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*The clear proof of a person's love of God
is if that person genuinely shows
love to fellow human beings.*

The Dalai Lama—

COVER: IMAGE BANK/ULRICH PFEIFFER
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From the Publisher



The other day while visiting, a friend suggested that I contact a particular author to interview for a future issue. I was taken aback by the idea, as I have always held little regard for this writer. Pressing business interrupted me and we said good-bye.

Later, mulling over our conversation, I wondered about my attitude toward this writer. I reviewed opinions I've gathered from people I respect. Most value his

writings because they raise collective consciousness and support people in their transformational process. Yet for years, I've convinced myself that my thinking was right. It then occurred to me that I was defending an opinion formed long ago. In reality, I am not familiar with this author's recent works.

This incident was a reminder of how quickly my mind defends. Of course, the question then became, what am I really defending? That is the question for us all, for none of us escape the tentacles of defendedness.

One tentacle encircles attitudes, snaring us into a closed relationship with our beliefs. Static thinking causes stagnant being. New possibilities in our lives emerge only when we have a flowing relationship with information. Once we allow information inside, our wisdom grows and we see reality more clearly.

Another tentacle wraps around emotions. Feelings held tightly paralyze us. They are not allowed to move on through and can become buried or never ending. In addition, the movement of breath through emotions is stifled, preventing their full release. After a while, we become numb and miss out on all the insights our emotions deliver.

Defendedness also attaches to old wounds. My wife had a dream that illustrates this. She was standing on a smoldering battlefield. She recognized that old memories stirred the flames, and that her presence would not let the memories rest. Intuiting that it was time to move on she walked away. Enough hurt. Now it was time for healing. She began crying and her tears put out the fire. When we defend old wounds we keep them alive.

Defendedness has deep roots in us all. That we grow these roots isn't wrong. It is our way of learning to survive. However there comes a time, if we are to heal and grow, that we must follow these roots deep into our being, loosen their hold, and discover what is there. This frees us from the past. This is the way of transformation.

Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

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From the Editor

*“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”*

—Saint Exupery



Becoming loving is our life's work. Love is our core nature and at a deep level, throughout our lives, wherever we go, whatever we do, it is love's expression that we yearn for. Imagine the vastness of our capacity to love. The Buddha said, "If you truly loved yourself, you would never harm another." Envisioning a world where we all love and are loved that much overwhelms my heart. Yet, surely it is possible. This issue explores love and contemplates a more loving humanity.

"Love is the only rational act of a lifetime," summarizes Steven Levine, in our feature interview. Nothing makes sense but love, if we believe, as does Deepak Chopra, (see Book Reviews) that we "are created to be completely loved and completely lovable for our whole lives." Furthermore, he promises that if we do not experience life in this way, if we do not even feel loved, there is hope. This can change. We can know the experience of being totally loved by restoring our spiritual nature. Sam Keen, (Book Reviews) agrees, as he says, "In the depths of our being, we know we are created to love and be loved."

Bernie Siegel looks forward to the day when it is normal for people to love well and fully. He discusses how most of us don't have the ability to love because we weren't loved ourselves. He proposes that we can become loving by practicing and rehearsing loving behavior every day. Whether relating with ourselves or others, we can ask, "If I love this person, how would I behave toward him or her?" By listening to and acting upon our heart's guidance, we act lovingly and literally become more loving and sensitive. When our actions are instructed by the wisdom of our hearts, we fill our lives with love and live in a more loving world.

We can conquer the world with our love? Mother Teresa believes that we can. We do so by starting

within our own homes. She urges us to love those who are nearest to us, in our own families. We can show love in simple ways. She reminds us that we do not need to carry out grand things in order to show great love. Her life is an example of her words, "It is the intensity of love we put into our gestures that makes them into something beautiful."

John Welwood takes us intimately into our homes when he explores love in committed adult relationships. His insights help us to mature in our loving. As children, we needed another's love to grow and thrive. As adults, we can discover the wellspring of support dwelling within ourselves. By resonating with our spiritual nature, we experience love flowing from our essential being. Once we can do so, our love with others grows a deeper bond, and we are able to encourage each other to honor the sacred essence and basic goodness within. When two partners evolve in this way, they leave behind the old parent/child dynamic—"I'll take care of you, and you take care of me." They stop seeking love outside themselves to provide fulfillment, to fill some empty space inside. They no longer need to, for they have tapped the endless love supply within.

Also at home are our pets, who have much to teach us about love. Marti Miller, in her Transformation Story, tenderly shares how her pet taught her about unconditional love. She knows, as do many of us, that the connection we make with our pets is at the soul level. Animals are able and willing guides, for their expressions bring us love every day of their lives.

May we all drink from the eternal fountain of love within and grow in love.

Welcome to Personal Transformation.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor

Contributors



In *Disappointment, Devotion, and Growing Up*, (p. 40) John Welwood shows us how to find the true source of love within ourselves. He is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist whose books include “Journey of the Heart” and “Ordinary Magic.” He and his wife,

Jennifer, lead workshops on conscious relationship and psychospiritual work across the country.



Almost all of us carry too much luggage through life. *What Do You Want to Carry*, (p. 48) tells us how to lighten our load. Richard Leider is a career and lifestyle consultant for individuals and organizations. He is the author of “The Inventurers,” “The Power of Purpose,” and

“Life Skills.” He is founder of The Inventure Group, a training consulting firm in Minneapolis. David Shapiro, who co-wrote, is a freelance writer specializing in progressive business and personal development programs helping people with ongoing life and career development.



Mother Teresa is known for her work with the “poorest of the poor” in Calcutta, India, writes about love in *No Greater Love* (p. 80). Born in 1910, Mother Teresa began her novitiate in India in 1928. Mother Teresa is the recipient of many of the world’s most prestigious humanitari-

an awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize. Since its inception in 1950, her order, the Missionaries of Charity, has opened more than 500 centers around the world to help the dying and destitute.

Discovering the real source of happiness is important to us all. In *Finding Joy*, (p. 60) we are shown the way. Dannel Schwartz is spiritual leader of Temple Shir

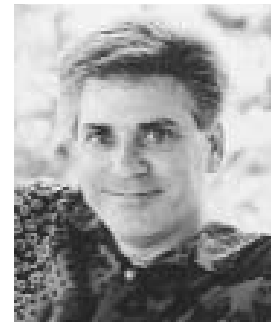
Shalom in West Bloomfield, Michigan. He is the author of “On the Wings of Healing.” He frequently lectures at universities and community centers on spirituality and modern Jewish philosophy.

Heart Lessons, (p. 44) is an instructive and inspiring article on how we can become more loving. Bernie Siegel is the author of several books, including “Peace, Love and Healing,” and “Love, Medicine and Miracles.” He also is the author of several videos and audio cassettes on healing.



He started the Exceptional Cancer Patients, a specific form of individual and group therapy that facilitates personal change and healing. He lives with his wife and five children in New Haven, Connecticut.

We can transform suffering into meaning. In *We Heal by Telling Our Story*, (p. 38) we learn about the power of story telling. Richard Stone is founder of the Story Work Institute. He has developed training programs for counselors, social workers, hospice, and bereavement coun-



sultors on how to help dying patients and their families explore the life review process. He is the author of “Stories: The Family Legacy” and he lives in Maitland, Florida.

Eknath Easwaran writes about the kind of beauty and love that grows with time, in *The Second Half of Life* (p. 35). He is one of the most respected interpreters of spiritual issues in the world today. He is the founder and director of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in



Tomales, California. He was born and raised in India, where he grew up in a self-supporting agrarian village. He is the author of over a dozen books.

Reflections



From Our Readers

SHOULD HAVE

I have recently received a review copy of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. Today I am sending in a check for a subscription. Yours is a wonderful publication.

I am a 53-year-old divorced male who is in that “uncomfortable” stage of life involving a transition from what I *should* have been and done, which I did, to that stage where I am working to discover who I really am and what I really want to do.

