. At such a time, you would rely on your inner power to see you through—the power that was there all the time anyway. When you make *that* connection, you realize your real wealth. Divorced people rarely see themselves as risk takers, but they are and they often manage very well. They are simply not aware that risking is inherent in such a situation. When the awareness comes through, they can better appreciate their risk taking abilities.

### RISK IS LOWERED WHEN YOU ...

- *Follow your vision, purpose, and goals.*

When you connect who you are with what you do, you have a sense of rightness about your life and tend to be much more centered. This connection creates the sort of balance that deflects the dangers of arrogance, overconfidence, and greed. It is probably not a guarantee, but it seems to help. Witness

the lives of those who appear to follow their purpose with a deep sense of knowing; Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa are cases in point.

- *Improve your awareness of inner and outer reality.*

No one can avoid something they do not sense. Here are three ways to increase awareness:

1. *Practice living in the present.* Doing so will promote paying attention to what is going on now. For example, if you are gardening, stay with the gardening; don't be off somewhere else in your mind. If you are talking to someone, be completely present to that person. When it is your turn to listen, listen. Don't plan what you will say next. Be conscious of what is going on in the present.

2. *Be open to advice from others.* Sharing experiences that are pertinent to current issues can often be vital to risk taking.

3. *Accept that you may not know everything.* No one needs to have all the answers all of the time. The important thing is to network. Collect people. They are among the most valuable non-financial assets you can gather around you for support.

- *Become fully informed about the area of risk you contemplate entering.*

Recall that the dictionary defines risk as "undefined danger." The logical protection, then, is to bring definition to the danger and thereby make the situation more predictable. There is no excuse for entering any field without data if the information exists. Use your non-financial resource base for support in finding the people who have the knowledge necessary to lower risk.

- *Hold onto the concept that risking involves opportunity.*

Instead of seeing risk exclusively as "undefined danger," include the "upside of risk" in your view of things—that is, the notion that the

**When you connect who you are with what you do, you have a sense of rightness about your life and tend to be much more centered.**

risks that present themselves offer opportunities to pursue your purpose and goals.

- *Write a life plan.*

A comprehensive plan and a network of people are key non-financial tools that can be used with great leverage in overcoming risk and combating fear.

#### **R I S K I S R A I S E D W H E N Y O U . . .**

- Are out of touch with or are not following your vision, purpose, and goals.

- Are so consumed by fear that you are unable to take advantage of opportunities that could be prudently risked.

- Are unaware of either the risks you are taking now or those that may present themselves in the future.

- Are impulsive and do not wait to become as informed as is reasonably possible before taking risks.

- Are unattentive to the inner aspects of risking.

#### **T H E P A R A D O X O F R I S K I N G M O R E B Y N O T R I S K I N G**

We tend to think that risk and security are at opposite poles. Although in one sense they are, in another they are not. That is the nature of any polarity. Its power comes from its inherent connectiveness.

Have you ever had the experience of realizing that in not taking a given risk, you would be taking a still greater one?

*That is the paradox.*

Staying in an unrewarding job because it is safe may be a larger risk to health and well-being than moving to a riskier situation that holds the possibility of growth and challenge. Not taking the risk of showing your true feelings can lead to the loss of the whole relationship. The same thing can happen if you avoid communicating on tough interpersonal issues at work or at home.

Our nation is stronger and more secure because people are willing to take risks. The most conspicuous example of this willingness is in new business start-ups. Some people choose to deal with job security by starting their own businesses and betting everything on their own creativity, endurance, and skills. In this way, they manage their own risk rather than putting it in someone else's hands.

So consider the possible consequences of *not* taking risks as well as the consequences of taking them. Be on the lookout for all the connections. Remember that for every patch of sunlight there is adjacent shadow, without which the light would not be visible. •

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# You Can Make A Difference

*When I am dead, how will I be remembered? Has my life been so insignificant that I really didn't make a difference?*

*I heard the story of a man who had worked in middle management all his life and then, long before his retirement, he died suddenly of a heart attack. A short time later his wife and children moved to another city to live with her parents. Many of the people who had worked with this man went to his funeral, and this experience began to raise questions within them. Many of them realized, "This could happen to me!" ❖ One of the things that frightened these people was that not only was this man gone but that after a while it was almost as if he had never been there. ❖ One question that all of this raised was, "When I am dead, how will I be remembered? Has my life been so insignificant that I really didn't make a difference?"*

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These are not easy questions. Many of us avoid asking them because the answers can be painful. For so many of us, the only answers we get feel

empty. Perhaps we stop to realize that maybe we will be remembered only because we were a successful salesperson, or that we were always at work on time, or that we got a gold watch when we retired, or that we were a good and fair competitor in sports.

It is my impression that most of us don't give a hoot about being remembered for our punctuality or job performance or how successful we were at earning money. When we are tempted to live our lives as robots, caught up in the routine and humdrum business of the world, or when we spend most of our lives competing to see who is best, or who has the most possessions, we may truly feel that our lives are very empty.

I believe that what really matters to most of us are our heart connections, the love we extend to others from our hearts. This is what really makes our lives matter. Many, many years ago, I remember someone saying that living without sharing one's life is a wasted life, and I believe this is true.

As the years pass and we enter that stage of life that some refer to as "old age" or "elderly," there is a temptation to look back on our lives and be disappointed by what we find. And if we look ahead, we see but a few years left, and we may wonder what we have really

accomplished. Perhaps we are struck by the feeling that we have had little or no effect on the planet or those who live on it.

How old we are or how many years we have left to live are questions that need not make us feel that our contribution has been small or limited. When it comes to love, there are no big or small gifts. True love is always total and beyond any measurement or comparison.

Recently, my wife and I were having dinner at the home of our dear friends. One of their guests was a most

delightful seventy-five-year-old woman by the name of Vivian, who taught me a lot that night about not associating limitations with the aging process.

Vivian was full of zest and vitality. When I asked about her age, she answered with a twinkle in her eye that she was "ageless." It became very clear that night that Vivian keeps her heart young by always having a thirst for new experiences and new knowledge.

Vivian told us that she loves to take classes at the local junior college.

When I asked her what she was studying at this time in her life, she told me the following story.

Her sister and she went to the college to sign up for an evening course but found that the course they wished to take was filled up. In fact, they were told that every course was filled to capacity except one. When they asked what this course was, they were told that it was a class on how to become a clown.

They laughed and told each other that this would absolutely be the last thing in the world they would be interested in learning. But after further discussion, they looked at each other and said, "Well, as long as we're



here, why don't we just go and find out what it's all about?"

They went to the class and were so surprised at how much they loved it that they enrolled that night, and both of them became totally engrossed in the art of becoming a clown. Vivian said how much she enjoyed preparing her "clown self" to bring joy and laughter to others. She said it easily made her forget her own small, insignificant daily problems. She was amazed at what a serious student she became and what hard work it was to learn to be a clown. It took her nearly an hour to create her clown face and put on her costume, and another forty-five minutes to take it off.

Her clown costume is so good that even some of her best friends don't recognize her when she wears it, a fact that Vivian thoroughly enjoys. She says it gives her the freedom to be a totally different person, one who isn't afraid to do and say things that she never knew she was capable of doing and saying.

After graduating from the clown class, Vivian and her sister decided they wanted to be with children and to make them laugh, but they also wanted to spend time bringing more joy and laughter to older people. As a result of their unique spirits, they have become well known in their home state of Illinois, and many newspaper and magazine articles have been written about them.

We were absolutely absorbed with Vivian's story, so she agreed to meet with us again the next day. She shared some articles and photos of herself and her sister dressed as clowns. And do you know what? No one could ever have guessed their ages. They were indeed ageless, just as Vivian had said the night before! Vivian stated that becoming a clown is one of the most wonderful things that could ever have happened to her. It gives her a way to give back in gratitude all the

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Here is the beginning of a list of questions we can ask, and things we can do, right now, to make a difference:

1. I shall ask each day, what can I do to be more helpful to other people?

2. I shall ask each day, what can I do to bring more light and love to this planet of ours?

3. I will visualize in my mind an image of the kind of world I'd like to live in.

4. I will be reminded that my thoughts as well as my actions help determine the kind of world I live in. Thus, I shall ask for help each day to let go of all my attack thoughts and actions—and have them replaced with only loving thoughts and actions.

5. I shall ask what I might do each day to help our handicapped, our elderly, our sick, and our children.

6. I will read and do at least one of the things recommended in the book *Fifty Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*, published by The Earthwork Group, Berkeley, California.

7. I will ask myself what I might do this day in my family, my school, my place of work, and during my leisure hours to make the world a better place to live.

8. There is a wonderful organization called "The Giraffe" for people who are willing to stick out their necks to help make the world a better place to live. I, too, will ask myself how I might *stick out my neck* to make a difference.

9. I will either make a phone call or tell someone in person how much I love them.

10. I will think of someone I have not forgiven and will have a willingness to forgive them today.

love she has received in her life. She feels so good about herself because she feels useful. It is her unique way of making a difference in people's lives. She knows that each day she brings joy and happiness to people of all ages.

Vivian awakens in me, and I think in almost everyone she meets, the happy, innocent child that each of us has in the center of our hearts. She made it very clear that she lives only in the present and does not worry about the past or the future.

Vivian seems to have known, from the very depth of her being, that the way to heal yourself of irritation, sadness, or unhappiness is to do your best to reach out and help others. She is a true messenger of love, of happiness and humor. She vividly demonstrates that when you don't believe there are any limitations or barriers to expressing your potential and being useful, then there truly are none.

## YOU ARE NEVER TOO YOUNG

Our society often teaches us that wisdom comes only with age. Another way of looking at the world is to believe that our true perceptions of wisdom have little to do with how old we are, but much to do with how willing we are to see every person we meet, regardless of age, as a teacher of love. This means that a three-year-old has as much to teach us as a ninety-three-year-old. I know that my whole life has changed since I have accepted this premise.

I think that it is extremely important to take a whole new look at what we tell our children. For example, children so often hear us say that you can't do this or you can't do that until you are older and are a grown-up. Some children get the erroneous message that they can't be fully alive and make a difference in this world until they are

adults. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In Philadelphia, an eleven-year-old boy by the name of Trevor Ferrell was watching television one night when he saw a story on the news about street people. His heart ached when he saw these people sleeping in the streets on that bitterly cold night. Although it was late, he told his parents that he wanted to go to these people that night and help them. He just knew that there must be something he and his parents could do to help.

His father was pleased that his son was sensitive to the street people's suffering and that he wanted to help, but it was very late and everyone in the house was tired. Trevor, however, still wanted to go. He was not going to believe in any kind of limitation in following what his heart was directing him to do.

Trevor did not let up. Finally his parents agreed to take him to the center of Philadelphia where the television program had shown the street people to be living. Trevor took a single yellow blanket and a pillow from his own bed. While they were driving, he pressed the blanket and pillow against the car heater to warm them.

As they turned a corner in the city, Trevor saw a man sleeping in the street on an iron grating. He called out to his father to stop the car. Then he calmly got out, walked up to the man, knelt down beside him, and handed him the blanket.

"Here, sir," he told the man. "Here's a blanket for you." Then Trevor went back to the car and brought the man the pillow. The man's face lit up with one of the biggest smiles Trevor had ever seen.

"Thank you," the man said. "God bless you."

"God bless you," Trevor said.

Trevor and his parents were deeply moved by this experience. The next night and the next they returned, bringing blankets and hot coffee for the street people.

But even this was not enough for Trevor. He kept telling his parents, "There must be something more that we can do." There seemed to be no way that this boy was going to give up his idea of helping the street people. He did not sit down and draw up a logical plan but he did follow his heart.

Trevor began putting posters up all over town, asking for donations to help the street people. The response could not have been more heartwarming. People from everywhere brought warm clothes and blankets and

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piled them high in Trevor's garage to be taken to the street people. One person even donated a Volkswagen van so that they could take the donations to the people who so desperately needed them.

Over time, Trevor's Campaign, as it was named, was helping to feed and clothe and even provide housing for the homeless people in the inner city. There just seemed to be no stopping the enthusiasm and generosity that people from the community showed once Trevor got it started. A whole change of consciousness began to occur. Everyone began to feel better about themselves. Schoolchildren, business people, even people from high society showed up to volunteer their time.

Even the most complacent and doubtful people began to learn that they too could make a difference.

People of all ages turned up to help, not only by giving money but by touching the hearts of the people around them who needed their assistance.

#### HOW WE CAN ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

Within each of our hearts is an endless list of creative things that we can do to make a difference. This list is revealed to us simply by asking ourselves each day how we might be helpful to others and what we might do to bring more light and love to our planet.

It is possible to start each day letting these two thoughts fill our hearts with compassion and determination, as if our very lives depended on it. I am really talking about a commitment to save our lives and our planet—being very clear that our purpose every day is to help and love others and the vast Universe of which we are all a part.

This means being totally committed to going through each day having the same concerns and interests for others as we have for ourselves. It means focusing our concern beyond our own selfish interests.

Not long ago, I heard Roger Muller, formerly of the United Nations, suggest that we can all start becoming global citizens and peacemakers by simply closing our eyes and visualizing the kind of world we'd like to have. •

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ROBERT BRENNER/PHOTO EDIT

# PROFOUND PERSONAL HEALING

JACK KORNFIELD

Many people first  
come to spiritual  
practice hoping  
to skip over their  
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their lives.

Jack Kornfield holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. He is a husband, father, psychotherapist, and founding teacher of the Insight Meditation Society and the Spirit Rock Center. His books include "Seeking the Heart of Wisdom," "A Still Forest Pool," and "Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart."



Almost everyone who undertakes a true spiritual path will discover that a profound personal healing is a necessary part of his or her spiritual process. When this need is acknowledged, spiritual practice can be directed to bring such healing to body, heart, and mind. This is not a new notion. Since ancient times, spiritual practice has been described as a process of healing. The Buddha and Jesus were both known as healers of the body, as well as great physicians of the spirit.

Wise spiritual practice requires that we actively address the pain and conflict of our life in order to come to inner integration and harmony. Through the guidance of a skillful teacher, meditation can help bring this healing. Without including the essential step of healing, students will find that they are blocked from deeper levels of meditation or are unable to integrate them into their lives.

Many people first come to spiritual practice hoping to skip over their sorrows and wounds, the difficult areas of their lives. They hope to rise above them and enter a spiritual realm full of divine grace, free from all conflict. Some spiritual practices actually do encourage this and teach ways of accomplishing this through intense concentration and ardor that bring about states of rapture and peace. Some powerful yogic practices can transform the mind. While such practices have their value, an inevitable disappointment occurs when they end,

for as soon as practitioners relax in their discipline, they again encounter all the unfinished business of the body and heart that they had hoped to leave behind.