It’s quite a challenge just fighting off those recurring “shoulds.” I found the Kornfield and Feldman article *Finding the Way* especially relevant. I suspect I will buy their book *Soul Food*.

Again thank you for the review issue and keep up the good work.—*John Herbst, Little Rock, Arkansas.*

SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

Your recent interview with Swami Chetanananda expressed the importance of having a teacher on the spiritual path. Did he, by any chance, offer any suggestions as to how to obtain a teacher? Please write a few words at the end of this letter if you will, and return it in the enclosed envelope. A brief reply will be appreciated.—*C. R. Brockman, Nashville, Tennessee.*

SWAMI CHETANANANDA: “You have to seek. You should seek a person whose only ideology is compassion for all living beings, a person who single-mindedly looks within, a person who teaches selflessly, without any expectation of financial reward. Finally, this person should demonstrate the power of his/her teaching in some truly extraordinary way.”

FRIENDS FUND

I thank you very much for the subscription to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. I was quite surprised to receive the March issue of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* and altogether shocked to see my letter on the inside.

My hat is off to you in your endeavor to enlighten people to the miracle that is life. You can be sure that I read *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* from front to back, and I fill out your introductory card hoping that my friends and family will realize that *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* is a blueprint for life and that they will join me in a quest for a fulfilling and joyous lifestyle.

Again, a heartfelt thank you for your generosity—I am truly grateful.—*Jeff Osborne, Spur, Texas.*

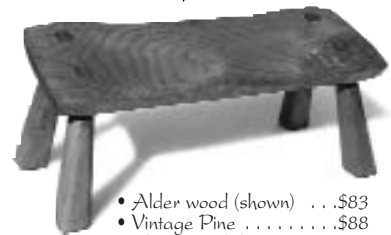
EDITOR’S NOTE: Jeff’s subscription to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* is paid for by the *Friends Fund*. The *Friends Fund* was established to furnish subscriptions of *PERSONAL*

Of a Like Mind

McClintock

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T O S H A R E

Thank you for the opportunity to share *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine with family and friends at a special rate. I wish you much success!—*Sindy Verdugo, Long Beach, California.*

W O N D E R F U L

Bless you and thank you for your wonderful, gentle, loving journal!—*Sandy Pike Foundas, Ashland, Massachusetts.*

D E L I G H T E D

I'm delighted by your journal. I was getting frustrated when I couldn't find it at the bookstores, so I've decided to subscribe. I did find an out-of-date issue in one store when you were called *LOTUS*. It was stashed away in the computer section.—*Joy Banks, Monrovia, California.*

U N A B L E

I read your excellent magazine, *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. I know it would help me greatly, but at this time, I am financially unable to subscribe. Thank you for the

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 14

Inner Traditions

Morinda
Tahitian Noni

Reflections

Continued from page 12

review copy.—*Martha Rose Miller, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania.*

SPIRITUALLY ORIENTED

Just a note to thank you for your work in publishing the lovely magazine, which I recently discovered at Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Greenville, SC, where I live. You are providing the world's relatively few spiritually-oriented people with a lovely publication.—*Janell Cooper, Taylors, South Carolina.*

HEALING PETS

I enjoyed reading your magazine, especially the article on *The Healing Effects of Pets*. I live in a 23-story highrise, with mostly senior citizens. Once a month, a group called "Basically Puppies" comes in with Sitka (a rottweiler), Lady (a collie), and sometimes a greyhound, pomeranian, or retriever. They also bring guinea pigs, a rabbit or two, but no cats. I love this Sunday afternoon and am always home for it. I always had pets but with my failing eyesight I gave them up. After four eye operations, I now see rather well, but do not plan on getting any more pets, as I have serious lung problems (I never smoked, but had to breathe the smoke of others) and am often in the hospital. When I look into the beautiful eyes of Sitka or Lady, I definitely feel these animals can and do pray for people. People love to stroke their soft fur and talk to them, but I believe there is more to it than this. Just to have the bunny, who is frightened by all those dogs, relax and go to sleep in someone's arms is a blessing for the person holding the bunny, above and beyond the stroking its soft velvet fur and kissing its sweet ears.—*Shirley Burghard, Syracuse, New York.*

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 21

Tara Mandala Retreat Center

Wings of Joy

J F K University
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Life Eternal

GEORGE JAIDAR

Philosopher George Jaidar, of Ojai, California, is the author of "The Soul: An Owner's Manual, Discovering the Life of Fullness" (Paragon House, 1995). He loves rescuing terms and concepts from the dungeons of misunderstanding. This is the second in a series of columns by George Jaidar, which will shine new light on words and concepts that need to be redeemed, words that can be springboards to personal transformation.

Let us think that economics has nothing to contribute to spirituality, let me remind you of *Gresham's law*, which is the tendency of an inferior currency to drive a superior currency out of circulation. Those of you familiar with the evolution of religion and spirituality will have become acquainted with this phenomenon, even though you may not have recognized the applicability of *Gresham's law*.

The currency to which I refer here is the language which we use to communicate about religion and spirituality. All through history, we become aware of the spiritual discoverers and explorers who have pointed at wondrous truths for us to see and act upon. Unfortunately, these truths are soon lost or "driven out of circulation" by the symbiotic needs of societies and religions to make religion into the handmaiden of society in achieving social control, cohesion, and stability. Soon the superior currency of the original spiritual truths is degraded and driven out of circulation by the inferior

currency of the religious terms and concepts.

We would be hard put to find a spiritual tradition that does not use the concept of *life eternal* as a way of pointing to the mode in which we discover our spirituality, the Life of the Spirit, or how we grow our Soul (a process, not a thing, object, or entity). But look at what nearly all religions have done to the term, *eternal*. It has become misused and misunderstood. Both *eternal* and *eternity* have degenerated to refer to time and extensions thereof. (Don't look to dictionaries for help in this; now they only claim to represent usage, which is the problem.)

Eternal is now widely regarded as a synonym for *everlasting*, which cheapens the meaning, but is understandable for the needs of societies and organized religions to coerce uniformity and social control through the promise of an afterlife. Jesus and Gautama, among others, never promised everlasting life or any kind of afterlife, but rather a *life eternal*. It is a kind of childishness in spiritual matters that requires or looks for an afterlife.

Eternal or *eternity* is not a spatiotemporal or quantitative concept, but rather a qualitative, transcending concept. Paul Tillich expressed it so perceptively when he said, "Eternity is the invasion of the Now by the Divine." (I prefer saying it is the "infusion of the Now by the Divine.") Essentially, it is a quality of the Now that is manifested or incarnated by the individual who discovers and is exploring the Life of the Spirit or, if you prefer, who is growing the Soul, in our everyday world, not in some other place or time.

Thus, the *life eternal*, the Kingdom of Heaven, a life of Bliss, or Nirvana is available in the here and now when we learn to be *in the world, but not of it*, that is, when we learn not to be limited by the ordinary worldview of our enculturation. In sum, each individual needs to see through the limits of that worldview and of our enculturation for successful survival at most, in order to transcend here and now, in the world, to the *life eternal* for which we were created. •

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LOTUS AD FULL PAGE



Stepping Out From Behind the Veil

JACQUELYN SMALL

Jacquelyn Small, LMSW, is the author of seven books on personal and planetary transformation, including "Becoming Naturally Therapeutic," "Transformers," "Awakening in Time," and "Embodying Spirit." Jacquelyn is the director of Eupsychia, a healing and training institute that conducts 14-day, 6-day, and weekend intensives throughout North America offering people access to the actual processes of transformation. Her work blends the best of conventional therapy with the newer transformational methodologies and psychospiritual groupwork. Jacquelyn also conducts a Mystery School in the Western mystery traditions, co-led with esotericist, Don Gill. To contact her or gain information about Eupsychia's programs, call 1/800/546-2795, or write PO Box 3090, Austin, Texas 78764.

Blended with the God-energy that emanates from our Source is mixed all the suffering, illusion, and darkness we humans have absorbed while taking on this earthly experience of individuation. Currently, we are as far from our Source as we've ever been, the ending of the darkest cycle in human evolution, known as the Kali Yuga period in Hinduism. Even our sciences, with all their exactness, have been invented in an era so dense that we've lost sight of what reality is, and are still operating "in the dark" as to our own nature. Look around you, and you'll see that this is so.

The human psyche is "the battlefield" where all dualities are played out. If we are to help the world dispel its darkness, we must each wrestle with it in our personal lives and come to understand it. But remember: all has a sacred function, even our gravest mistakes. So without judgment, we cast our searchlight into these dark places and watch the darkness dissipate. The responsibility we carry is the recognition and actual experiencing of divinity in human form, to each "stand tall" as a fully-blossomed Self.

For many, this awakening upon a higher plane of consciousness is occurring right now. Mystics call this process "a forced evolution" — in which we opt for acceleration beyond that of ordinary growth and accept the "voluntary suffering" that ensues. The one doing the forcing, however, is not outside us; the impulse comes from our own soul. Depth psychology calls this "individuation," the process we undergo to become an undivided whole, willing to think and act for ourselves.

For you who are awakening now and deciding to take full responsibility for who you are, your time of deliverance is here! That is, if you are willing to do "your part" and allow yourself to be jolted into action. The wisdom of our own first-hand experience of transformation, the time-honored Path of Direct Knowledge, is surfacing once more as a live possibility. We, who are questing for the truth and avidly seeking life's purpose, are those who awaken first at the ending of every cycle and enter the threshold into the coming life. A built-in sense of this process itself is our only assurance. Like "the Fool on the hill", we plunge headlong into the still uncarved future with an attitude of cavalier faith — experiencing the raw data of our own transmutation, transformation, and transcendence yet to be tested against scientific scrutiny. A divine experiment, indeed! Holding steady in the light of our highest spiritual intention, we pave the way for others. As we dive all the way down into these life processes and

learn to speak the “language of the day,” we carry the message by being the message itself.

And how do we proceed? By activating our soul’s higher cognitions: the creative imagination, inspiration, and intuition. Creative “imagineering” bridges the actual and the ideal, filling the gap with inner visions that manifest by our focused sacred intent. Inspiration infuses us with the fiery yearning to express. The intuition is our soul’s “re-cognition” that God’s will is aligned with our personal will. These are the “tools” that co-create our future life. So we must learn to use them.

But here’s a warning: these energies of transformation, when invoked, come barreling through our consciousness, consuming anything that won’t be contained within the boundaries of love and truth. Evolution is the powerful love and wisdom of God moving through us, and consciousness, which awakens our true seeing, is its life force. Consciousness relentlessly clears our old dead patterns, and liberates us from the past. When we resist, this sacred purification can produce a serious crisis, anything from physical disease to spiritual emergencies. To avoid these pitfalls, we must put in place a stabilizing daily spiritual practice that keeps us awake and clears our resistances with pristine honesty. Otherwise, we plummet into the despair of chaos and misinterpretation.

Anything left unconscious, we now understand, has the power to destroy us. And since humanity has so much error in its collective unconscious mind, we are rapidly destroying the world, and certainly many of our personal lives, by our own ignorance. Nothing is ever “just personal,” however, in such all-consuming evolutionary work. Like cells within an organism, we do not have as much autonomy as we think. As each of us purifies our bloodstream of its old DNA patterning through this conscious process, we add more weight to the morphogenetic fluid that is formulating the Divine Body on earth. The blossoming of our species, Humanity, results, which is “our part” in the Divine Plan.

In guiding such psychospiritual processes, we’ve seen how by cooperating with these potent transformational forces, the old “stuff” of our past spontaneously arises from the unconscious, revealing its many faces. In sacred space, and with loving guidance, opening is all we ever need do, the rest is done through us by a Higher Order—of which we are also a part, though we remember it not. We’ve been programmed to believe that Powers greater than ourselves are external. This is an untruth that holds us away from knowing our real identities.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 20

For humans,
becoming conscious is
suffering. But
suffering is not the
goal; deepening into
Life is. As Joseph
Campbell once said,
it’s not so much the
meaning of life that
we seek intellectually,
but more “the rapture
of being alive.”

Therefore, the sacred
purpose of the shadow
is plain. The shadow
in us will keep us
aware of the
unredeemed parts of
ourselves, those parts
we’re in denial of that
hold our passions and
dynamism. For our
wholeness, all our
unconscious elements
must be made
conscious. And
becoming fully
conscious and living
enraptured is our true
purpose in this divine
human experiment.

Eupsychia
v6n2 p23

Innovative Learning Group
Wings
V6N2 p20

From our long experience at Eupsychia, we've documented major landmarks along the way that help us weave our tapestry of Selfhood back together so our greater Identities will "show." Perhaps what follows can help guide you toward your full unfolding.

1. We enter the Path and recognize our true nature. Our search for knowledge becomes "Who am I?" We turn inward and discover the Self (our soul), who is both human and divine. This is the shift from ego-based living to soul-dominance.

2. We meet and embrace our shadow. All resistant and unintegrated parts are recognized and healed. When we can embrace our own dark side, we find a "sparring partner" who provides the tension we require to push on through to more refinement.

3. We re-visit our past to release its hold on us. With the expanded vision of who we are in wholeness, we shine the light upon our old issues. Judgment is dropped; forgiveness floods our hearts. We let go.

4. We refine our personalities. Moving now beyond remedial work, we enter the process of self-realization. Voluntary disciplines and processes that soften our rough edges and reveal our shining soul become welcome companions. We'll attract inner work or outer lessons that, in order to get through, expand us and activate our finer qualities.

5. We resolve the mystery of death/rebirth. We learn that we do not grow by steadily moving upward, but through sequences of dying to the old and rebirthing into the new. We turn in a new direction and greet the new that is pulsating through us, seeking expression. There is no death, we see,

only transformation.

6. We learn to live within the tension of the opposites. We accept the fact that we are both the shadow and the light, and honor the gift that shadow brings — our passions and our realness — while simultaneously drawing forth our higher qualities. This tension balances as a “zero point” in the center, and we become fully embodied souls.

7. We awaken to our life’s purpose and soul’s expression. We relax into just “do our being” in right relationship to all our brother and sister souls. There is no higher purpose than to be an authentic Self — especially in a world that is starved for Truth!•

Letters from Readers

Continued from page 14

GOOD NEWS

Thank you, for Tina Rasmussen’s article *A World Awakening* (March, 1997). I did not realize how hungry I am for good news! I wish this were a regular feature in the magazines and newspapers I read as well as on radio and TV. On some days, I’m just not up to the mega-doses of bad news served up by the media, so I avoid it. Or if I do take it in, on those days I get depressed. And any day, I can use a dose of good news. Tina’s article made my day.—*Terry Hager, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*•

YOUR VOICE

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Journey into Wholeness

Ahp

Healing Through Forgiveness

MARY NURRIE STEARNS

Forgiveness is love's way of healing us. Forgiveness is an intimate relationship with mercy that soothes pain, dissolves anger, and releases attitudes that don't serve our own life potential or humanity. Forgiveness is a journey that develops and requires the kind of courage that changes our lives in wonderful ways. This courage compels us increasingly to seek truth and compassion. Along the way, love's presence sustains us when our effort is great. As we deepen in our forgiveness practice, we come to know how we are to express ourselves in the world.

With forgiveness promising so much, why do we often hesitate to actively engage it? Even when we desire to face long-held feelings and let go of painful wounds, we shy away from the depths of what forgiveness would have us experience. We may be reluctant to join hands with forgiveness because we lack the know-how, the tools of forgiveness. Or at some level, we may misunderstand forgiveness and decide it is not appropriate for us or that we are not ready.