True maturation on the spiritual path requires that we discover the depth of our wounds: our grief from the past, unfulfilled longing, the sorrow that we have stored up during the course of our lives. As

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over again.*

Achaan Chah put it, "If you haven't cried deeply a number of times, your meditation hasn't really begun."

This healing is necessary if we are to embody spiritual life lovingly and wisely. Unhealed pain and rage, unhealed traumas from childhood abuse or abandonment become powerful unconscious forces in our lives. Until we are able to bring awareness and understand-

ing to our old wounds, we will find ourselves repeating their patterns of unfulfilled desire, anger, and confusion over and over again. While many kinds of healing can come through spiritual life in the form of grace, charismatic revivals, prayer, or ritual, two of the most significant kinds develop naturally through a systematic spiritual practice.

The first area of healing comes when we develop a relationship of trust with a teacher. The image of the statues of Jesus and Buddha in the midst of the Vietnam War reminds us that even in great difficulties, healing is possible. It also reminds us that healing cannot come from ourselves alone. The process of inner healing inevitably requires developing a committed relationship with a teacher or guide. Because many of our greatest pains come from past relationships, it is through our experience of a wise and conscious relationship that these pains are healed. This relationship itself becomes the ground for our opening to compassion and freedom of the spirit. Where the pain and disappointment of the past have left us isolated and closed, with a wise teacher we can learn to trust again. When we allow our darkest fears and worst dimensions to be witnessed and compassionately accepted by another, we learn to accept them ourselves.

A healthy relationship with a teacher serves as a model for trust in others, in ourselves, in our bodies, in our intuitions, our own direct experience. It gives us a trust in life itself. Teachings and teacher become a sacred container to support our awakening.

Another kind of healing takes place when we begin to bring the power of awareness and loving attention to each area of our life with the systematic practice of mindfulness.



## HEALING THE BODY

Meditation practice often begins with techniques for bringing ourselves to an awareness of our bodies. This is especially important in a culture such as ours, which has neglected physical and instinctual life. James Joyce wrote of one character, "Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body." So many of us do. In meditation, we can slow down and sit quietly, truly staying with whatever arises. With awareness, we can cultivate a willingness to open to physical experiences without struggling against them, actually to live in our bodies. As we do so, we feel more clearly its pleasures and its pains. Because our acculturation teaches us to avoid or run from pain, we do not know much about it. To heal the body we must study pain. When we bring close attention to our physical pains, we will notice several kinds. We see that sometimes pain arises as we adjust to an unaccustomed sitting posture. Other times, pains arise as signals that we're sick or have a genuine physical problem. These pains call for a direct response and healing action from us.

However, most often the kinds of pains we encounter in meditative attention are not indications of physical problems. They are the painful, physical manifestations of our emotional, psychological, and spiritual holdings and contractions. Reich called these pains our muscular armor, the areas of our body that we have tightened over and over in painful situations as a way to protect ourselves from life's inevitable difficulties. Even a healthy person who sits somewhat comfortably to meditate will probably become aware of pains in his or her body. As we sit still, our shoulders, our backs, our jaws, or our necks may hurt. Accumulated knots in the fabric of our body, pre-

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viously undetected, begin to reveal themselves as we open. As we become conscious of the pain they have held, we may also notice feelings, memories, or images connected specifically to each area of tension.

As we gradually include in our awareness all that we have previously shut out and neglected, our body heals. Learning to work with this opening is part of the art of meditation. We can bring an open and respectful attention to the sensations that make up our bodily experience. In this process, we must work to develop a feeling awareness of what is actually going on in the body. We can direct our attention to notice the patterns of our breathing, our posture, the way we hold our back, our chest, our belly, our pelvis. In all these areas we can carefully sense the free movement of energy or the contraction and holding that prevents it.

When you meditate, try to allow whatever arises to move through you as it will. Let your attention be very kind. Layers of tension will gradually release, and energy will

begin to move. Places in your body where you have held the patterns of old illness and trauma will open. Then a deeper physical purification and opening of the energy channels will occur as the knots release and dissolve. Sometimes with this opening we will experience a powerful movement of the breath, sometimes a spontaneous vibration and other physical sensations.

Let your attention drop beneath the superficial level that just notices "pleasure," "tension," or "pain." Examine the pain and unpleasant sensations you usually block out. With careful mindfulness, you will allow "pain" to show itself to have many layers. As a first step, we can learn to be aware of pain without creating further tension, to experience and observe pain physically as pressure, tightness, pinpricks, needles, throbbing, or burning. Then we can notice all the layers around the "pain." Inside are the strong elements of fire, vibration, and pressure. Outside is often a layer of physical tightness and contraction. Beyond this may be an emotional layer of aversion, anger, or fear and a layer of thoughts and attitudes such as, "I hope this will go away soon," or "If I feel pain, I must be doing something wrong," or "Life is always painful." To heal, we must become aware of all these layers.

Bringing systematic attention to our body can change our whole relationship to our physical life. We can notice more clearly the rhythms and needs of our bodies. Without mindful attending to our bodies, we may become so busy in our daily lives that we lose touch with a sense of appropriate diet, movement, and physical enjoyment. Meditation can help us find out in what ways we are neglecting the physical aspects of our lives and what our body asks of us.

A mistaken disregard for the body is illustrated in a story of Mullah Nasrudin, the Sufi wise and

holy fool. Nasrudin had bought a donkey, but it was costing him a lot to keep it fed, so he hatched a plan. As the weeks went on, he gradually fed the donkey less and less. Finally, he was only feeding it one small cupful of grain throughout the day. The plan seemed to be succeeding, and Nasrudin was saving a lot of money. Then, unfortunately, the donkey died. Nasrudin went to see his friends in the tea shop and told them about his experiment. "It's such a shame. If that donkey had been around a little longer, maybe I could have gotten him used to eating nothing!"

To ignore or abuse the body is mistaken spirituality. When we honor the body with our attention, we begin to reclaim our feelings, our instincts, our life. Out of this developing attention, we can then experience a healing of the senses. The eyes, the tongue, the ears, and the sense of touch are rejuvenated. Many people experience this after some period of meditation. Colors are pure, flavors fresh, we can feel our feet on the earth as if we were children again. This cleansing of the senses allows us to experience the joy of being alive and a growing intimacy with life here and now.

### HEALING THE HEART

Just as we open and heal the body by sensing its rhythms and touching it with a deep and kind attention, so we can open and heal other dimensions of our being. The heart and the feelings go through a similar process of healing through the offering of our attention to their rhythms, nature, and needs. Most often, opening the heart begins by opening to a lifetime's accumulation of unacknowledged sorrow, both our personal sorrows and the universal sorrows of warfare, hunger, old age, illness, and death. At times we may experience this

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sorrow physically, as contractions and barriers around our heart, but more often we feel the depth of our wounds, our abandonment, our pain, as unshed tears.

As we develop a meditative attention, the heart presents itself naturally for healing. The grief we have carried for so long, from pains and dashed expectations and hopes, arises. We grieve for our past traumas and present fears, for all of the feelings we never dared experience consciously. Whatever shame or unworthiness we have within us arises—much of our early childhood and family pain, the mother and father wounds we hold, the isolation, any past abuse (physical or sexual) are all stored in the heart.

Many of us are taught that we shouldn't be affected by grief and loss, but no one is exempt. One of the most experienced hospice directors in the country was surprised when he came to a retreat and grieved for his mother who had died the year before. "This grief," he said, "is different from all the

others I work with. It's my mother."

Oscar Wilde wrote, "Hearts are meant to be broken." As we heal through meditation, our hearts break open to feel fully. Powerful feelings, deep unspoken parts of ourselves arise, and our task in meditation is first to let them move through us, then to recognize them and allow them to sing their songs. A poem by Wendell Berry illustrates this beautifully.

*I go among trees and sit still.  
All my stirring becomes quiet  
around me like circles on water.  
My tasks lie in their places  
Where I left them, asleep like  
cattle...*

*Then what I am afraid of comes.  
I live for a while in its sight.  
What I fear in it leaves it,  
And the fear of it leaves me.  
It sings, and I hear its song.*

What we find as we listen to the songs of our rage or fear, loneliness or longing is that they do not stay forever. Rage turns into sorrow; sorrow turns into tears; tears may fall for a long time, but then the sun comes out. A memory of old loss sings to us; our body shakes and relieves the moment of loss; then the armoring around that loss gradually softens; and in the midst of the song of tremendous grieving, the pain of that loss finally finds release.

In truly listening to our most painful songs, we can learn the divine art of forgiveness. While there is a whole systematic practice of forgiveness that can be cultivated, both forgiveness and compassion arise spontaneously with the opening of the heart. Somehow, in feeling our own pain and sorrow, our own ocean of tears, we come to know that ours is a shared pain and that the mystery and beauty and pain of life cannot be separated. This universal pain, too, is part of our connection with one another,



and in the face of it we cannot withhold our love any longer.

We can learn to forgive others, ourselves, and life for its physical pain. We can learn to open our heart to all of it, to the pain, to the pleasures we have feared. In this, we discover a remarkable truth. Much of spiritual life is self-acceptance, maybe all of it. Indeed, in accepting the songs of our life, we can begin to create for ourselves a much deeper and greater identity in which our heart holds all within a space of boundless compassion.

Most often this healing work is so difficult we need another person as an ally, a guide to hold our hand and inspire our courage as we go through it. Then miracles happen.

Naomi Remen, a physician who uses art, meditation, and other spiritual practices in the healing of cancer patients, told me a moving story that illustrates the process of healing the heart, which accompanies a healing of the body. She described a young man who was twenty-four years old when he came to her after one of his legs had been amputated at the hip in order to save his life from bone cancer. When she began her work with him, he had a great sense of injustice and a hatred for all "healthy" people. It seemed bitterly unfair to him that he had suffered this terrible loss so early in his life. His grief and rage were so great that it took several years of continuous work for him to begin to come out of himself and to heal. He had to heal not simply his body, but also his broken heart and wounded spirit.

He worked hard and deeply, telling his story, painting it, meditating, bringing his entire life into awareness. As he slowly healed, he developed a profound compassion for others in similar situations. He began to visit people in the hospital who had also suffered severe physical losses. On one occasion, he told his physician, he visited a young

*What we find as we listen to the songs of our rage or fear, loneliness or longing is that they do not stay forever. Rage turns into sorrow; sorrow turns into tears; tears may fall for a long time, but then the sun comes out.*

singer who was so depressed about the loss of her breasts that she would not even look at him. The nurses had the radio playing, probably hoping to cheer her up. It was a hot day, and the young man had come in running shorts. Finally, desperate to get her attention, he unstrapped his artificial leg and began dancing around the room on his one leg, snapping his fingers to the music. She looked at him in amazement, and then she burst out laughing and said, "Man, if you can dance, I can sing."

When this young man first began working with drawing, he made a crayon sketch of his own body in the form of a vase with a deep black crack running through it. He redrew the crack over and over and over, grinding his teeth with rage. Several years later, to encourage him to complete his process, my friend showed him his early pictures again. He saw the vase and said, "Oh, this one isn't finished." When she suggested that

he finish it then, he did. He ran his finger along the crack, saying, "You see here, this is where the light comes through." With a yellow crayon, he drew light streaming through the crack into the body of the vase and said, "Our hearts can grow strong at the broken places."

This young man's story profoundly illustrates the way in which sorrow or a wound can heal, allowing us to grow into our fullest, most compassionate identity, our greatness of heart. When we truly come to terms with sorrow, a great and unshakable joy is born in our heart.

#### DEVELOPING A HEALING ATTENTION

Sit comfortably and quietly. Let your body rest easily. Breathe gently. Let go of your thoughts, past and future, memories and plans. Just be present. Begin to let your own precious body reveal the places that most need healing. Allow the physical pains, tensions, diseases, or wounds to show themselves. Bring a careful and kind attention to these painful places. Slowly and carefully feel their physical energy. Notice what is deep inside them, the pulsations, throbbing, tension, needles, heat, contraction, aching that make up what we call pain. Allow these all to be felt fully, to be held in a receptive and kind attention. Then be aware of the surrounding area of your body. If there is contraction and holding, notice this gently. Breathe softly and let it open. Then, in the same way, be aware of any aversion or resistance in your mind. Notice this, too, with a soft attention, without resisting, allowing it to be as it is, allowing it to open in its own time. Now notice the thoughts and fears that accompany the pain you are exploring: "It will never go away." "I can't stand it." "I don't deserve

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# Seasons

MARGARITE HOEFLER

*You begin to see that there are seasons in your life in the same way as there are seasons in nature. Those rhythms in life are natural events. They weave into one another as day follows night, bringing, not messages of hope and fear, but messages of how things are.*

—Chögyam Trungpa

# Healthy Shame

*T*here is a nice irony in shame. Our feelings of inferiority are a sure sign of our superiority and our feelings of unworthiness testify to our great worth. Only a very noble being can feel shame. The reason is simple. A creature meant to be a little less than God is likely to feel a deep dissatisfaction with herself if she falls a notch below the splendid human being she is meant to be. If we never feel it, we may have lost contact with the splendid person we truly are. If we can still feel the pain, it is because we are healthy enough to feel uncomfortable with being less than we ought to be and less than we want to be. This is healthy shame.

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Some psychologists seem to assume that all bad feelings we have about ourselves are an unhealthy psychic disorder. I believe that they are mistaken. They work on the assumption that feelings of unworthiness are our problem and never the symptom of a real problem beneath the feelings. To this I say, not so fast. If we feel like flawed persons, it may be because we are in fact flawed. Our shame may be a painful signal that we are failing to be the persons we are meant to be and that our shame may therefore be the first hope of healing. Let's at least explore the possibility that a certain kind of shame may be good for us.

Let me propose some possibilities.

**S H A M E M A Y B E A  
C A L L F R O M O U R  
T R U E S E L V E S**

"Be not ashamed of feeling shame or scornful of its purpose." Willard Gaylin wrote this in his book *Feelings*, and he added, "These emotions—guilt and shame—guide us to our better selves..." It is good to know that we have a better self to be called back to. And it is good to know that our shame keeps us in touch with that better self. A healthy sense of shame is perhaps the surest sign of our divine origin and our human dignity. When we feel it, we are feeling a nudge from our true selves.

Where is this so-called true self?

**Our shame may be a painful signal that we are failing to be the persons we are meant to be and that our shame may therefore be the first hope of healing.**

Is it hiding somewhere inside of us, like a forgotten ghost who haunts us with memories of the self we used to be? What is it like? How do we know it when we see it?