Myths about forgiveness, such as forgive and forget, misinform us. Forgiveness is not amnesia. We forgive and remember. Remembering helps us to break harmful cycles and reduces the likelihood that we will be



IMAGE BANK/BRITT ERLANSON

hurt, or hurt others, in the same old ways. Forgiveness does not dull pain. It is not an escape route from intense emotions trapped within—or from the work required to understand and release those feelings. Forgiveness does not condone; we forgive the doer, not the doing. Forgiveness is letting go of intense emotions with the full knowledge that the behavior was cruel and that all parties involved were hurt by it. Treating pain with kindness produces insight and we come to realize the ignorance and history that fueled the event. We can then examine our relationships through the eyes of mercy. Understanding human frailty, we are also more able to forgive ourselves.

Healing happens over time. We heal at one level, then another. We make the decision to forgive, again and again. Saying words of forgiveness is the first step. Reciting the words creates an opening and willingness, and moves us into a body, heart, mind, spirit process of remembering and releasing. According to Rumer Godden, in *A House With Four Rooms*, "There is an Indian proverb or axiom that says that everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, a mental, an emotional, and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time, but unless we go into every room every day,

even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person.” Our bodies hold the imprints of unforgiven hurt and anger, and we must forgive with our entire being. Forgiveness literally becomes a healing way of life that enhances well-being, a lifestyle that keeps our inner rooms healthy.

How then do we forgive? There is no religiously correct or universally agreed-upon approach to forgiveness. Yet, there are tools that support and even accelerate the process. We begin by letting go of our unforgiving stance. We acknowledge the events and feelings that really happened. We admit that the past cannot be changed. However, through healing, we can leave those yesterdays in the past and create a better tomorrow. Realizing that forgiveness is our own personal journey, we release expectations that others will respond to our work,

even though each person’s healing has positive rippling effects. While journaling, drawing, dancing, breathing, and talking, we face whatever our body, heart, spirit, and mind present next for our healing. Through these processes, we begin relating differently to our suffering. We don’t hold back. We gently soothe our pain with love. We allow thoughts and feelings to rise into awareness where they are recognized and permitted to pass on through. Setting aside sacred time daily, we pray and meditate on forgiveness, and we commune with the divine. And we trust—knowing that grace and a great wisdom are embracing our efforts.

The forgiveness meditation below, when practiced regularly can take you deep into the heart of forgiveness. •

FORGIVENESS MEDITATION

BY STEPHEN AND ONDREA LEVINE

Begin by centering the mind, as in meditation. Become quiet, soften the belly.

Slowly bring into your mind, into your heart, the image of someone for whom you have resentment. Gently allow a picture, a feeling, a sense of that person to gather there. Invite them into your heart for just this moment, noticing any fear or anger or sensation that arises. Soften around whatever arises.

Silently say in your heart, “I forgive you. I forgive you for whatever pain you may have caused me in the past, intentionally or unintentionally, through your words, your thoughts, your actions. However you may have caused me pain in the past, I forgive you.”

Open to the possibility of forgiveness so that resentment may pass, so that your heart may be free and your life lighter. “I forgive you.” It is so painful to hold someone out of your heart. “I forgive you.”

Allow that being to go on their way touched by the blessing, the possibility of your forgiveness.

Now gently allow into your mind, your heart, the image of someone who holds resentment for you. Invite them into your heart and say, “I ask your forgiveness. I ask to be let back into your

heart. Forgive me for whatever I may have done in the past that caused you pain, intentionally or unintentionally, through my words, my actions, even through my thoughts. However I may have hurt or injured you, whatever confusion, whatever fear of mine caused you pain, I ask your forgiveness.”

Allow yourself to be touched by forgiveness, to be forgiven, to be allowed back into their heart. Allow forgiveness to fill your heart. Allow yourself to be forgiven. If your mind jumps forward with recriminations and judgments against you, just notice how merciless we are to ourselves. Let your heart meet this other heart in forgiveness.

Allow that being to go on their way touched by the blessing of forgiveness.

Now gently allow yourself into your mind, into your heart. It is so painful to hold yourself out of your heart. Say, “I forgive you” to yourself. Use your own first name, say “I forgive you” to yourself.

Whatever hard thoughts arise against yourself from your mind, hold them with softness. Let softness touch your judgments with forgiveness. Allow yourself into your heart, into forgiveness. Let forgiveness fill your body with warmth and care. Bathe yourself in its mercy and kindness. Let yourself be loved. Return yourself to your heart. •



A Call to Action

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

Wanted: Courageous souls willing to express and demonstrate their spiritual beliefs on a regular, ongoing basis in order to heal the world. Must be willing to be laughed at, doubted and discounted. Pays on a commission basis only; once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for rich transformational rewards.

I have always believed that the first and most powerful statement we can make regarding our beliefs lies in our actions, rather than our words. As Ghandi advised, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”

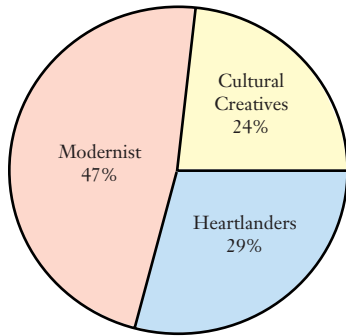
But how much time do we have? In his book, *The Search for a New Beginning: Developing a New Civilization*, Mikhail Gorbachev writes, “The present-day global landscape is one of profound crisis, which could end either in the death of humankind or in the breakthrough to a new civilization...At present, we are running a race against time. What will happen next—a critical escalation of global threats and the collapse of our civilization, or a critical growth of hope, of the willingness and ability of the international human community to develop new, truly human ground rules of living together, capable of saving civilization through its

renewal? It’s up to all of us who live today on this planet to answer this question.” One only needs to open a newspaper for an overview of global deterioration on every level. It’s clear that now is the time, and we are the generation.

A STRONG AND GROWING MOVEMENT

The good news is a movement is afoot. In the September 1996 issue of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, I described a study by sociologist Paul Ray which detailed the discovery of a new subculture in the United States, the Cultural Creatives, who were undetected even a decade ago. This group has reached a critical mass of 24% of the U.S. population—44 million adults—and is responsible for generating most of the new ideas in society, operating on the leading edge of cultural transformation. The Cultural Creatives hold values of environmental sustainability, globalism, relationships—and personal transformation paired with social altruism and idealism.

In contrast to the Heartlander (29%) and Modernist (47%) subcultures, the Creatives are the only subculture that’s growing. While these two groups still comprise the majority of the population, their world views have not resulted the utopian life they promised, causing both groups to decline in numbers. As the Heartlander population ages, people have lost faith in a nostalgic image of traditionalism. At the same time, the Modernist view that money, possessions and technology are societal cure-alls has proved untrue. This leaves the Cultural Creatives with the most promising possibilities for the future. Unfortunately, most Creatives believe they are few in numbers, and therefore hesitate to champion their values in public arenas. (Paul Ray, *The Rise of Inte-*



gral Culture, *Noetic Sciences Review*, Spring 1996)

What will it take for the Creatives to believe that we are a strong and growing movement? That we could be just as vocal as the conservative Heartlanders, or as influential as the successful Modernists? David Spangler recently wrote that, in 1995, total sales of “new age” books, products and seminars were in excess of \$450 million. “As a commercial enterprise, the new age movement has arrived, and it’s no trivial matter!” he wrote. (*New Age Magazine*, January/February 1997)

Brian Hall, founder of Values Technology, has been studying human values internationally for over 20 years. Hall’s model of values development includes a psychological instrument approved by the American Psychological Association called a “Values Map.” As a person progresses through the values map, he or she begins to question Heartlander and then Modernist values, but finds it difficult to abandon the previous world view. Hall has observed that in the last 10 years, increasing numbers of people are moving toward what he calls the “values shift,” in which people embrace Cultural Creative type values, such as spirituality and self-actualization. However, because the personal transforma-

Bantam

Mount Madonna
pickup from
v6n3 p10

tion required to make the values shift is so difficult, people sorely need external reinforcement—such as books, magazines, workshops, and like-minded people and organizations—in order to make the transition. Maybe this is why the Cultural Creatives hesitate—because of seemingly sparse reinforcement for our views. (*Values Shift*, Brian Hall, Twin Lights Publishers)

THE WORLD NEEDS THE
CULTURAL CREATIVES:
BUT WHAT CAN ONE
PERSON DO?

As the “want ad” at the beginning of this article stated, it’s difficult to be a change agent in a world which may not appear to welcome the change. But as Confucius said, “It’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” As we saw

when the Berlin Wall unexpectedly came tumbling down, a critical mass of people with a common belief (like the Cultural Creatives?)—even if unorganized—can change an entire society.

Neale Donald Walsch, author of the book *Conversations with God*, has a response to people who ask, “What can I do?” His answer is to become completely “visible”—in other words, to be 100% authentic in all communications and interactions with others. “Life is not just about what we’re *doing*; it’s about what we’re *being* while we’re doing it,” he says. Walsch encourages people to direct more time at being *active* about our beliefs, rather than continuing to go to transformation workshops, thinking we need to *improve* before we’re competent. The message is the same—now is

the time, and we are the generation.

But as one person, what can I do? Cultural Creatives (CCs) can do several things:

- Find like-minded people and organizations, and support each other
- Develop a concise summary of your beliefs, which will enable CCs to gain clarity and to share that clarity and passion with others
- *Be* the change we want to see; be a magnet to attract others because our light is so bright
- Be courageous in sharing these beliefs (appropriately) with others—in language they can relate to—while honoring their path
- Remember that we are supported—there are more Cultural Creatives than it seems—and the world desperately needs us to “be a candle in the darkness”

Personal transformation means behaving—more and more, every day—“as if” we really believe that God is in all of us, and that there’s a higher purpose and a grand plan that extends beyond our everyday lives. And personal transformation means behaving “as if” this is the ultimate reality, even when our immediate physical reality and the limited perspective of our egos can’t understand the “why.”

Imagine how the world would be transformed—and how each of us, in our experience of the world would be transformed—if we truly believed that the above were true. It would only take an instant, if we all behaved “as if.” As Einstein said, “A problem cannot be solved at the level of thinking that created it.” Will the Cultural Creatives—will *we*—have the courage to solve the world’s problems with our new level of thinking?•

Dreamtime Cruse
Cyan and Black (biggest part of
ad is black)

Parallax Press

American Institute

v6n3 p21



Meet Others, Learn, and Experience

M E L I S S A W E S T

Wanted: • People experiencing the gifts and challenges of personal and spiritual awakening. • People desiring change, a deepening of their inner and outer journeys, but who are not quite sure how to “do it.” • People eager for a small community where they can experience the power of being fully and compassionately listened to and supported in their life journeys. • People wanting to support others in personal transformation, thereby enriching their own spiritual lives as well.

If any of this sounds like you, *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* invites you to participate in the birth of an exciting grass-roots national movement. We at *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* are creating a network of small groups across the country dedicated to studying and experiencing the power of personal transformation.

We are creating a non-profit organization—the *TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDY GROUPS PROJECT*—that will empower such small groups, through resources like handbooks and videos, and through organizational help in finding or setting up such a group in your area.

If you have ever participated in a twelve-step or growth group, you know the wonderful feeling of being supported in your transformation by a caring group. If you have not yet been in a group, this project will pre-

sent you with a powerful and life-changing opportunity to experience the learning and healing possible in a small group of like-minded individuals.

Imagine meeting with a small group of others who are also committed to personal and spiritual awakening... Imagine being deeply listened to as you share the joys and challenges of your personal transformations with others, and learning from their stories as well... Imagine the excitement of sharing new ideas with your “journeying partners” as you read and discuss articles and books on different aspects of the transformational journey.

David Bohm, physicist and author of *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, likens the power of a group to a laser. Ordinary—or “incoherent”—light scatters, he writes in “On Dialogue,” since the separate light waves are not in phase with each other; there is no power. A laser beam, however, “produces a very intense beam which is coherent. The light waves build up strength because they are all going in the same direction, and the beam can do all sorts of things that ordinary light cannot.”

Our culture is in the midst of a “laser-beam”, small-group revolution. People are meeting in homes and churches across the nation to share support and healing, inspire grass-roots political and cultural change, and exchange exciting new ideas. We at *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, through the *TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDY GROUPS PROJECT*, will offer guidance for setting up small groups specifically dedicated to personal transformation.

How will these groups work? They will enable you to:

- *MEET OTHERS* who are also interested in personal transformation. We believe that we were not meant to do this work alone. Even though each of our journeys is unique, there is great power in sharing those journeys, finding inspiration in other’s stories, and supporting each other through the ups and downs of the path.

The longing for community is universal and there is something magical about any intense, tightly knit group of people working together and playing together... A transformative community is a nearly indispensable launching pad for transformation. Such a community can create the context and the confidence for a transforming journey.

—George Leonard and Michael Murphy

- *LEARN* how the process of transformation works. Again, even though each of our journeys is unique, there are general road maps for the journey itself. Through reading and discussion of selected articles from *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* magazine, or other recommended topics and materials, you will gain a wider understanding of the gifts and challenges of the transformational journey.

- *EXPERIENCE* how the power of transformational work increases within the support of a caring community. In stage two of this project, you will be able to work experientially in these same groups, with the guidance of trained leaders, exploring creative ways to deepen your personal and spiritual awakening.

We at *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* believe this project is vitally important now, not just for the individuals participating, but for the cultural healing and renewal our country so desperately needs.

As participants in these groups become more “heartful and soulful”, they will be empowered to effect change at a grass-roots level, from being more loving family members or friends, to serving in new ways that create cultural, political, or ecological change. When we relate to the world compassionately, rather than from fear or anger, we have more to give, and are less vulnerable to burnout and cynicism. “Never doubt,” writes Margaret Mead, “that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever does.”•

Melissa West, M.S., is a psychotherapist, teacher, and author. She co-founded and co-directs LifeQuest, a nonprofit organization dedicated to contemporary rites of passage. She gives workshops and speaks nationally on transformation, ritual, and rites of passage. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

If the possibilities of personal and cultural transformation, through participation in small study groups, excites you, we'd love to have you on board! These are ways we need your help:

- Let us know if you're interested in organizing, or participating in, such a group in your community.

- Tell us if you have experience and training in facilitating group experiential work. This will be especially needed in the second part of the project.

- Send donations! We particularly need donors, sponsors, and grants to support the work of getting the *TRANSFORMATION STUDY GROUP PROJECT* off the ground: writing and publishing a Group Handbook, a training video, and booklets about particular aspects of transformational study groups; staff and office overhead; and training for group leadership. We have incorporated this project as a non-profit organization; this means all your donations are fully tax-deductible.

We are excited here at *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* at the promise and power of this *TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDY GROUP PROJECT*. If you are too, and wish to participate in any way, let us know. If you are interested in hosting a transformation group in your area, or donating financial support to develop and implement this project, please contact us. Write: *TRANSFORMATION STUDY GROUPS*, 4032 South Lamar Blvd. #500-137, Austin, Texas 78704-7900. You may also E-mail us at LotusPT@ aol.com. We look forward to hearing from you!•

Tell about Your Transformation

In each issue, we present stories from people who have transformed their lives.

Do you experience inner peace and joy? Is your life fulfilled with loving relationships? Are you directed by your wisdom and aspirations? We want to present your inspiring story. We want to tell our readers how *you* changed your life.

You may have overcome some major trauma or handicap, made a successful major career shift, developed your creative potential, or filled your relationships with love and understanding.