Our true self is like the design for a building still under construction. Or, the original design for a building that needs restoring. It is stamped in the depths of us like a template for the selves we are meant to be and yet are failing to be.

Christians recognize the pattern of their true selves in the story of Jesus. We may also recognize it when we see it in the lives of our heroes and saints. We feel it in the pressure we get from our own conscience when it works right. We know it by a deep intuition we have of the better person we would be if we truly were all we can be.

Our actual self—the self we are from day to day—never quite matches the template of our true selves. In fact, the gap between our true

selves and our actual selves is what creates our healthy feelings of shame. So, before I talk about our true self, I had better explain what I mean by our actual self

Our actual self exists on two levels.

The upper level is the self we are in the roles we play and the company we keep. It is the self we are creating out of our decisions and our acts, our commitments and our relationships, our failures and our achievements—the self that we are on surface where everybody can see us act our life stories.

The lower level of our actual selves is the deep self that many of us fear to get in touch with—the hidden motives and inclinations that creep upward into the first level and become the self everybody sees. It includes all the murky things that go on in the shadow world of our sub-conscious. It includes our deeper feelings, our drives, our instincts, and our assorted subliminal attitudes.

Shame comes on us when our actual self, on either level, is in conflict with the true self we were meant to be. What, then, do we mean by our true self? Any image of the true self is blended from many ingredients. I will run through a few of them. You can decide for yourself whether they do in fact match at least parts of your own image of the truest and best you—the self that in your best moments you truly want to be.

▲ First, your true self is a grateful person; you feel the gladness that comes when you sense that every breath, every heartbeat, every good feeling, every touch of another person's friendly flesh on yours, every loving relationship another person offers you, that it is all a wonderful gift to you. It is all a gift that you accept and relish and enjoy. And accepting it makes you feel wondrously fortunate and blessed.

▲ Second, your true self is an inte-

grated whole; your life holds together; you are one. You are the same person in secret as you are in public; you have the courage to face unpleasant realities without disguising them; you have a natural bent for accepting and telling the truth even when it hurts; and you try to keep your promises even when it costs you some inconvenience and sacrifice. In short, you are a person of integrity.

▲ Third, your true self is tuned to what is really going on around you. And in you. You listen to the voices, you look at the sights, and you smell the scents of reality around you. You see connections; you see the links between things, how one thing relates to another. You see the differences between things; you can tell the difference, for instance, between what is important and what can wait until tomorrow. You see things in yourself you are proud of and you admit to things you feel ashamed of. In short, you are a discerning person.

▲ Fourth, your true self is the conductor of your private inner orchestra. You manage your passions. You

are not afraid to get angry, but you do not lose control of your temper. You have powerful capacity for pleasure, but you are not addicted. You can let yourself go, but you are not a slave of your own impulses or other people's seductions. You are the sort of person that other people can count on because you are in charge of your life.

▲ Fifth, your true self can love with passion. Your love desires all that your loved-one can give you, but your love is also a strong desire to give her all she needs from you. And yet your love respects your own needs as well. Your love is strong enough to go on loving even when the fire of passion dies down. You make people better and freer persons for having been loved by you. Your love is fair, fair to the person you love and fair to yourself.

There they are, just for starters, five ingredients of our true self. Do you not recognize in them at least parts of the self you were meant to be? And want to be? But the self you never quite are? Do you not feel a pang of dissatisfaction with your actual self when you think of what

you really are meant to be your true, your ideal self? And is it not clear that the shame you sometimes feel is a gift to you precisely because it calls you back to your better self?

Shame is a flame from the glowing ember of our original fire that still burns at the core of our lives, still broods in our memories, still glimmers in our hopes, and still invites us to be one with her again.

How does our true self get its message to us? In many ways. Some of us get it straight from our conscience. Some of us get it from the stories of those who went before us. Some of us learn it from what wise and profound minds have taught us. All of us get it because the divine Spirit prods and pushes, nudges and shoves us with intimations of the better self we were created to be.

*S H A M E M A Y B Y A  
S Y M P T O M O F  
S O M E T H I N G  
G O I N G W R O N G*

Shame, we are told, is the painful feeling of being a flawed human being. Well, what if, in fact,

we are flawed human beings? All of us. Cracked vessels. Wheels out of alignment. The heart of us slightly off center. What if none of us is quite a match for the self we could be?

Given the horrors that some members of our species consistently inflict on other people, why should we blame our shame? Why should we not be thankful that we still have the power to feel it? Given the crabbed side of my own spirit, my irresistible urge to seek my own interests at the cost of others, my comfort in the teeth of other people's suffering, my niggardly envy of other people's success, and given my urges to smash the nose of any driver who cuts in front of me, given such flaws, are we not more in tune with reality if we accept our shame as the cost of failing to be the selves we ought to be, the selves we are meant to be, and the selves we really want to be? This is healthy shame and we are closest to health when we let ourselves feel the pain of it and be led by the pain to do something about it.

If I never feel shame, I have become either totally divine or totally corrupt. And my best intuitions tell me I am neither.

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

Our shame may be a counter balance to our tilt toward folly. When it comes down to it, most people do the right thing because they would be ashamed of themselves if they did the wrong thing. It isn't the fear of breaking the Ten Commandments or the threat of punishment that keeps them true to themselves. More often than not, they avoid the cheap, the mean, and the fake because they do not want to feel ashamed of themselves.

There is a fascinating character by the name of Tarrou in Albert

**But whenever we  
feel it, shame sets  
us at a cross-road.  
We have a choice:  
do we rush to get  
relief or do we  
first ask what  
causes the pain?**

Camus' novel *The Plague*. He has been helping Dr. Rieux take care of all the dying people in the plague struck town of Oran. What the epidemic of plague taught him was, as he put it, that "each of us has the Plague within him; no one, no one on earth is free from it." Which means this: everyone has something to be ashamed of.

Tarrou recalls one day how he watched a young man of thirty or so who was on trial for murder. The young man—maybe guilty, but probably innocent—was convicted and sentenced to die. Tarrou never forgot the shame he felt on hearing a human being condemned to die.

"For many years, I've been ashamed, mortally ashamed, of having been, even with the best of intentions, even at many removes, a murderer in my turn... Yes, I've been ashamed ever since. So that is why I resolved to have no truck with anything which, directly or indirectly, for good reasons or for

bad, brings death to anyone or justifies others putting him to death."

Tarrou's shame was a power that pushed him to live so that others may live. Not the best of all reasons for living nobly, but not an ineffective one either.

**S H A M E I S A  
C H A N C E T O  
U N D E R S T A N D  
O U R S E L V E S**

Shame has no intelligence; it does not think or speak. It is a feeling. But whenever we feel it, shame sets us at a cross-road. We have a choice: do we rush to get relief or do we first ask what causes the pain?

To ask why we are feeling the sting of shame is a step into self-understanding. When we probe our shame, we may discover a great deal about ourselves that is worth knowing. What we find out about ourselves may disappoint us deeply. It may also make us feel grateful for the good qualities we had not dared give ourselves credit for before. But whatever there is for us to discover inside ourselves, shame may be the push we needed to look and see.

As we bore through the crust of feelings we do not understand, we may also discover deep pools of shame that somebody caused us before we knew what was happening. We may feel for the first time the full sting of a shame that we do not deserve, a shame someone injected into us by treating us as if we were a shameful child, unhealthy shame. Waves of sadness may pour out into our consciousness, our heart may be breaking, and only when we see where it came from will we know why it hurts so much to carry it.

Having finally felt the unbearable burden of sadness, we may discover our true selves in it. And in that discovery we may also uncover a store of healthy shame that becomes us. •



# Living With Questions

*Why am I here? Where am I going? We need to see how honest we can be with ourselves when trying to answer these questions. These two questions are related. That is, most people think they are here because there is a goal; they want to go somewhere. Where do you want to go? You probably think you know. Do you? ❧ These are questions that you cannot answer with your mind. These are questions that should remain questions. Do not try simply to answer them mentally. These questions are like a flame. If you answer them with your mind, you will put out the flame because the mind doesn't, the mind can't know the answers to these questions. When you answer them with your mind and you think you know, the question is gone. When you believe you have answered such questions, the flame is gone and there is no more inquiry.*

A.H. Almaas is a writer and teacher. The following is from "Diamond Heart," a collection of talks given to his students engaged in essential realization.



If you settle for answers on this level, you will live like most of humanity who assume that they know why they are here and where they are going. Such a life typically feels shallow and insignificant. A life with no fundamental questioning is a life lived according to formulas, according to what one has heard from others. But why should you believe what others tell you about life? You don't actually know yet what is true for you, what is important for you, what will work for you.

It is better to remain ignorant than to pretend knowledge. If you know that you are ignorant and don't pretend otherwise, there is a question that stays alive and continues to burn in you, a deep hunger for the truth.

If you look at every moment of your life, such as this moment, you will see that most of the time you believe that you know what is the best thing for you at that moment. You think, feel, and behave as if you know what is supposed to happen, as if you know what you want and what is important to want. You live your life believing at every moment that you know how you should be. Where does this knowledge come from?

Most of it comes from your early childhood, both from what you were directly taught and by what you indirectly absorbed from your surroundings. Some of it comes from what you have heard or read. It is conditioned knowledge. Whatever the source, conditioned knowledge is useless in answering the fundamental questions, such as the question of why we are here. The conditioned knowledge says that what I'm here for is to be

happy, to be successful, to feel good, to get what I think I want, to satisfy my dreams, to get someone to love me, or to make a lot of money. The conditioning is simply a mechanism for survival. You have survived, you are here—so that knowledge has done, and is doing, its job. If you want to continue merely sur-

philosophers, have the answer that is appropriate for you? Christ says to love your neighbor. Do you really know that is what you need to do? Buddha says that enlightenment is the best thing. How do you know that is what you need?

Some people say you have to learn to be yourself. It sounds good.



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viving, you can. But what difference is there then between you and any animal, any insect that is born, lives and dies? This is the knowledge that you have been conditioned with, and it is useless for answering fundamental questions.

How do you know that the knowledge you get from others is the truth? How do you know that your teachers, or even the great

Some people say you should be free from your personality and develop your Essence. It sounds great. How do you know it will resolve your situation? You don't really know whether any of these ideas are relevant or true for you. You can't know with certainty until you have experimented and learned from your own experience. Until then your action is based on

MYRLEEN FERGUSON/PHOTO EDIT

faith or belief. If you assume unquestioningly that what someone else says is the truth, your inner flame will be extinguished. You will believe that you have answered questions when you haven't

still don't know whether it's the answer. You don't know whether it will actually resolve your situation. And if you believe you know, you're lying to yourself. You need to keep the question alive while you inves-

answered. Can you allow the questions to remain if you don't know whether there is an answer? Can you be that sincere with yourself? You believe you're here because you believe you can get something here,

*Do you ever allow  
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that you hear?*

answered them; other people have. And they haven't answered them for you, but for themselves. We comfort ourselves by believing that others know and that we can use their knowledge. It's a very comforting thought; it encourages us to be lazy. We comfort ourselves by saying to ourselves, "Somebody knows, and in time I'll get around to studying it. It's already known and always available to me."

But do you, yourself, really know in your heart what is supposed to happen? Do you ever allow yourself to question, to have a burning question—and not put out the flame quickly with the first answer that you hear? You put out the flame so that you can return to your sense of comfort and security.

Someone tells you that it's good to pay attention, to be aware. When you try it, it helps a little—but you

investigate for yourself.

Our questions about why we are here and where we are going are uncomfortable, but they are real questions for every human being. If you do not ask them and allow them to be ongoing questions, you will never know for yourself what it's all about. You will never know who you are, why you're here, and where you are going. Your mind is full of ideas and dreams and plans about what will fulfill you, what will make you happy, what will give you freedom. But these ideas silence the question, comfort your mind, and put out the flame.

So begin with the awareness that you don't know the answers. And be aware of the feverish attempts in your mind to convince yourself that you know. It's not only that you don't know the answers, you don't know whether the questions can be

you believe you can experience something here, you hope you can find some freedom here. But do you really know that? Are you certain that what we are doing is right for you? Can you ever be certain if you don't answer the questions for yourself?

Perhaps you have heard the idea that if you think you need love, you need to love others, be selfless. It sounds good.

It's what the great masters say. But for you it is hearsay, a rumor, a possibility worth inquiring about. It is not knowledge yet. Is it possible to leave your ideas, your thoughts, your knowledge behind, and let the inquiry be? Can you let the question stand? Can you for a while forget all your formulas, all of what you have heard or read, everything your parents said or didn't say, what all the great teachers have

TONY FREEMAN/PHOTO EDIT

said, and remain alone with the question? Why are you here? Where are you going? What is it all about? Can you let yourself have that question intensely—can you let that flame burn in you without needing to put it out with an answer?

Can we let this inquiry deepen in us, in our hearts, in our bellies, in our being? Can we let our being be a question mark, a yearning? It is a motiveless search, a search that does not depend on any ideas about going somewhere. There is no goal in sight, so it becomes a flame that continues to burn and deepen with time. Don't cover it up, put it out, or let it go; just let it be. Let it consume you. Let it burn away all your ideas and beliefs about how things should be. Let it burn away all your concepts about good and bad. Let that inquiry deepen and expand, so that you can forget. Let go of all you have learned... for a while at least.

Can you exist as an inquiry, an inquiry into the truth? Are you here just to live, work, eat, love, hate, have children, and die? Can you let go of what you believe you have? Can your mind empty itself of all your possessions, beliefs, theories, knowledge, understanding, and simply remain as a search, a pure inquiry not influenced by anyone or anything, even your own past? Even if you felt love and freedom and relaxation and so on in the past, what makes you think these things are what you need at this moment? The insights you had in the past might have been right, but how do you know they are what you need now and in the future? In order to find out, all you can do is let them go. Can you remain completely ignorant, unknowing? Can you let your mind go, not impose anything on your mind, and at the same time not go dead, not become unconscious?

Can we rid ourselves of all influences, of the influences of others'

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ideas and of our own past, and remain in the now, as an inquiry? You can observe that every time someone says something that sounds true or every time you have an insight, you say, "Oh, wonderful, that must be it." You want to put out the flame. You want the first answer that comes to silence the questioning.

Why are we in such haste to have answers? We jump on the first promise of salvation that comes. Why not stay with the question? What makes you think that salvation is the answer, that freedom is the answer? What makes you think that enlightenment is the answer? What makes you think that love is the answer? You might feel that you want these things, but how do you know that getting them is the best thing that could happen in this moment? How do you know whether you're supposed to be dead or alive, rich or poor, free or enslaved? Is it possible to let your mind be free?