Please send a recent picture of yourself and a 1,000 word story, typewritten and double-spaced, describing your transformation,

why you did it, how you felt during the process, and how your family and friends reacted. Your story is important. If you are not a skilled writer, our editorial staff can assist.

In your story, please include:

- Events or experiences that launched your transformation process.
- Decisions that greatly impacted your growth.
- Coping skills during the time of change and disruption.

- Resources that helped you.

Send your story and picture along with this completed release form. If your story is used, you will receive a two-year subscription plus two gift subscriptions for friends.

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My Soul's True Hunger

L I S A S A R A S O H N

I'd like to think that I'm responsible for the transformation that has occurred in my life—moving beyond twenty years of an eating disorder. I've certainly done my share of the work. But I have to say that the transformation has been inspired by flashes of Divine intervention.

The event I'm about to tell you occurred when I was thirty-five years old, still struggling with an eating disorder. I had battled with compulsive eating from the time I was seventeen. I would alternately binge and starve, overeat and then diet rigidly. I was constantly obsessed with my weight, my shape, the clothes I could and couldn't fit into, the food I could and couldn't eat. I gained and lost about twenty pounds at least five times a year, without ever looking "fat."

Then, after an interval of relatively sane behavior, I was overeating again to stuff down my feelings. My eating in this period was nowhere near as frantic as it had been in times past. But however mild my overeating was, I felt hopeless. Would this pattern ever change?

On one particular night, I woke from a sound sleep when someone turned the light on in my room. Or had

I fallen asleep leaving the lamp at my bedside on? I reached out to turn the lamp off, pressed the switch, and found that I hadn't turned the lamp off at all: I'd turned it on. With all the light filling the room, the lamp had been off. I sat up, quickly turned the lamp off again, and the brilliant light remained in the room. Or was the light blazing inside my skull?

I don't ordinarily have supernatural experiences. In fact, although I keep an open mind, I'm relatively skeptical about paranormal happenings. But I knew I was dealing with something here, and I had better pay attention. I heard a message: a transmission came through to me from this bursting light, not so much in words—rather as a knowing directly conveyed. The message was: "Clean up your act with food, or you're going to die."

I noted this instruction, lay back down, and returned to sleep. In the days that followed, I didn't dismiss the message I'd received—it would have been hard to ignore such a wake-up call. But I didn't know what to do with it. I can't say my behavior changed in any way.

About two weeks later a bright, blazing light again woke me from a sound sleep. This time I didn't bother turning off the bedside lamp. Sitting up, I listened for a message. I didn't get the sense of words this time. I sensed more of a gesture—the kind of gesture a person makes when she's standing in front of you with her arms across her chest, weight on one foot, tapping the toes of the other foot against the floor. The kind of gesture that says: "Well, we're waiting. We haven't forgotten you. We're watching to see whether you'll ante up." I understood that I was being watched to see whether I'd do something with myself, rise to the challenge, take charge.

Again, I took this event at face value, lay back down, and returned to sleep. But in the days and years that followed, I acted. I devoted myself to discovering and developing my inner source, the spiritual center which

AHP

would truly satisfy the soul hunger I was trying to feed by filling my belly full of food.

In my training as a Kripalu Yoga instructor, I had learned about hara—the Japanese term for the belly as the wellspring of our physical and spiritual vitality, the home of our soul. I had read that strengthening hara develops soul qualities such as courage, confidence, creativity, identity, autonomy, authenticity, sense of connection—the very qualities I craved.

The belly as the source and site of our soul-power? What an idea! In my life, I had only known my belly as a source of embarrassment, shameful evidence of my uncontrollable appetite. But now I suspected that developing hara would be a practical way to connect with my inner source, and that my life depended on making that connection.

Accordingly, drawing upon yoga and other movement traditions, I designed a sequence of eighteen hara-strengthening movement and breathing exercises. I also wrote a myth—a story of the heroine’s journey—to narrate the movement sequence. This narration made moving through the belly-energizing exercises an exhilarating ritual of self-affirmation and spiritual empowerment.

I’ve practiced this belly-energizing ritual almost daily for the last seven years. In the process, I’ve moved beyond the eating disorder which used to torment me.

Practicing this “Honoring Your Belly” ritual cultivates the soul qualities which I used to try to absorb through food. Best of all, it gives me an ever-deepening sense of my inner source as a tangible presence within my belly.

How do I experience this inner source? When my belly is active

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 75



The PHOENIX

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What I Learned from Cubby

MARTI MILLER

It was the seventh day of September 1995 when I heard a voice telling me that in one week my beloved cat Cubby would be making his transition. I went into a panic because Cubby had been my support for thirteen years, and I felt that I needed him more than ever now, as I was making many changes in my life, Cubby was my companion and the one I would turn to when life became too challenging. Through the years that we had together, he taught me how to love, and when he told me that he would be dying, I begged him to stay, for I was felt I was just learning how to love as deeply as he loved me.

On September 12, 1995, Cubby had surgery to repair an abscess that he had received in a fight with another cat. The phone rang letting me know that Cubby had made it through the surgery. The veterinarian said he was doing great and that in the morning I would be able to take him home. My first thought was that the message I had received the week prior was inaccurate and that all was well. I was relieved, but deep inside I knew that all was not well. The next morning I was preparing to go to the hospital, but the phone rang.

I picked up the phone, hearing that the message that I had gotten the week before was indeed accurate. Cubby had made his transition by having a seizure. At that moment, I was to begin a path that resulted in changing my life and gives me an opportunity to step into my purpose for this lifetime. For years, I have been challenged with deciding what it is that I am supposed to be doing in this life. For the past twenty years, I have been hiding in the clinical laboratory performing the mental tasks of the day. When Cubby died, I was faced with going to a deep level of my emotions.

The prior two years I had experienced the loss of two very special people, but Cubby's death went deeper than either of those deaths. I went to a pet loss support group for a while and never really found what I needed from the group. I realized that the year I had spent at the University of Santa Monica had already given me many of the tools that I needed to heal the pain that I was feeling inside me. I had been given the gift of knowing that I had done the best I could and that Cubby had chosen me. There was a part of me that knew that his death was an extension of his love for me. It was this love and a spiritual connection that Cubby shared with me during his life. I came to understand that he was brought into my life to teach me. His death was also a way for me to grow to my next level, if I chose to do so. I was going to start my second year at the University of Santa Monica. Part of the second year is to have a project that is carried out for the entire year. My project was to begin a counseling practice in Denver. One of my classmates suggested that I do a tape for people who have lost a pet. I blew the idea off as being beyond my ability. I had no idea of how to do it or what to do. I laughed and said that it was unlikely for me to do anything like that.

At the time I was teaching a class called "The Power to Heal." With twenty years in the medical field, I thought that my purpose was to assist others in dealing

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The Second Half of Life

E K N A T H E A S W A R A N

People who identify themselves with their body often find the latter half of life a great burden. Only when you learn to identify yourself with the Self will the latter half of your life become a great blessing.

Once, when a friend and I were walking at the local shopping district, a young woman reporter stopped me. She apologized for interrupting my walk and said, “Do you mind if I ask you a question?” She cleared her throat. “What would you say is the most unpleasant thing about growing old?”

I wasn’t offended. She was a nice young woman; she was just reflecting the assumptions which underlie all our modern attitudes. So I smiled and said, “Now you’d better take down what I say. The latter part of my life is wonderful. In fact, there is no comparison with the first part. All the physical vigor and the running about and the—what do you call it?—the vim and razzle-dazzle of early life, it’s all ‘sound and fury, signifying nothing.’”

When you have only your physical appearance to depend on, I might have added if I had known her better, there is no escape from the ravages of

time. That is why spiritual teachers say, Enjoy your youth, but don’t neglect to light the lamp of beauty inside, which will glow brighter with the passage of time.

Our society lives by the rather juvenile theory that beauty and joy are limited to a particular period in life. It’s true that children have a marvelous beauty of their own, but every child has to grow up. Teenagers have a certain beauty of their own, but they, too, have to grow up. Similarly, the twenty-somethings and the thirty-somethings will eventually become forty- and fifty-somethings.

When my grandmother, in her sixties, came and sat with us in our ancestral home, she was the center of all attention. Her beauty came entirely from within, a beauty born of the highest feminine qualities. Forgiveness, inward strength, the use of gentle words (which means gentle thoughts), all play a part in making a woman—or a man! Beautiful.

Whatever religion you belong to, whatever country you belong to, everybody responds to this kind of inner beauty. You don’t have to advertise. To use one of the great similes from Sri Ramakrishna,



We Heal By Telling Our Story

R I C H A R D S T O N E

Many years ago, I was trapped in Glacier National Park by a fierce blizzard. Wind roared past our camp throughout the night. By morning, the temperature had dropped, and we were stuck in a fog bank that whirled by us and disappeared behind a white curtain. We headed out that day walking head-on into a fifty-mile-an-hour gale with snow and hail pocking our ruddy complexions. Four inches of snow and ice accumulated on the windward side of our packs and clothes in less than ten minutes. I realized that we could die out here and that no one would find us until the next June, when the snows melted.

TSI/WALTER HODGES

Huddling together like cattle taking their last stand against a predator, we debated our options and decided to turn back. It was a good thing. The wind whipped harder, and at times I leaned into it with all my weight just to keep both feet on the trail. We struggled to make our way to the few lonesome trees that had guarded our previous night's stay. After setting up the tents, we stripped off our soaking gloves, pants, hats, and boots and slipped into our down bags to wait for a break in the weather. Except for a brief dinner of English muffins and peanut butter—and the miserable task of hanging our food out of the bears' reach—we stayed in those bags for nearly twenty hours.

All night, snow pelted the tents' outer protective skin, and wind ricocheted off the mountains, racing with the speed of an avalanche toward our precarious nest in the trees. Occasionally, the sound of thunder, or of a huge boulder tumbling over a cliff, echoed throughout the valley.

Sometime around sunrise, the snow stopped. I decided to venture out. Our packs were barely visible beneath the drifts that had accumulated around the tent. I walked to the pit toilet and was relieved to find our food still hanging from its perch. Not even the bears were willing to brave such a storm. The metal toilet seat was cold, and my legs quivered as goose bumps crept up my ankles to my thighs. It was good to be out of the tent, even if it meant sitting half-naked in the frigid air. On the floor was an old spy novel left behind by a previous occupant. I was too weary to pick it up.

One by one, my friends struggled into the light. With miserable looks in our eyes, and hands and feet hurting from the wet and the cold, we tried desperately to get warm.

Everything was wet. Our spirits were nearly broken. No one wanted to admit it, but this wilderness was just too tough for us.

We hiked out that day. Quietly. Our shoulders were weighed down by the trials of the last twenty-four hours, and the thirteen treacherous miles that day left my muscles screaming and my toes aching.

A JEWEL MADE OF PAIN

I would not wish the above circumstances on anyone, and I would certainly never want to repeat it again. But the very act of telling you this story changes the way I see these events, altering the way I feel. What may have been the most miserable twenty-four hours I have ever spent has been exalted into something worth celebrating. I and my friends survived, living to tell about our brush with disaster, none the worse for wear, and prepared to tackle the wilderness once more.

By telling you about my trip to Glacier, I have taken the stuff of suffering and transformed it into one of the most elemental and important materials of human existence—meaning. By telling the story, I am no longer the victim of circumstances beyond my control. I have wrestled back control by the simple act of description, turning what seems to be a failure, in almost every way, into a heroic saga of survival. In this manner, even acute suffering can be redeemed.

A few years ago, I heard the story of Arn Chorn, a teenage refugee from the Cambodian war and the horrific slaughter perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge. His journey of healing is a monument to what is possible in each of our lives.

Arn's parents were killed by the Khmer Rouge, who viciously drove city dwellers into the fields to work. Many of the children who survived these forced marches were made to act as human shields for the soldiers. Their life expectancies were, obviously, short.

While in one of the camps, Arn watched as his sister slowly died of dysentery. He had also witnessed many of his other relatives die in this way. When he was forced to leave for another camp, he had no choice but to desert her. Tearfully, Arn departed, his heart rent with sadness, remorse, and guilt. He never saw her again.

It was at this moment when he realized that his fate would be the same if he remained. He fled through the forest to the safety of Thailand. It was the Khmer Rouge's policy to hunt down escapees. If they weren't executed, they would be returned to the camps and watched more vigilantly. The soldiers were not far behind when Arn made it past his

last obstacle to freedom—a swiftly flowing river.

While Arn was in a refugee camp, Reverend Peter Pond befriended and eventually adopted him, bringing him to the United States. Even though he now lived in a safe, supportive world filled with material comforts, Arn could find little reason for joy, much less any for continuing his life. His despair was overwhelming.

One day while driving with Arn, a mutual friend, Judith Thompson, asked him to describe the circumstances of his flight from the Khmer Rouge. Until this time, he had not shared with anyone the burden of his decision, made years before. Weeping, he described every step of his escape. With a long history in peer counseling, Judith listened intently and with compassion. During the many weeks that followed, Arn shared his story over and over with Judith, each time revealing a new detail that had been covered by the weight of guilt and shame. With each sharing, Arn experienced a sense of freedom that he had not felt since coming to this country—one that flowed from within.

The powerful transformation Judith witnessed in Arn led her to ask two simple questions that transformed both her life and Arn's—what if other children who had been deeply wounded by war were able to share their experiences with each other? And, what would it be like for children from this country to hear these stories and the details of the abominable conditions that are the by-products of the violent conflicts initiated by adults? Thus was born Chil-

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dren of War, a nonprofit, international effort that brought together children from strife-torn countries around the world. By sharing their stories with each other, and in forums at schools throughout the States, these children were able to make the face of war real for so many of us who are desensitized to violence and conflict. Their pain no longer seemed to be a senseless suffering. It had found meaning and purpose. Now, because of their pain, they could serve the world as witnesses of war. As their despair was “storied,” they were able to find a common bond. Alchemically, their stories released them to fully experience the birthright of childhood—joy. We, too, regardless of the nature and depth of our suffering, can rediscover the roots of connection, healing, love, and joy by courageously telling our own tales that are filled with grief, pain, and distress.

FINDING A PLACE OF WHOLENESS

As our world moves and shakes beneath our feet, we are challenged daily to find new ways of coping with and making sense of it all. Needing to ground ourselves in the realities at hand, while also searching for a perspective that allows us to find purpose in the events, feel-

ings, and ideas that surround us, we desperately need tools that can help us keep it all together, giving a sense of wholeness to what would otherwise be a fractured reality.

The narrative structure of story impresses understandable patterns of meaning on experience,

no matter how discontinuous an event is with our core beliefs and current view of things. This shows up most vividly in the midst of personal crises.

A friend of mine who works as a chaplain at a local hospital described for me what happens when an unconscious trauma victim is brought into the emergency room. Frequently the patient's identity is unknown, and lifesaving procedures are initiated while a chaplain or social worker attempts to contact the next of kin (if other family members weren't also involved in the accident). But it's not unusual for a parent or sibling to be informed in a more dramatic fashion.

In one case, a mother was driving by the scene of an accident. One of the cars that was mangled looked quite familiar, much like the one belonging to her teenage daughter. As she got closer, she realized that it was a family member's car. Frantically she pulled her vehicle to the shoulder, asking every emergency worker within earshot what had happened. The ambulance had pulled away moments before. She implored those who were first on the scene for details. The shock of the realization practically incapacitated her. She furiously questioned anyone who could give her information: "How did it happen? Who was at fault? In what direction was my daughter's car going? How fast was the other driver going? What condition was she in when they put her in the ambulance? Is she alive? What are the chances she's going to be okay? She is going to be okay, isn't she?"