I am not trying to give you an answer; I'm just giving you a question. You need to let your being be ablaze like a flame, an aspiring flame, with no preconceived ideas about what it aspires to. To be just burning intensely, deeply wanting to know, wanting to see the truth

without following any preconceptions, totally in the present with the question itself, and let it burn away all the ideas, all the beliefs, all the concepts, even the ones you learned from the great teachings. If you don't allow that flame completely, will you ever rest in your life? Will you ever rest in your life as long as you're covering up your question, answering it before it's really answered? Will you ever really be content with someone else's answer?

These questions are not theoretical or philosophical. They are at the root and heart of your life, relevant for every moment of your life, whatever you're doing. If you don't know but you're pretending that you know, you're wasting the moment. It's a complete waste, regardless of what you're doing. It's not only that the idea in your mind might be the wrong one for you—the fact that it is an idea, instead of a direct perception, puts out the flame of the search, and your unfoldment is blocked. Whenever the answer is not a direct perception it will block or distort your experience.

What I'm saying is not meant to lead you to blame yourself for believing that you know. It's not a matter of trying to make you "good." No, we're trying to see the truth. You need to see clearly all the ways that you snuff out the flame and how consistently you silence the question.

You might do some work on yourself and have a wonderful experience, a great insight or state. But how do you know that this wonderful experience is what is needed right now? How do you know that the knowledge you think you're getting will resolve your situation? The flame must continue. The fire of inquiry needs to be fed, needs to grow, to intensify, to deepen. Our inquiry needs to be directed not at trying to reduce it but to letting it

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# Understand Family Patterns To Change Your Life

C A R O L Y N F O S T E R

*You can leave your lover, quit your job, and keep your child home next weekend, but if you don't figure out the underlying causes for these problems they will probably happen again, with new characters or in new ways.*

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Many personal problems are like poison oak; they keep growing back, and they signal their presence with discomfort and pain. In your daily life, these problems can erupt in different ways. Sometimes your body signals you with symptoms and illness. Sometimes persistent thoughts or unexpected emotions such as anger, fear, and depression make you unhappy or confused. Perhaps you say or do something that doesn't reflect your usual behavior. Perhaps conflicts with family, friends, or colleagues develop at home or at work.

In all these cases, chances are you don't know what to do at first. Yet, because of the discomfort of the problem, you want it to go away, as fast as possible. People who come in to see counselors almost always end their initial description of the problem by saying, "Okay, now what should I do?" They want the problem solved more than they want to understand why it happened. When you take your car to a mechanic, you don't want a history of the internal combustion engine; you want your carburetor fixed.

Yet our problems tend to repeat themselves in patterns, and part of the solution is understanding the history that set up those patterns. Perhaps your lover has betrayed you, your boss is impossibly demanding, or your teenage child stays out past curfew. You can leave your lover, quit your job, and keep your child home next weekend, but if you don't figure out the underlying causes for these problems they

will probably happen again, with new characters or in new ways.

Problems repeat in patterns because people are likely to do what is familiar, even when it is clearly not working. Because it's familiar, you often don't realize that there is another possible course of action. The root of your old ways of doing things goes back to your family experiences from childhood and adolescence. If you backtrack through the development of a problem, you will come to the roots of it in your early family life.

You can move far from the places where you were born and raised, and you can cut yourself off completely from all family members. However, your attitudes and behavior are still primarily shaped by your family experiences from the past. These experiences created your psychological root system.

Your past experiences formed a pattern for your growth, shaping the way you perceived and responded to yourself, your family members, and the world outside the family circle. You can't change those experiences, but through exploring your past, you can better understand your life now and change your future.

Your family was the soil from which you were born, and from infancy through adolescence most families provide nourishment in the form of life-sustaining food, shelter, and human contact. Since families are never perfect, as no soil is perfect, you probably received a combination of both nutrients and pollutants from your family ground. Perhaps your basic needs were met, but no one went out of his or her way to make you feel special. Or perhaps you were protected so much that you had a hard time becoming strong and self-sufficient.

Just as you can't predict how a plant will develop and guarantee that it will thrive, there is no magic formula for the growth of a happy

human being. However, psychologists and family therapists study what conditions help children grow into healthy and fulfilled adults. Through learning from the diversity of family situations in their practices, they notice that for healthy development, children need to receive these conditions:

- A stable foundation of responsible, caring adults,
- An environment where it is safe for children to discover and express themselves,
- The nourishment of love and the direction of parental guidance,
- A model of how to make a good life and how to cope with adversity.

You may have been fortunate enough to grow up with all of the above conditions met. More likely, however, your family provided a complex mix of helpful and hurtful experiences; and to the degree that they are hurtful, they are probably harming your life today. You can't get rid of all of your problems quickly, but you can trace how current difficult or painful areas of your life developed in your family context and make specific plans for positive change.

#### YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR SENSE OF SELF

Your sense of self today is defined by how you imagine, experience, and describe yourself as a person separate from others, with an identity uniquely your own. As with life stance and communication, you first learned about your sense of self from your family. A strong and healthy sense of self grows from a strong and healthy inner foundation of trust and from clear, directly communicated messages that you are a valuable, precious human being. Both the inner foundation of trust and the outer communication of value came from your first teachers—your parents and other family members.



The stronger your base of family encouragement toward knowing and developing your sense of self, the more fully you can express all the facets of your being. Yet, most of us received a double message: Be yourself AND be who we want you to be. In *The Dance of Intimacy*, Harriet Lerner writes that from birth on, "Family members encourage us to be our authentic selves

because the family has taught that you are either a daydreamer or an achiever.

One reason that your family did not encourage all aspects of your sense of self is that they had difficulty seeing you as separate from them. Separation is no less a task for the parents and other family members than for the growing child; parents have to let go of goals and

self, you may have these problems in adulthood:

- Confusion or guilt about your personal characteristics ("Am I selfish?" "Should I be more independent?" "Is it unfair to want this for myself?")
- Automatic compliance with or rebellion against family needs and goals ("My mother needs me; I can't transfer to Chicago." "I'll be



MIEKE MAAS/IMAGE BANK

*How you experience and express your emotions today is largely dependent on the attitudes about feelings that were passed on to you by your family.*

while they also unconsciously encourage us to express certain traits, qualities, or behaviors and to deny or inhibit others."

For instance, in a highly competitive family, a child who loves to daydream may be pressured to focus, set goals, complete tasks, and shut off daydreaming. Both daydreaming and goal-setting are important creative acts but in this family, the child's sense of self may be less strong than if his or her parents could recognize the creative trance as part of the child's authentic talent. Further, the child may be less able to follow these daydreams through on his or her own time

dreams for their children that they may have been constructing since their birth.

Another reason that your family did not encourage all aspects of your sense of self is related to society's expectations. Cultural attitudes affect family values. The prevailing messages from social institutions such as schools, religious organizations, and government influence what your family felt about the relative importance of developing and expressing various aspects physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

If your parents were unable to let you develop an authentic sense of

damned if I'll let them tell me what to do.")

- Blockage or lack of development in one or more areas of selfhood—the physical, the mental, the emotional, or the spiritual ("I was the sickly one in our family." "My parents decided I wasn't as smart as my sister." "My family just doesn't express strong negative feelings." "We were taught not to question our religion.")

In addition, you may be experiencing difficulties in intimate or professional relationships that trace back to family circumstances that prevented development of a complete sense of self. In "The Dance of

Intimacy,” Harriet Lerner emphasizes that “changing any relationship problem rests directly on our ability to work on bringing more of a self to that relationship. Without a clear, whole, and separate ‘I,’ relationships do become overly intense, overly distant, or alternate between the two.” When you strengthen your own separate identity, you will be better able to differentiate your needs and wishes from those of others and to address the inevitable conflicts when those needs and wishes are at odds.

A key element in positive change, then, is to focus on and develop your personal identity, enhancing your sense of basic worth and strengthening areas of your selfhood that your early family experiences may have taught you to neglect or undervalue.

The four aspects of self—body (your sensing self), mind (your thinking self), emotions (your feeling self), and spirit (your longings, your essential self)—encompass the areas of personal identity that your family influenced. By surveying your memories and feelings about each area, you will discover where your sense of self is clear and solid and where it is confused and undeveloped. Understanding its roots will enable you to bring more clarity and perspective to the task of defining yourself as an individual and a family member.

As an infant, you didn’t even realize you had a body separate from your mother until you were about five or six months old. Your earliest physical sensations were of comfort (warmth, dryness, fullness, and caring touch) or discomfort (cold, wetness, hunger, and lack of caring touch). Your parents continued to hold primary responsibility for your physical needs as you grew—to comfort you and care for you in illness or injury, to provide nourishment, to keep in touch literally.

*Your family was the soil from which you were born, and from infancy through adolescence most families provide nourishment in the form of life-sustaining food, shelter, and human contact.*

In their care of you, your family demonstrated the life stances they had toward the body, their attitudes and approaches toward the physical dimension of themselves and their children’s selves. These attitudes sprang from their own family background and affected how they treated themselves and you in relation to these topics, each of which is very important:

*Appearance and grooming*

*Health and strength*

*Nourishment*

*Sensual and sexual pleasure*

If your family had a healthy life stance toward the body, you may have received messages that communicated these attitudes toward your physical self:

- Acknowledgment (“It’s no fun to be sick, but you’re a strong kid; you’ll be well soon.” “It’s natural to want to touch yourself there because it feels good, but it’s a private part of your body and you can

do that in your private place, your room.”)

- Appreciation (“You look wonderful!” “I like the way you can choose your own clothes and get yourself ready.”)

- Confidence (“I’ll help you stay healthy until you are big enough to take good care of yourself—which I know you can.” “She’ll learn to choose the right foods for herself, Mom.”)

- Encouragement (“Go ahead and have fun playing baseball—if you make the team, fine; if not, you can still enjoy playing with your friends.”)

- Delight (“What a wonderful dance you made up—you’re so graceful!” “Wow, you dove off the high board!”)

If you grew up surrounded by these healthy attitudes, you probably have a strong sense of self in the physical domain. You take good care of yourself, trust your health and strength, and enjoy your body’s vitality and capabilities.

On the other hand, if your family had an unhealthy or destructive life stance toward the physical aspect of self, you may have received messages that communicated these attitudes toward your physical self:

- Denial (“Stop complaining and ignore your stomach ache. You can’t pamper yourself; just keep going.”)

- Criticism (“Can’t you stand up straight?” “You have no will power—stop stuffing yourself or you’ll get even heavier.”)

- Anxiety or fear (“If you play outside, you might get sick.” “If you show yourself off in what you wear like that, you’ll get yourself in trouble.”)

- Discouragement (“You’re too skinny to play football.” “Girls shouldn’t try to play sports like boys do; it’s unfeminine.”)

- Distaste (“Oh, you smell; get away from me.” “It makes me sick

to see you fat like this; you could be so lovable if you were thin.”)

If you grew up surrounded by these attitudes, you probably lack a strong and confident sense of your body and the whole physical domain. You may take poor care of yourself, neglect or fear for your health, doubt your strength, and take little pleasure in your physical appearance, sensations, and abilities.

Ultimately, it is the overall balance of these healthy versus destructive messages that determines how you grow up feeling about your physical self. The more negative the family attitudes and behavior toward the body were, the more likely it is that you now feel bad about your physical self or have problems related to physical well-being. If you didn't receive adequate physical care and emotional soothing from your parents, you may have become addicted to food, alcohol, drugs, sexual relationships, work, or other activities as substitute ways to fill an inner emptiness. If in childhood you were hurt and violated by physical or sexual abuse, your sense of self as related to the body has been severely traumatized, and you may have learned to adapt by separating your intellect from your physical self. You may still be out of touch with your body as a result of the abuse, and you may feel shame or guilt despite the fact that you were clearly victimized.

Whether you simply lack some confidence in your physical self or have more severe problems due to destructive family attitudes and behavior, you can learn a healthier stance toward your body now and experience its strengths and pleasures more fully.

Your thinking abilities began developing in infancy and toddlerhood when your mind responded to your environment through your senses (tasting and touching) and your movements (grasping, rolling,

*Since families are never perfect, as no soil is perfect, you probably received a combination of both nutrients and pollutants from your family ground.*

sitting, crawling, standing, walking, and running). Once you could use language, your mind began to symbolize, to describe your experience through what you said. Your mental operations became more sophisticated. Between 7 and 11, you learned to think about things in concrete ways, understanding cause and effect; between 11 and 15, you developed the ability for abstract thinking.

Throughout your mental growth, your family shaped your attitudes about your mind's abilities by their attitudes and behavior. They demonstrated their life stances toward the mind, their approach to the mental dimension of themselves and their children's selves. Their mind-oriented life stance was a legacy from their own up-brings and influenced your development in regard to:

- Your view of your intelligence,
- Your success at activities dependent on thinking skills,
- Your use of your reasoning abilities,
- Your use of your intuitive abilities.

How smart you believe you are and how effectively you use your mental abilities today depend to a large extent on attitudes about your

mind that your family communicated to you. You can enhance your mental development by recalling positive attitudes toward your mind from your family. You can also clear away blocks to fuller use of your mind's capabilities by identifying and calling into question any unhealthy family attitudes toward your thinking self.

Your family's life stance toward the mind was reflected in the following reactions to your mental achievements and creativity:

- Acknowledgment (“It takes time to learn these things, but you will.”) or denial (“Don't try to figure things out in life; it's too complicated.”)
- Appreciation (“You have a good mind.”) or criticism (“How could you be so dumb?”)
- Confidence (“I know you can think this out for yourself.”) or anxiety and fear (“If you don't succeed in school, you won't succeed in life.”)
- Encouragement (“Go ahead make a guess; it's okay to make mistakes while you're learning.”) or discouragement (“Stick to what your teachers tell you; they know best.”)
- Delight (“It's exciting to see you be so thoughtful and creative!”) or distaste (“You may be smart in school, but where will that get you?”)

Each of these attitudes influenced how you viewed your intelligence, how successful you were at tasks that had to be thought through, and how freely you developed your abilities to figure things out rationally and to follow your creative hunches. If you feel at ease with mental tasks, you can trace some of your competence and success to your family's constructive attitudes and teachings. If, however, you feel blocked, anxious, or ashamed about your mental abilities, your family probably passed on to you some of their unresolved feelings about their thinking selves

by discouraging or criticizing your intelligence and thought processes. You may avoid pushing what you feel are your mental limits; you may make decisions you later regret because you didn't feel capable of thinking them through or trusting your intuition.

No matter what your family taught you about your mind, you can develop a healthier stance toward your thinking self, valuing and enjoying your mind's abilities. By tracing the roots of your current view of your mind to your family's stance toward thinking, you can learn how to counteract negative attitudes that may be hampering your mental abilities, while building on those that are positive.

Your emotions began developing at birth, when the only emotion you showed was a generalized excitement; by three months, you showed more specific emotions of distress and delight. By age two, you had acquired new shadings of emotion, experiencing and expressing fear, disgust, anger, jealousy, affection, elation, and joy. The development of these and all other human feelings was most strongly influenced by the bond you had with the people who took care of you the most. You watched your parents' faces and bodies to see how they responded to your feelings and what their feelings were. Your attachment to these special people meant that what they taught you about your feelings took on great importance.

Your family shaped your beliefs about your emotions as well as your actual experience of them by their stance toward their own feeling selves and their responses to the feelings you displayed. Your emotional development was strongly affected by your family's attitudes and behavior in relation to:

- How you acknowledge your feelings to yourself,

*Your past experiences formed a pattern for your growth, shaping the way you perceived and responded to yourself, your family members, and the world outside the family circle. You can't change those experiences, but through exploring your past, you can better understand your life now and change your future.*

- How you express your feelings outwardly,
- How intensely you feel your emotions,
- How easily you respond to changes in your emotions.

How you experience and express your emotions today is largely dependent on the attitudes about feelings that were passed on to you by your family. If your family was open and accepting about emotions,

you probably learned to notice your feelings, express them freely, accept that intense feelings are part of life, and adapt flexibly to your changing feelings.

If your family feared or denied emotion, you probably learned not to acknowledge what you felt to either yourself or others. You may be unaware or fearful of your emotional intensity, and you may try to avoid changes in emotional states—for instance, staying angry in order not to be afraid.

Both healthy and harmful responses to your feelings were learned from family messages about emotions, including:

- Acknowledgment (“Yes, I am sad; I’m missing your daddy while he’s away, just like you are.”) or denial (“I am NOT angry!”)
- Appreciation (“I like it when you tell me how you’re feeling, because I can’t always tell.”) or criticism (“You shouldn’t feel jealous of your sister; only bad little girls are jealous.”)
- Confidence (“It is scary to go to a new school. It’s OK to start out scared and then learn how to feel more comfortable.”) or anxiety or fear (“Don’t act so angry—you might hurt somebody, and then wouldn’t you be sorry.”)
- Encouragement (“I cry, too when my feelings are hurt.”) or discouragement (“It’s better not to feel those things; it doesn’t get you anywhere.”)
- Delight (“I love it when you stand up for yourself and show how you feel.”) or distaste (“Only people with poor control show their feelings.”)

These attitudes about the value of experiencing and expressing feelings may have been directly communicated to you, as in words, or indirectly communicated through family behavior. If no one said anything negative about expressing sadness but everyone walked out of the room whenever your grand-



mother began to cry, they communicated fear or distaste about sad feelings without a word being said. You learned to shape your emotional expression to fit within a range that your family found acceptable or you learned to take the consequences of their reactions if you went ahead and expressed what you felt despite their disapproval.

If you can easily acknowledge and freely express the full range of what you feel today, your family accepted the emotional aspect of your identity. If you have trouble knowing or showing what you feel, or if you are uncomfortable with intense or changeable feelings, your family legacy of negative responses to emotion may be holding you back from your full selfhood. You may become bogged down in your emotions or run away from them. Your emotional ups and downs may interfere with your well-being, your relationships, and your activities. Whether your family helped or hampered your emotional development, you can make changes now in your stance toward your feelings and strengthen your emotional sense of self.

Your spirit is the core of your self that connects you to deep longings, wonder, religion, and mystery. Since this dimension of your sense of self is not an obvious physical reality like your body, you will need to define what it means for you as you think about spirit in this section. Students' definitions of what they mean by the core of their identity have included not only the word "spirit" but also soul, values, the meaning of life, character, God, essence, and self with a capital "S." The roots of the word spirit come from the word for breath, so you might consider that the dimension of your spirit is whatever gives you vitality, as your breath is necessary to life.

No matter how you define this core aspect of self, your experience

*A key element in positive change is to focus on and develop your personal identity, enhancing your sense of basic worth and strengthening areas of your selfhood that your early family experiences may have taught you to neglect or undervalue.*

of other aspects of selfhood is changed by the involvement of that core spirit. When you run, dance, play a sport or musical instrument, or make love, your body and spirit often interact. Your physical experience expands into a fuller, more wondrous sense that psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow." When you read, write, teach, or discuss ideas that fascinate you, your mind and spirit often interact. Your mental experience becomes charged with the mystery and fascination of creativity. When you express your deepest feelings to someone you trust, your emotions and your spirit often interact. Your feelings become not just energy to discharge but a vehicle for healing and connection.

Your sense of what spirit means changes and develops throughout your life. As an infant and very young child, before you learned to use language, everything was wondrous to you; once you could understand and use language, you began

to explore through questions about life and your family's beliefs and practices. "Where do my dreams come from?" "Why do we go to church?" "Is God inside me?" "Why do people do bad things?" "Where do we go when we die?"

Throughout childhood, you formed your beliefs in this area in response to the authorities in your life—first your parents and family members, later your teachers or religious leaders. In adolescence, you may have begun to question some of your family's beliefs about spirituality, religion, or faith, starting down the path of individual belief formation that continues throughout your life.

This individual quest for spirit is always in tension with the inherited and learned beliefs from your family past. Your family's stance toward the spiritual aspect of life reflected their own backgrounds and influenced your development in the areas of:

- What you believe about your essential nature,
- What you believe about how people should act,
- What you believe about a divine being or force,
- What you believe is the meaning and purpose of life.

The types of spiritual beliefs you hold and how you put them into practice are strongly connected to your family's attitudes and behaviors. As in all other areas of family influence, the determining factor in the growth of your spirit is your family's openness and trust. If you were encouraged to question and explore, you grew in your own understanding, using your family's beliefs as a foundation when you needed that stability, diverging from them as you became more aware of your deepest convictions. If you were told that only beliefs prescribed by family and religious authorities were acceptable, you had either to limit your spiritual

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# for

*At a  
Simons  
“Forgiveness”  
workshop,  
participants  
experience the  
healing process.*

*Dr. Sidney Simon is a professor at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst). He is a recognized authority in the areas of values clarification and self esteem. He has published numerous books including “Values Clarification” and “Getting Unstuck.” Suzanne Simon is a writer, counselor, and workshop leader. Their book “Forgiveness: How To Make Peace With Your Past and Get On With Your Life” is based upon Suzanne’s own experience of coming to terms with her family of origin.*





# giveness

## *An Interview with Suzanne and Sidney Simon*

*Interviewed by Mary  
NurrieStearns, Editor of Lotus*

*LOTUS: Let's begin with the question, "What is forgiveness?"*

SUZANNE: Forgiveness is a process of healing. When we do a forgiveness workshop we don't focus on the word "forgiveness." We focus on healing. We describe the six stages of healing and tell people that when they move through healing sufficiently, and usually that takes years, forgiveness is the by-product. Forgiveness is what happens at the end of the healing journey. It happens organically. It isn't necessarily the goal.

*What is the experience of forgiveness?*

SUZANNE: You let go of the enormous emotions around the hurt. You feel lighter, more at peace. You let go of the emotional charge from a particular hurt. You may think about it, or have feelings about it, but the hurt doesn't consume you any more. You know that you have peace. You've put that issue or hurt into perspective. And you have a life. The biggest sign is that you have a life.

*In the present rather than the past?*

SUZANNE: Yes.

*What is this healing process?*

SUZANNE: It has six stages. Healing is moving through those stages. You look at the hurt and name it, own the impact that it has had on your life, feel all the feelings that come up because you were hurt in that particular way, and do the hard work of

hurts. Future hurts don't hurt so badly if we have a strong foundation from our childhood and feel good about ourselves. If a little slight comes when we are older, that is all it is, a little slight. Slight feel big because of what happened to us as children. When we were

healing that hurt, of getting beyond it.

*People say "let by-gones be by-gones." Why dredge up old wounds?*

SUZANNE: Not dealing with past hurts, particularly with our families, is at the heart of our future

young, we did not have screening devices or a sense of self to buffer hurts. Hurts usually came from the people who were supposed to love us the most and take care of us the best. We are very impressionable as children. We

*Sid and  
Suzanne  
Simon*

## THE SIX STAGES OF FORGIVENESS

BY SUZANNE SIMON

### Stage 1: Denial

- occluded memory
- blocking
- damaged goods
- not believing it happened
- “Did you think you dreamed it?”
- it wasn’t that bad
- others had it worse
- minimizing it
- it didn’t have any impact on my life
- notion of being repulsive

### Stage 2: Self Blame

- It was my fault
- I set it up
- I asked for it
- “If only I had \_\_\_\_\_”
- “If only I had not \_\_\_\_\_”
- been so pretty, so ugly, so stupid
- told my mother
- said “NO”

### Stage 3: Victim

- acknowledges they are a victim of something
- puts blame out there where it belongs
- mourn, grieve, tears
- often not “attractive”
- poor, pity me
- don’t expect too much from me
- I don’t expect too much of myself either
- powerless (play out their script, which is to be unhappy or used)
- often expressed with drugs, alcohol, food abuse, over-spending, over-working, over indulging.

- complains, whines, sighs

### Stage 4: Indignation

- righteous anger
- justified
- focused on abuser
- “How dare you!”
- “This will not happen again!”

### Stage 5: Survivor

- I made it! I’m here!
- moving towards taking ownership of your life
- makes choices, doesn’t just respond
- different sound from “I am an incest victim” to “I am an Incest Survivor!”
- don’t wallow
- don’t deny
- you know you did the best you could
- reclaim your power, believe in yourself and your abilities
- sense of humor is restored
- might help others
- time to pat yourself on the back
- respect for what you gained (6th sense, courage, creativity)

### Stage 6: Integration

- seeing where it fits into the whole of your life
- yes, it happened to me
- no, it is not me
- I am more than it
- knowing the person who hurt you is more than what they did to you, too
- being able to see the lessons in it for your life
- an indication that our self esteem is on solid ground.

believed our self-worth was based on how we were treated. If we were not treated with respect or kindness, we came to believe that there was something wrong with us, causing us to be treated that way. Healing allows us to restore self-

worth, live in the present, and enjoy loving relationships.

*Forgiveness is a gift of the healing process. Are there myths about forgiveness that cause us not to want to undertake the healing process?*

SID: Yes. Forgiveness is not for-

give and forget. We think forgive and forget is a dangerous myth, one that religion seems to support, unfortunately. Maybe forgive and forget did work in a pioneer society where there was not time for much else. Turn the other cheek was perhaps the only way to get through. I am afraid that if you turn the other cheek now you may open yourself to some other kind of illnesses. The wound may turn to cancer or addiction. Forgiveness is not forgetting.

*Do we forgive and remember?*

SID: Yes. We remember so that it will not happen again. We break the hurtful cycle so it won’t be perpetuated. Victims beget victims. We are absolutely convinced about that. Somebody has to break the cycle. To forget is not what breaks cycles, remembering is what break cycles.

SUZANNE: Forgiveness is not condoning. Many people get hung up with this myth. They think that if they forgive someone, they are condoning what they did to them.

*So forgiveness is not approving.*

SUZANNE: That’s right. It is letting go of the hurt with the full knowledge that what the other did was wrong and that it hurt you. You don’t come to a place of forgiveness and then say “Oh, it was okay what you did to me.”

*Forgiveness is not absolution.*

SID: No, it certainly is not. We were both touched by a book about absolution, “Sunflower,” by Simon Weisenthal. A dying German officer calls in a Jewish person from a concentration camp and asks him to absolve him before he dies. The book describes the enormous conflict of that prisoner. Refusing to absolve him might mean his instant death yet he knew in his heart-of-hearts that you can not absolve someone for all the hurts they did to any one else.

*Is forgiveness a one time decision?*

SID: No. People ask will the

process ever stop and the answer is, "Well, eventually. But not tomorrow."

SUZANNE: Healing happens over time. We heal at one level, and think we have come to resolution and forgiveness about it. As we grow and do more work, we dig a little deeper, rework the thing and heal a little bit more. We make the decision to forgive again. We keep doing it over. It really is not a one-time event.

SID: We tell people that when they bump into the hurt again they haven't returned to ground zero or regressed. They always move forward, except they have gone back.

*It is not a linear process, is it?*

SUZANNE: Right.

SID: The six stages of healing help this nonlinear process become clear.

*What is the first stage in the healing process?*

SID: The first stage we call "denial." If you don't get beyond denial, the healing process will never begin. In the denial stage, you do not own that something actually happened. Denial sometimes takes other forms. One common form is minimizing where people say, "Oh, it wasn't that bad," "Other people have it worse," "It happened so long ago." Another form is occluded memory around whatever happened. People have blocked out large, significant chunks of their lives. We often ask in workshops if people can remember the name of their kindergarten or their first grade teacher. We sometimes see the most painful, blank looks. We think something was going on that made the memories very, very foggy.

SUZANNE: Sometimes people's denial takes the form of com-

pletely blocking. People do not want to feel like damaged goods, that they are fundamentally soiled, dirty, or wrong. Many people do feel that way deep inside. Because that is such a painful way to feel about yourself, people block that feeling and all other feelings. When you are in denial about a specific hurt, you also deny the joy and creativity in your life. You don't just block the bad feelings, you end up blocking the good as well.

*Causing yourself to feel numb...*

SUZANNE: Yes.

*How do you help people break through denial?*

SID: By having them make a list of the people who have hurt them. Every single hurt they can recall. Getting it down on paper is the first step because then there are stories to tell, things to talk about, and memories to review.

SUZANNE: We have a deep sense of respect for people, no matter what stage they are in. Some people might be in denial for very

good reasons. Maybe there are other things going on in their lives right now. Maybe they are not in the right frame of mind to take out this past hurt and deal with it. Maybe they don't have an adequate support network to cushion them as they deal with the painful hurt. They are smart to stay in denial. It is not okay to make a lifetime out of being in denial, but for periods of time it may be the smartest way. Our bodies have a built in safeguard. We will not have memory for something we are not ready to deal with.

*If workshop participants write the list, they must have some readiness to work through denial.*

SUZANNE: We have them do an exercise in a group where they name three of the people who hurt them and what each person did to hurt them. When you sit in a circle and you hear yourself and five other people say I was hurt by, or my father did thus-and-so to me, or I was hurt by my brother who did

thus-and-so,.. there is sanction to speak up about the hurt. You don't have to pretend you were not hurt. It's okay to talk; we have all been hurt.

*Why are these exercises so powerful? What starts to happen?*

SID: People move into healing. Stage two is called "self-blame." You sort out what was your responsibility and what was the other person's responsibility. Often people take all the blame themselves. We find that people use the phrase, "if only I," "if only I hadn't been so cute," "if only I hadn't been so afraid to say no," "if only I had told somebody." It's crucial to realize that for a little kid, in every single instance, mistreatment is the responsibility of the adult and not the child. We ask them to write an apology letter from the person who hurt them to themselves. They realize that if they can write an apology letter they are not taking the blame.

*Or minimizing the effect of the wound.*

SID: We urge them to say everything in that letter they have ever wanted to hear someone say. Many, many people cry. It is a high point of the workshop when people come up front and read their letters to the whole group.

SUZANNE: Usually the person who writes the letter gets into the shoes of the person who hurt them and understands why they did it. If the letter is from their father, he might be saying, "I am so sorry that I could not be a father to you and that I always worked, but I never knew how to be a father. My own father did the same to me. People understand how the person who hurt them got to be the way they were. It is very healing.

*It sounds like a powerful tool to help people see that abuse is inter-*

*generational and an ongoing cycle. Any other tools you use?*

SID: We do a lot of work in stage three, the victim stage. Several tools become essential. The victim is the big catch basin for this work and healing. This is the stage people return to most frequently even when they make progress. It is a painful stage and not a pleasant or attractive place to be.

*What is the victim stage?*

SID: It is a stage where you name the perpetrator and where you clearly wallow, feel the pain, and do your mourning. You feel sorry for yourself.

*It sounds like a time of grieving, being aware of the full impact and feeling the emotional pain.*

SID: Some people see being a victim as a way of life.

SUZANNE: In the self-blame stage, the phrase is, "If only I." In the victim stage, the phrase is, "If only you." It is a very powerless stage. We turn the power for our lives over to the person who hurt us. We say, "If only you had not hurt me I wouldn't be so miserable," "If only you hadn't hurt me,

I wouldn't be an alcoholic now," "if only you hadn't hurt me, I wouldn't be in the mess that I am in with my life." It is important to put the blame where it belongs, on the person who hurt you, but not to put the responsibility for your life on their shoulders.

SID: People use their victimhood for excuses. Excuses not to get their dissertations done, excuses for their messy garage, or for their eating patterns.

*How does the victim stage help healing? Why is it necessary?*

SUZANNE: When we were hurt we did not get the attention and support that we needed in order to heal. Later, when we start to deal with it, we give it so much attention that it becomes a way of life. We feel that if we don't give it attention, we are just like others who did not give our hurt attention. We feel that we would betray ourselves if we did not focus on this all the time. So we obsess on it, seven days a week. It seems like our very life depends on keeping this thing alive. It is very difficult, for people don't want to stay miserable.

When people act out their victim behaviors, as unattractive as they are, it is their way of showing pain. We encourage people to feel all they want to feel and to deal with all of the pain. We then help them to have a life and eliminate those victim behaviors so they can function out in the world.

*So the goal is to honor wholly and deal with the feelings without victimizing yourself.*

SUZANNE: Yes.

*What are victim behaviors?*

SID: They fall into three categories. They are the whiner, the meaner, and the self-indulger. All of us are capable of all three behaviors. The whiner moans, complains, groans, and calls attention to themselves. The meaner uses a lot of side-winding anger. It is as if they have not been able to confront the perpetrator in any way and they take it out on the person who is closest. A lot of wife battering is victim behavior coming out of the meaner posture. We think the rapist is in this category, along with the racist, and the put-down artist around the office who gets his kicks out of making someone else miserable. The self-indulger is someone with an addiction. An alcoholic is often a victim acting out.

*Is the self-indulger indulging in some form of addictive behavior whether it is food, alcohol, relationships, or sex as a way to avoid feelings?*

SID: Yes. The victim stage is necessary, but not for twenty years.

*How do you move on?*

SID: You move into a pattern of overall health. There is nothing we have yet found that shakes the victim pattern more. You buy a pair of walking shoes and you start to walk. You improve your food habits, organize your time, and develop a support system.

*You begin to take better care of yourself...*

SUZANNE: We do an exercise

*Forgiveness is not a  
new idea.*

*Throughout our  
lives, parents,*

*teachers, and*

*religious leaders*

*have urged us to:*

*Forgive and forget;*

*Let Bygones be*

*bygones; Turn the*

*other cheek; Kiss*

*and make up.*

in the workshop to help people move beyond the victim stage. I have everyone stand up. I stand up high on a chair so they can see me. I raise both of my arms in the air and I make a fist. I ask them to mimic my postures. I say a series of phrases and they repeat the phrase immediately after me. It's really quite wonderful to have one hundred people shouting these messages. I first demonstrate the whiner. I start by saying, "I've been hurt, I've been hurt lots of times and I don't like it." They repeat it. I then say, "And, sometimes because I've been hurt," and they repeat it, and I bend my body down, rub my eyes like I am crying and say, "I whine, and I moan, and I groan, and I tell people over and over how bad I feel." They repeat this after me and

laugh because it is so familiar. I always bend my body down because a victim posture is not standing up tall. Next I act out the indulger. I raise my hand and say, "Sometimes because I have been hurt" and I bend my body back down again, "I stuff my face." They make the gesture and put something in their face, some substance. The last posture I do is the meaner. I'm like a boxer and I lash out at other people. They do that with their bodies.

I state that these responses are choices. The fact is that I have been hurt, but what I do with that fact is always a choice. I can choose to whine, self-indulge, and be a meaner or I can choose to heal and take charge of my life. The choice is always mine. I stand straight up while talking about choices.

The exercise really has an impact because it is done with humor. It is nice to laugh at ourselves in a respectful way. By putting our body into the postures we get the message in a different way. This awareness helps people change.

SID: Any change towards healthier habits will produce a movement away from victim.

Suzanne: The victim posture is about powerlessness, the feeling that you have no control over your life. We ask people to look at ways they can control their life and get their needs met in healthy ways. We want them to have power in their life.

*Moving beyond the victim phase leads where?*

SID: To indignation. Once you get there, you are almost home. Indignation is not side winding anger. Indignation is rightful anger. It is anger truly directed towards the person who hurt you.

SUZANNE: Anger is a normal emotion. We all experience it, yet are frightened by it as we have been hurt by other people's anger. Consequently, we don't do anger at all, don't recognize anger or we do



anger all the time and walk around angry. We have people examine their programming around anger when they were a child. That often helps them see how they deal with anger in their present lives. Anger does have a purpose. Anger is not for anger's sake. Anger is a great energizer; there is a charge to it.

SID: Great energy.

SUZANNE: It is a great energy and that is why it occurs after the victim stage. The victim stage is not energetic; it is very dis-empowered and passive. Finally anger catches up with us and provides the oomph to take some action. The action is to set clear boundaries on our own behalf. In the self-blame stage we blamed ourselves for something that was never our fault. Our boundaries got muddy in earlier life. We didn't know what was our responsibility and what was someone else's and who should have been protecting whom. In the indignation stage, we use that charge called anger to help set boundaries clearly. We don't sit around hoping someone won't hurt us, hoping the world will treat us fairly. We set clear boundaries so that our chances of being treated respectfully, the way we want to be treated, are higher. Setting boundaries is very healthy use of anger. It doesn't have to be done loudly, aggressively, or violently. It just has to be a clear statement that, "I can't be mistreated any more."

*Does the power emerging from setting boundaries help us go beneath anger, to start looking at shame and fear, the layer of feelings under anger?*

SUZANNE: It does empower you, to help you dig deeper.

SID: Suzanne does something in the workshop that is really helpful and powerful. She has people clench their fists and raise it above their heads. They squeeze harder and harder until they begin to tremble. Just imagine people walk-

*Forgiveness is  
recognizing that  
we no longer  
need our  
grudges and  
resentments, our  
hatred and  
self-pity.*

ing around that angry, squeezing their fists all the time.

*That is tremendous energy trapped in us, if it is not discharged wisely.*

SUZANNE: We make a big point of saying this is a place to move through. Use anger for something constructive. It is not a place to take up residence.

*Where we dump anger on others or ourselves...*

SUZANNE: We don't think that you need to take your anger to the person who hurt you and at whom you are angry. Often that is not very helpful. The person may be dead and you can't or they may not be in a place to hear your anger. Working through anger needs to be done with a therapist, a trusted friend, your journal, or while walking in the woods.

*Such confrontation is a choice that may not be necessary in healing. It may be for some but not for others.*

SID: We feel very responsible about doing anger.

SUZANNE: It is important to ask what you are hoping to get out of a confrontation. If your purpose is to make another feel bad, the outcome is not going to be successful. If your purpose is to enhance the relationship or bring greater insight, you might find a way to do it so that you get that outcome. Confrontation needs to be a conscious act, done with awareness.

*What are appropriate ways to release anger's energy from our bodies?*

SUZANNE: Anger often has physical energy and it needs physical release.

*What are some physical outlets?*

SUZANNE: Run, jog, dance furiously, throw rocks.

SID: I am practical, I chop wood.

SUZANNE: There are a million physical things that you can do. Many outbursts of anger have a physical element, like pounding your fists on a table, slapping someone, or putting your fist through the wall. That physical emotion needs to thrust itself somehow. Better to release that energy purposefully than to dump on someone.

*Where does working through indignation lead us?*

SID: The survivor stage is a sweet stage, but you are not done yet. Once you get to "survivor," good things happen. You have an overall wellness program in effect. Anyone can see it. Your self esteem is growing and shows in your appearance and poise. People begin to celebrate the strengths they developed by living through the painful, miserable stuff. There are gifts. Suzanne, for example, is orderly, sensitive, caring, aware, and concerned. I, who was a kid from a battering family, am enormously light on my feet. I had to be! I ran much of my early life, trying to get away from the vicious-



ness. Survivors also express humor. You don't see humorous victims or humorous indignation. You finally see the absurdity and craziness of what went on.

When Suzanne's father died, she went to the casket with her brother and sister. She brought vegetable seeds because he was a vegetable grower. In addition to being an abusive, incestuous father, he was a gardener. She put the seeds over him and laughed about how his would be the only plot in the Brooklyn Cemetery where vegetables would grow. You can't do that as a victim. A victim would want to curse and swear. Survivors have humor. They see the big picture.

SUZANNE: There is a real sense of pride in the label "survivor." "Yes, I came from an incestuous family but I survived it!" You know deeply in your heart that you did the very best that you could while you were surviving that experience. An incest survivor understands that this did not happen because there was something wrong with her. This was done to you and whatever you did in order to get through that experience was right for you. Whatever you did in your healing journey, you did the best that you could do. Now you are in a better place and have greater awareness. You have support in your life and more is required of you. You feel a need to create your life differently so you won't make the same mistakes. Let's say that you dealt with childhood wounds with drugs and alcohol. In the survivor stage, you stop beating up on yourself for getting into drugs and alcohol. Now that you are further along in your processing, you stop doing the drugs and alcohol. You take care of your overall wellness. You don't use the excuse of "Well, my life is a mess because I was sexually abused as a child."

*In the survivor stage you move*

*on. You distance from the experience.*

SUZANNE: Yes, definitely. In the survivor stage, you really feel as though you have a life.

*A different life.*

SUZANNE: You recognize all that happened is part of what's made you who you are now. As Sid said, you take pride in those qualities because you realize where you got them. You may not be happy you had to learn those lessons that way, but you see how those lessons can serve you in a healthy way. You take pride in your stamina, resourcefulness, creativity, and sensitivity instead of resenting those qualities.

*You experience your qualities as strengths as well as reactions to past hurts. You are well on the road to integration.*

SUZANNE: Integration is a lovely place to be. You see how the experience fits into the whole of your life. You incorporate everything that happened to you and understand deeply why you are who you are now. Integration is saying, "Yes, this thing happened to me, but it isn't me. I am more than it. It has shaped me certainly but I am more than an incest survivor, adopted child, an abandoned person." You know who else and what else you are. You know your dreams, hopes, visions, and what do you want to be when you grow up! In other words, yes, all of this happened to you but that is not all of who you are. You have a much larger identity. And you have accepted who you are.

In the survivor stage, you believe that you did the best you could to survive, however you had to. In integration, you understand that the person who hurt you is more than the hurt they did to you. When I finally could say to myself that I am Suzanne and I am more than this incest, I had to apply this same logic to my father and say

therefore, he, too, is more than an incestuous parent. He did that to me but that is not the sole definition of who he was. Those vegetable seeds honored other parts of him. He was a wonderful vegetable gardener and put food on the table when he was out of work. In the integration stage, we let our parents into the human race. Virginia Satir said "We know we are mature when we let our parents into the human race."

*You let yourself into the human race when you know and accept who you are. As you do that with yourself, you can do that with your parents.*

SID: If we don't know who we are, we become part of the chain of victims.

SUZANNE: This understanding does not excuse offenders for what they did. We realize that people hurt other people because it is human nature. We see the commonality of what it means to be human. When someone in the workshop talks about how they can't forgive someone, I often ask if they have children? In one particular case the woman said "Yes." I responded, "Have you ever hurt your children?" and she said "Yes, of course." I then asked, "What would it be like for you if they said they could never forgive you? It is clear that you never intended to hurt them. Obviously you would never want to hurt them." Tears filled her eyes. We often don't want to apply the same graciousness to others that we want applied to ourselves. In the integration stage, we understand that we are all incredibly human and that we make mistakes. This wisdom leads to forgiveness. •

*For information and schedules on upcoming workshops contact; Simon Workshops, 45 Old Mountain Road, Hadley, Mass. 01035. Or call (413)584-4382.*

# Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

## *Ordinary Magic: Everyday Life as Spiritual Path*

Edited by John Welwood  
Boston: Shambhala, 1992  
\$13.00 Paperback

John Welwood—writer, teacher, and psychotherapist—is to be credited with editing another excellent anthology. This one puts into broad perspective the need for “mindfulness in action,” exemplified by a clear mirroring of spirituality and practicality in our everyday lives.

The thirty-five essays included in *Ordinary Magic: Everyday Life as Spiritual Path* represent, for the most part, Buddhist insights into the present human condition, meditation, mindfulness, and a “life-loving” existence. This East/West smorgasbord of a book sets a table of nutrients that will nourish anyone hungry for a spirituality, both connected to heaven and grounded in earth.

Magic, as Welwood uses the term, “is a sudden opening of the mind to the wonder of existence. It is a sense that there is much more to life than we usually recognize.”

Welwood has gathered together for your spiritual enrichment authors who have opened their minds, perceived “more to life,” and reflected in their teachings and daily lives an open-eyed and -minded wonder about existence in all its manifestations—above, below, and within.

“Total attention includes, never excludes,” writes Krishnamurti an exemplar of heaven and earth expressed through one’s self. Chogyam Trungpa, another teacher, shared this observation, “Magic is the total delight in chance.” Carla Needleman, a writer who seems to echo Krishnamurti, writes, “I turn toward myself not to exclude but to investigate.” And Stephen Levine, a compassionate and mindful man who works with the dying

(being with them), shares this question a Zen teacher asked, “Can you keep your heart open in Hell?”

These writers, and all the others in this book, are teaching that openness of mind and heart is an on-going process, naturally refined (as in the Buddhist sense of “polishing the mirror”) in everyday settings amidst *all* the circumstances of life. No exclusion. Open to pain, pleasure, anger, disillusionment. Living well, dying well. And always loving.

“When you see ordinary situations with extraordinary insight,” Trungpa wrote, “it is like discovering a jewel in rubbish.”

Mindfully meditating, as the writers of this anthology attest, is possible whether taking a walk, washing dishes, drawing pictures, writing, driving, fashioning a pot, dealing with a terminal disease, visiting a dying person, staging a protest—anything from the personal to the cultural to the cosmic. The secret to conscious living and to being human, Welwood writes, is in acknowledging our “dual nature,” expressed by our celestial yearnings and our earthly grounding. “The human soul becomes impoverished when we try to escape the contradiction at the core of our nature. It evolves and develops through living in the polar tension between heaven and earth, spirit and animal, expansion and contraction.”

In other words, conscious or mindful living is balanced living. As Pema Chadron, an American Buddhist nun, puts it, “not preferring the busyness of samsara or the stillness of nirvana.” Or, as contemplative psychotherapist Karen Kassel Wegela teaches, we can learn to “touch” whatever emotion, thought, or bodily sensation appeals for attention, and an instant later, “one lets the experience go.”

All of them teach that if we are aware, no linguistic demon or trickster will ensnare us. No emotion will cloud our perception or overwhelm us.

*Ordinary Magic*, most of all, will help you see the ordinary magic in your own life. You will understand and appreciate these words of the Sufi poet, Rumi:

# Institute For Personal and Professional Development Ad

## Reviews

*Let the beauty that we love be  
what we do.*

*There are hundreds of ways to  
kneel and kiss the ground.*

### **Bly & Woodman on Men & Women**

Robert Bly and Marion Woodman  
Applewood Communications Inc.  
\$29.95 per video tape (6 volumes)  
360 minutes

(Editor's Note: Tape 1, *The Pin* and Tape 5, *The Firebird* will be reviewed here to give one a reasonable "feel" for what this series is about. See the *Lotus* ad for information on other titles and details on ordering.)

Near the beginning of the first tape *The Pin*, one hears Marion Woodman, Jungian analyst and author, say, "There is a whole new dynamic between masculine and feminine evolving in modern consciousness."

Woodman explores the meaning of this "new dynamic" with Robert Bly—author, poet, and an acknowledged leader of the men's movement. Together, they move into new territory, a "sacred space" where an ancient fairy tale from Russia is told. It is a tough story, Bly says during one of their interactive sessions with a group of invited participants, because it "begins with an image of an entire culture asleep."

The tale is complex and obviously cannot be recalled in a review, but be assured that the interplay between Woodman and Bly during their intermittent storytelling sessions is captivating. Bly announces each session by saying, "We're leaving our time now," and indeed you will move into a mythological realm where meanings about father, son, tutor, mother (symbolized by stepmother in the story), and the golden-haired woman will emerge

through the clutter of your unconscious and find expression in the body. The accompaniment of musicians on tabla and sitar helps take one into the heart of the story.

Between tellings of this wonderfully stirring tale, participants are invited to join Bly and Woodman—both splendid presences on a small, raised, circular stage—in responding to the symbolism of the story and relating their own personal tales concerning masculine feminine dynamics.

In this first tape, the *pin* is a symbol by which sleep is induced, causing enslavement to "society's various false tutors" and "jealously protective parents." Bly and Woodman talk at length about how "energy systems" are affected by this collective sleep. They also make clear that we acknowledge we are asleep. *The Pin* is the wake-up call.

Tape 5, *The Firebird* is a continuation of the Russian fairy tale, but now Bly and Woodman are at a most delicate stage in their discussion of how men and women relate to each other. The story is at the point, Bly concedes, where listeners are led down into their grief. More than any other feature of this tape—the storytelling, the recitations of poetry, the music—it is what I call "grief-letting" that comes through loudly but not always so clearly, because pain expressed at a personal level, though necessary, can easily spin off into an argumentative orbit if one is distracted more by the words (a groping for words) than by the feelings one is genuinely experiencing.

To the credit of Bly, Woodman, and the participants, the near eruption into argument was tempered by respectful listening to the heartfelt testimonials of men and women who yearn to work through negative masculine and feminine aspects

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### Reviews

towards conscious (and positive) masculinity and femininity. Interjecting a personal note, I can tell you that this tape often moved me deeply.

For instance, a mother is visibly shaken at the possibility that she might have committed “psychic incest” with her son (i.e., passed on the energy of what Bly and Woodman call the “negative mother”), and, if so, she asks Bly if “the children will let us move forward.” During this poignant exchange, Bly answers that they will but we must truly be sorry for (his words) “what I said and did to you.” But the tears say more than the words in the end.

Bly wonders aloud how much grieving is necessary, and Woodman admits there is a “danger of wallowing in it.” Eventually, she says, men and women must overcome their fear of entering a new level of awareness (as symbolized by the firebird) and respond positively and in fresh ways to the demands that a “huge love” will put on them.

Tapes 1 and 5 of *Bly & Woodman on Men & Women* are clear indications that these demands must be met if, to use Woodman’s words, “a whole new dynamic between masculine and feminine” is to be brought into sustained conscious awareness.

### *When Good Enough Is Never Enough: Escaping the Perfection Trap*

By Steven J. Hendlin, Ph.D.  
New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons,  
1992  
\$21.95 Cloth

“Perfectionism is consciously and unconsciously built into the very cultural, psychological, and religious foundations of our achievement-oriented upbringing.”

Steven J. Hendlin, a clinical psychologist, backs his statement above with a rich bounty of observation drawn from private practice, everyday life, and memories of his own perfectionist-driven childhood.

*When Good Enough Is Never Enough* is both a no-nonsense and common-sense book, a necessary blend that will spotlight perfectionist patterns of behavior in oneself, friends, family, bosses, and anyone else who has indeed become ensnared in the “perfection trap.” Hendlin reminds readers early on that no self-help book, his included, will miraculously free you from this trap, but is confident that the information he has amassed can be useful in helping one “gain a sense of understanding and control over your perfectionist thoughts and behaviors, which you initially might not have believed possible.” (Italics the author’s)

Besides describing, in a sense, the anatomy of perfectionism (i.e., “The Nature of the Trap”), Hendlin offers very practical strategies for not only extricating oneself from the trap but moving in clear-minded ways towards more reasonable standards of personal performance, which he simply refers to as “excellence.” But with no equivocation, Hendlin makes clear that moving from perfection to excellence is hard work, as difficult—to use his simile—as “Dancing on the Razor’s Edge.” Attitudes entrenched (many of them unconsciously) since childhood cannot be discarded overnight.

Many of us still wriggle around in emotional straitjackets that mom sewed together and dad fastened and secured. In his private practice, Hendlin has observed time and again the cognitive and emotional restrictions on behavior



## Reviews

that are the consequence of early influences of perfectionistic parents (who, as the cycle goes, also experienced similar upbringings). He acknowledges that the label "adult children," now popular in self-help literature, is "accurate and valuable" up to a point and can be a foundation for initial efforts to break away from perfectionistic tendencies. But he cautions that there should be limits. "The popularization of the adult child label has spawned a host of spin-off groups, some of which assume clinical problems where none exist. Therefore, I use this label cautiously, not wanting to generate yet another recovery program, this time for 'Adult Children of Perfectionistic Parents'."

His caveat deserves careful consideration because he doesn't want perfectionists to fall into another trap, the role of victim, which might diminish one's potential for change. Although Hendlin seems to respect the intent behind 12-step recovery programs, he takes exception to the doctrine of surrendering to a Higher Power *outside* of oneself in any passive sense. He counsels as follows, "In place of passive surrender, the recovery movement could adopt the concept of *actively* surrendering control. Active surrender acknowledges the addict's need to claim responsibility for his decision to begin and sustain treatment." As for a Higher Power, active surrender "allows him to question his beliefs; it allows for the possibility that healing forces beyond his own willpower *but not necessarily outside of himself* may work to promote his physical and mental well-being." (italics the author's)

*When Good Enough Is Never Enough* is a most refreshing self-help book. It in no way plays down the addict-like hold perfectionism can have on you, but most importantly, it offers useful information on how to disengage from its trap. Hendlin

recommends that one makes rational inquiries, redefines terms for satisfactory performance, practices exercises that confront fear and anxiety, challenges false beliefs, and applies those elements (knowledge, compatibility, dedication, motivation, commitment, and satisfaction) that will transform perfectionism into excellence.

This book will remind you, though, that responsibility for springing open the perfection trap is truly yours.

### *Why Men Can't Feel And the Price Women Pay*

John Lee  
Sounds True Recordings  
\$9.95 cassette, 60 minutes

It would be accurate to say that John Lee, a therapist who focuses on masculine psychology and men's issues, is definitely not one to mince words. One might as well know up front that part of his appeal in live workshops is due to his candid way of expressing himself—sometimes inelegantly, always directly, and usually getting his point across in terms one can understand readily.

*Why Men Can't Feel and the Price Women Pay* is no exception to the above assessment. I suspect that this tape could be especially helpful for men not inclined to seek psychological counseling in the first place. But what he says about men's difficulty, if not inability, to *feel* merits full attention. Many males throughout this culture "can't feel," as Lee claims. Sensitive men and women who *can* feel see the obvious.

The paradox of this cultural tragedy is evident in the story Lee tells at the beginning of the tape. It goes, "Once upon a time there was a man who loved a woman very, very much, but he couldn't feel it."

So what do they do? And why?

Lee responds to the first question by saying that men go either to

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### Reviews

their head or genitals, hence displacing the energy of the heart, which at birth had coalesced into feelings and had formed an “invisible conduit” to God and, to a lesser degree, mom and dad. Why this displacement of energy? To this question, Lee answers with what he calls a “straw metaphor.”

As infants, we were literally raw receptors for feelings, “connected to God” and to our parents. Infants needed to draw on the energy of their parents, but they weren’t, Lee claims, “whole enough, sane enough, or together enough to function with that conduit sticking in them at a regular basis.” Like giant straws, the parents (especially the mom) took energy for themselves, sucking the infant dry, whether it be through abandonment, neglect, coldness, impatience, or any other negative means. Parents, of course, are trying to replace the energy they lost as children. And so the vicious cycle continues to this day.

In response to these early traumatic experiences of pain, the male child escaped the heart area (the 4th chakra, Lee says) in order to survive. He started a lifelong process of anesthetization by living up in his head or down in his genitals or both, the worst of both worlds. He became controlling, dominant, manipulative, and he objectified women to the extreme. The price he pays is a “deep emptiness” or a “deep hunger.” There is a hole where there isn’t a parent, and he will do anything cerebral or sexual to fill it. Going this self-destructive route, men are literally wreaking havoc with the energy of their bodies. And because this behavior is often unconscious, Lee points out, “Half of us have went [sic] out and found somebody that packs a six-pack of straws on them all the time.”

Hence, we arrive at the basis for dysfunctional relationships, an



## Reviews

unconscious feeding off of each other to fill the hole in our heart.

Lee offers simple advice: "Stop, putting anything in this hole." Men must stop and allow all the messiness of their past pain to surface, the memories, wounds, anger, tears, all of it. There will be "pain out the kazoo," he says, but if they don't go down into their woundedness as *consciously* as possible, they will continue to *unconsciously* erode their will to survive in a world devoid of feelings and to mistreat women who are drawn to them.

Lee intimates that there are techniques for men to delve into their pain, but on this tape he only discusses that, first, they accept the necessity of working through their "denial of realities" and, second to accept that they must step out of the caretaker mode (for Lee it was taking care of his mother and sister) and into a new life in which they become responsible for their feelings. With this in mind, one can appreciate *Why Men Can't Feel and the Price Women Pay* as a wake-up call for men to restore a balance of feelings within themselves so that they can love women as unique human beings, not as surrogates for parenthood.

### *Dreams: Language of the Soul*

Marion Woodman

Sounds True Recordings

\$18.95 cassette (2 volumes)

180 minutes

Dreams have traditionally fascinated peoples of nearly all cultures. In a few of these cultures that Western anthropologists have observed, the storytelling power of dreams led respected tribal elders to make important decisions for the welfare of their people. In these cultures, people not only heeded their dreams but obeyed them.

In *Dreams: Language of the Soul*, Marion Woodman, author and Jungian analyst, is no less fascinat-

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## Reviews

ed by dreams, and she is just as inclined to recommend that we heed the messages behind the symbolism of dreams and learn to bridge the gap between our conscious and unconscious. She, too, thinks we need to obey our dreams to bring about a holy alliance between masculine and feminine principles and learn to live consciously and purposefully.

For one thing, she says, dreams can enrich our lives, especially by kindling the imagination with archetypal images and infusing the body with energy from the realm Jung called "God's country." "For me the imagination is the divine element in man and woman," Woodman says with conviction, "and it's the part that connects us to God, and without that life for me is just a two-dimensional, drag-one-foot-after-the-other world, meaningless."

The world will seem anything but meaningless after listening to the insight-packed interview that constitutes these tapes. Woodman impresses me as both scholar and poet when she talks about dreams, and it is obvious that as analyst, she helps clients see beyond two-dimensional reality and become aware of how the language of dreams informs them at three levels, the imagination, emotions, and intellect.

Of course, she notes that the value of dreams will vary with one's awareness of them. Embedded within the symbolism of dreams are images of the "eternal world" (the "Great I Am") and the concrete world. So distinctions between subjective and objective can sometimes be difficult. But working with dreams can be an ongoing transformational experience, she maintains, for you will be learning eventually how to come into contact with your "authentic being." You will do this through a heightened understand-

ing of your personal world and the "archetypal world."

"Real healing," she counsels, comes through the archetypal dimension, where the pain of the "hurt inner child" can (and must) be felt in a fully embodied way. Why pain? she was asked. Because we are all "profoundly wounded" and to open up to God's (Jung's word was "Self") through suffering can be the point at which a union of feminine and masculine wisdom can jolt us into a totality which could be called conscious wholeness.

But I couldn't agree with Woodman more that there are personal and cultural imbalances to be corrected. For instance, her discussion of "conscious femininity" puts the emphasis back on the body as sacred and on the "wisdom of matter," which, she says, can take us into a "healing process or into a blossoming process that our conscious ego knows nothing about." As part of our effort to restore balance to our lives, she advises that males and females turn away from power-based patriarchal values—which result in a misuse of energy—and take responsibility for the obsessional power surges that take hold of our lives (especially, of course, males). How? She says we must honor and celebrate our body, our instincts, our energy, and we must love life in all its multiplicity.

Woodman talks about dream patterns frequently, but especially captivating is the one in which the image of the Black Madonna is emerging—an image she thinks suggests that peoples the world over are beginning to move into a "different dimension." The Black Madonna—part mother, part whore—represents a "real mutation in consciousness." Here is conscious femininity writ large, expressing so many wonderful qualities that could certainly be instrumental in

## Reviews

bringing about a “redemption of the planet.”

There is so much more to recommend *Dreams: Language of the Soul*, more than can be covered in a review. But be assured of this: you will begin to see how dreams can be a royal path to consciousness.

### *Marriage as a Path to Wholeness*

Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.

Sounds True Recordings

\$17.95 cassette (2 volumes)

180 minutes

Once upon a time, Harville Hendrix thought of himself as a “rank pessimist.” He believed that most of humanity was going to the “hell of our self-destruction.”

Thankfully, he re-examined his “value system” as a therapist (a primary Freudian influence) and realized the futility behind his practice. People would understand why their marriages were crumbling, would celebrate their divorces, usually remarry, and eventually recycle their way back into a group psychotherapy session with him and harp on the same marital problems.

In other words, no one healed, Hendrix says in his informative and illuminating lecture/workshop, *Marriage as a Path to Wholeness*. He learned from a revelation that “healing has to come in the context in which the injury occurred.” Marriage is that ideal context. Within a marriage, Hendrix reiterates throughout the tapes, there can be an *understanding through experience* of those inhibitory factors that conceal our wounds from childhood. Too often in therapy, he points out, couples talk like children, recreating family scenes, and otherwise demonstrating that they are “married to their parents, psychically.”

On tape one Hendrix puts to good use his Ph.D. in psychology and religion. He takes us on an “intellectual journey” that explores what people think a “dream mar-

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### Reviews

riage" is, probes into the "history of childhood," surveys the myriads of reasons that explain how humans have ruptured their relationship with nature, reviews the attempts of religion to redress the balance between nature and humanity, recalls the recent "limited revelation" of Freudianism, and proposes that "an organic, biological spirituality" can be most fulfilling within marriage.

It has become almost a given within therapeutic circles to acknowledge that most persons have been wounded in some way during childhood. What I find particularly striking in Hendrix's presentation on this topic, though, is his historical perspective. Many cross-cultural examples of cruelty to children (e.g., infanticide and abandonment) can be traced from ancient times till the eighteenth century. Between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries "adultification" of children was commonplace. They had to behave as little adults. Not until the eighteenth century, Hendrix relates, were children even "discovered." But cultural illuminates of the time thought that they were "devoid of an inner world." Of course, up till the 1950's, behaviorists tried to confirm this belief, but finally failed when the new field of developmental psychology substantiated the view that children indeed have an inner world and that they develop along a continuum of cognitive and perceptual stages.

Hendrix dwells on the history of childhood for a valid reason; he thinks that the parenting/childhood experience has up to now produced and still is producing a "damaged product." Hence, his chilling words about the discovery of childhood "Can you imagine... if we just discovered this as a species, can you imagine how brutalized all human beings have been from infancy into adulthood

throughout human history?"

This knowledge is a valuable background to the healing techniques and exercises that Hendrix demonstrates for the audience in his workshop—the "apparent child dialogue" (which increases awareness of the wound), Imago Therapy process (again, a dialogue with its goal being "restoration of empathy"), and the "positive flooding exercise" (a bombardment of positive energy on your mate).

The demonstrations on the tape are both poignant and funny, but everyone confessed to the difficulty of exposing one's wounded child. Hendrix joins the throng of therapists who admit that a species-wide history of parental mistakes and childhood suffering cannot be erased in an instant. He recommends that one re-experience childhood pain, encourage and support one's partner in doing the same, and engage consciously in long-term, corrective communications that avoid criticism and seek correctness through what he calls "behavior change requests."

Hendrix, like others, seeks balance for a relationship. *Marriage as a Path to Wholeness* will nudge you towards that balance by enabling you to see beyond the Imago—the erroneous image of your parents that you've fixated on for life—and into the deeper essence of yourself and your spouse, that core self characterized by "relaxed joyfulness."

### *Baraka*

*A 70mm feature length film from the Samuel Goldwyn Company.*

*Directed by Ron Fricke.*

*Produced by Mark Magidson.*

*Sound Track by Michael Stearns.*

*Review by Kathryn Burke.*

Baraka is an amazing, feature-length non-verbal film. The title comes from the Sufi word meaning "blessing" or "essence of life." The film astonishes, informs, arouses, and entertains as it expands our awareness of ourselves, our fellow man, and our planet.

Because this is a work without words, its sweeping images, unique sounds, and specially composed

music speak directly to the soul of the viewer. This is archetypal stuff which presents what Joseph Campbell calls "the only myth worth thinking"—the story of our planet and human interaction.

Among the silent scenes of spectacular mountain peaks, star showers, and gentle plains are juxtaposed stories of social comment: labor in mind-numbing factories, man's cruelty to man and animal, the horrible prophecy of wars to come and the aftermath of wars that were, the accelerated pace of Park Avenue traffic and Tokyo subways.

There are also spectacular rituals caught on the film: the Balinese "Kecak" dance performed by men in

checked loincloths, the joyful springing of a Masai dancer, burial on the Ganges, Sufi whirling dervishes. So much to look at, so much to think about.

Producer Mark Magidson and director cinematographer Ron Fricke embarked on a 14-month, world-wide odyssey covering 24 countries to capture the glories and calamities nature and man have produced in the past, and continue to produce in the present, that haunt us today. It is a movie to be experienced more than once, but even after the first viewing, be assured you will see your everyday world in a different way. For information on theater dates call (800)569-0083•

*Left; Whirling  
Dervishes,  
Istanbul Turkey  
Top Left; Kayapo  
Child, Brazilian  
Rain Forest  
Top; Balinese  
"Kecak" Dance,  
Bali Indonesia*

## Family Patterns

*Continued from page 65*

growth to what the family would tolerate or risk losing family approval by exploring your own beliefs.

You can see your family's life stance toward the spiritual aspect of yourself by the way they treated the following:

- Acknowledgment ("The feelings and ideas you have deep inside are really important.") or denial ("Nobody knows the meaning of life, so what's the point in asking those questions?")
- Appreciation ("I like hearing what you believe about God.") or criticism ("Who are you to have opinions? Leave that to the priest.")
- Confidence ("You will find your own faith as you grow up.") or anxiety and fear ("It's dangerous to stray from what the Bible says.")
- Encouragement ("How do you imagine God—I'd really like to know.") or discouragement ("Don't bother me about things you're too young to understand.")
- Delight ("When I listen to that beautiful music, I feel I understand what life's about.") or distaste ("What's to get excited about? Life is hard and then you die, like the bumper sticker says.")

The range of your family's attitudes and behaviors about spiritual selfhood shaped how you developed in this area. If you can explore and express your spirit in how you live today, you owe some of your strong core and sense of meaning to family encouragement toward growing spiritually. If you feel blocked from exploring or expressing your spirit now, if it is an area of conflict for you, your healthy spiritual self-development may have been held back by your family's unresolved fears or the imposition of their beliefs and practices. By describing how you were affected by your family's stance toward the spirit, you can strengthen the positive aspects and heal and bring out hurt, neglected, or constricted aspects of your core self. •

*Printed with permission of the Putnam Publishing Group from "The Family Patterns" by Carolyn J. Foster. Copyright 1993 by Carolyn J. Foster.*

## Living With Questions

*Continued from page 58*

grow. The flame needs to burn away all the rest, to grow until it answers itself by itself, becoming the fulfillment. The fire of that inquiry can burn away all the dross, all the resistance, all the ideas, all the accumulation of the past so you can actually see what is really there, the whole picture in the present moment without needing to depend on anything from the past or on anyone else's experience. When you know in the moment without any influence, then you can be completely alone with your own truth. Without that, it's obvious that you can't know with certainty. Only with that certainty can life become significant. If you know, for yourself, who you are, you will know where you are going, and you will be fulfilled.

Yes, there is guidance and help here, but not to give answers, only to help you inquire. This work is to encourage your own inner development, whatever that may be, to help you remain alone with your inquiry. It can be difficult to be alone with yourself. We are not usually supported or encouraged to let our being just be, to be authentic, and not an imitation or a reaction. You can be open, listening to what others suggest, but these things are only possibilities; you still need to inquire by yourself within the intimacy of your own heart. Is this answer your own experience, your answer? You need to be completely open and not use what you hear to comfort yourself. You need to use it to add fuel to your inquiry.

Can you let yourself be completely intimate with yourself, completely uninfluenced and unbiased? Can you let this inquiry, this flame, burn in the intimacy, in the utter aloneness within? •

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## Boundaries

*Continued from page 26*

with alcohol, not to take a drink or a drug, one day at a time.

By contrast, a wall is an unhealthy boundary. While it may have a useful and healthy purpose, the way I set it up, and how it makes me and others feel, may end up eventually hurting my own best interests. Some of the qualities of a wall are that it tends to be rigid, and the way that I have set it up may be unclear to me and to others. In close and intimate relationships, my wall won't let others in. I may lose some of my choices through its all-or-none characteristic. Often playing one or more roles unconsciously, I can experience and express little or no spontaneity. And despite all of my best efforts, I may end up feeling guilty, ashamed, and afraid. A wall may involve disguised hostility and chronic mistrust and is usually set up by the false self or ego, in contrast to the True Self which sets healthy boundaries.

Using a wall is in contrast to a healthy boundary which, though firm, is flexible. It is based on my inner life, including especially my own healthy wants and needs. I am clear in how I make the boundary. If I am in a conscious role, I am also flexible and spontaneous as appropriate from my inner life and in my relationship. I expand my choices by working through being stuck in any all-or-none thinking and behavior that I may encounter. While I may at times feel some painful associated feelings, I can feel confident that I have acted appropriately, based on my inner life.

Once I have built walls, they not only keep others out, but they lock my True Self in. In an attempt to protect my Child Within, I have imprisoned it. As long as I maintain these walls, I won't know the Real Me, and neither will anyone else. •

*From the book "Boundaries and Relationships" by Charles L. Whitfield. Copyright 1993 by Charles L. Whitfield. Printed with permission from the publisher, Health Communications, Inc.*

## Dying of Perfection

*Continued from page 16*

mant energy pulsating through my body. I felt so good, I didn't care what I looked like. It was a revelation. I made new friends, who listened to and supported me. When I boarded the plane to fly back to the States, I cried.

Finally, I was on the road to recovery, not just from CFIDS, but from a lifetime of trying to meet, and beat, unrealistic expectations. Some, other people had set for me. Most of them, I set for myself.

I'm not totally cured. No addict ever is. But I have reached a place where my addiction to perfection is taking a back seat to more important things—like backing off on days when I'm tired, spending more time with friends instead of competing with strangers, and accepting my limitations as I grow older. And like finding the ecstasy of spirit that is there for me—in yoga and in life—every time I stop trying long enough to simply be. •

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## A Way To Live

*Continued from page 19*

for quite awhile and I'm virtually penniless. Well, I've got a few rolls of pennies and a roll of dimes for emergencies. The funny thing is... I have never been happier and more at peace with myself. My days are now spent reading and writing. I'm learning about forgiveness and healing. I'm learning to accept and forgive other people. I'm learning to accept and forgive myself. That's a tough one. I've completely changed my diet. I'm quite sure the American diet is killing more people with AIDS than the disease. It appears we've been misled and lied to for many years concerning our diets. Also, we don't have to die from AIDS.

Anyway, my health has improved dramatically since I changed my diet and eating habits. Learning to relax and enjoy what I have has been very helpful however, learning to forgive and love is the key. This is the key to my healing. This is a way to live. •

## Personal Healing

*Continued from page 49*

this." "It is too hard, too much trouble, too deep," etc.

Let these thoughts rest in your kind attention for a time. Then gently return to your physical body. Let your awareness be deeper and more allowing now. Again, feel the layers of the place of pain, and allow each layer that opens to move, to intensify or dissolve in its own time. Bring your attention to the pain as if you were gently comforting a child, holding it all in a loving and soothing attention. Breathe softly into it, accepting all that is present with a healing kindness. Continue this meditation until you feel reconnected with whatever part of your body calls you, until you feel at peace.

As your healing attention develops, you can direct it regularly to significant areas of illness or pain in your body. You can then scan your body for additional areas that call for your caring attention. In the same way, you can direct a healing attention to deep emotional wounds you carry. Grief, longing, rage, loneliness, and sorrow can all first be felt in your body. With careful and kind attention, you can feel deep inside them. Stay with them. After some time you can breathe softly and open your attention to each of the layers of contraction, emotions, and thoughts that are carried with them. Finally, you can let these, too, rest, as if you were gently comforting a child, accepting all that is present, until you feel at peace. You can work with the heart in this way as often as you wish. Remember, the healing of our body and heart is always here. It simply awaits our compassionate attention. •

*From "A Path With Heart," by Jack Kornfield. Copyright 1993 by Jack Kornfield. Used by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.*

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U N A R I U S P R O D U C T I O N S A D

# Laughter

M A R Y N U R R I E S T E A R N S

**L**aughter is medicine for our souls. Just as we need food to sustain our body, we need laughter to soothe our soul. For example, a lunch filled with laughter provides both. We nourish body and spirit with food and humor. No wonder good feelings linger long after lunch. Life's problems seem more surmountable, our work seems easier, and our hearts are lighter.

We know suffering is part of living and we need help to endure it. With proper care we can transform suffering into tenderness and wisdom. Again, humor is a cat-

alyst for healing. Laughter sends relief to our bodies and love to our souls. The Book of Proverbs says it well, "In laughter the pain of the heart is eased."

Vicktor Frankl wrote in *Man's Search For Meaning* that "humor is another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation." Life's wear and tear can so deplete us, we must be replenished. Laughter comes to restore vitality and release despair.

We often tend to treat our lives seriously and forget the value of laughter. Yet, laughter is a most precious commodity. It is the elixir of life itself. •