Before anyone could answer her questions, she pulled back into traffic, racing to catch up with the ambulance. As she entered the emergency room, they were wheeling her daughter into the operating suite. What did she do?

According to my friend, she began talking with whomever she could find, recounting the horrible details of the event, struggling with how this could happen to her beautiful daughter. And she was not satisfied with telling the tale just once. Over and over, she recounted what had happened. She appraised the event from every possible angle.

Each attempt at description represents a quest to digest the horrid consequences of her daughter's accident. Such storytelling can go on for hours, even days. Repeatedly, persons who are traumatized

recount the relevant events to anyone with a willing ear. What these people need most, at this time, is generosity of listening. They don't require sedatives, psychoanalysis, or even reassurance; it's the patience of someone who is willing to say, "Now, tell me again where you were when the drunk driver ran that stop sign," that gives them the space to begin healing the pain.

This scenario plays itself out daily in emergency rooms throughout the world. It is not specific to gender or age. Universally, human beings will resort to narrative to come to grips with a shattered reality.

In less severe circumstances, the principle also holds true. The only thing missing is the urgency, but the need is there just the same. Representing our world to others through story is innately human, as crucial to our soul's survival as breathing is to the survival of our body. Short-circuit this natural process, and you will witness all forms of disease. It may show up as a physical symptom or as mental distress. More likely, it will appear under the guise of a nameless anxiety, or a general depression that we can't seem to attribute to anything in particular. These are the symptoms of an un-storied life.

Many things in our lives cry out to be storied—unfinished relationships, momentous changes that affect the course of our existence, and unjust hurts at the hands of friends and parents. In my experience, the events that need most to be storied are the emotional equivalents of car accidents that could never be spoken about or shared because of fear or shame. The wounds of sexual and physical abuse are prime examples of what could be healed with a minimum of scarring if the victims felt the safety to immediately "story" the event, much as relatives of trauma victims do. But humiliation and fear of retribution prevent the child from speaking his or her truth, and the trauma goes underground, now living outside conscious awareness, emerging in all sorts of dysfunctional ways. If the adult is willing to return to the event, recover the memories, translate them into story form, and speak them to a committed listener (in this case, usually a psychotherapist), the event can be redeemed, even transformed alchemically into a jewel made of pain. But it may

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Disappointment, Devotion, and Growing Up

J O H N W E L W O O D

Loving someone passionately stirs up deep longings for fulfillment, but if we expect a relationship to provide satisfaction that we cannot otherwise find within us, we set ourselves up for disappointment. Disillusion sets in when we realize that our partner is an imperfect, struggling mortal like ourselves; when we find that loving and passionate feelings do not remain constant; or when the relationship never quite manages to yield the ultimate happiness we had hoped for. Even if our partner is everything we could ever want, and our connection a real treasure, this can never in itself provide complete fulfillment.

As lovers grow closer, they often fall into an unconscious collusion: "I'll fill up your holes and compensate you for the ways you're incomplete, and you do the same for me." In this way, they create a codependent state where each of them feels both taken care of and needed. Yet in looking to another person to fill our holes, we create a parent/child setup. We see ourselves as an undeveloped or wounded child, and our partner as the good parent who should give us what we never received when we were young: perfect love, validation, mirroring, or support.

Whenever we expect another person to make us whole, we set ourselves in opposition to reality. Then when our partner inevitably fails to live up to this expectation, we start to plunge into hell, because we have lost our own ground. Buddhist psychology describes hell as a state of mind ruled by hatred and rejection of things as they are. Strug-

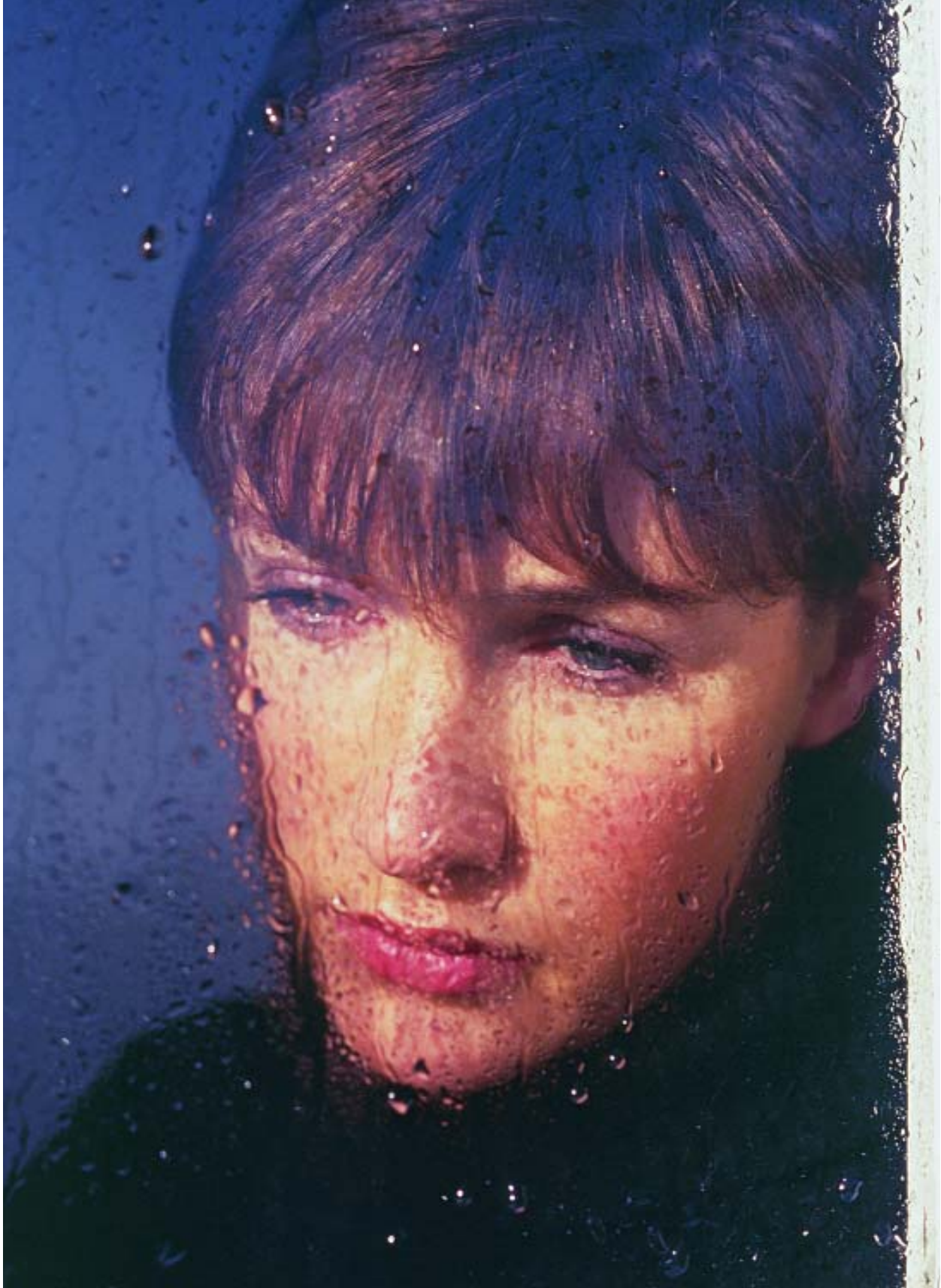
gling to get out of hell only makes it worse, for this is just another way of rejecting where we are. The only way out of hell is through opening and listening to our disappointment.

Disappointment always contains a powerful and accurate message that can be trusted: we have placed our longing where it doesn't really belong. If we can hear what our disillusionment is trying to tell us, it brings us down to earth and helps us recognize *the truth of what is*. Such moments of recognition provide major opportunities for growing up, for moving forward in our development. Seen in this light, disappointment is an important stepping-stone on the path of conscious relationship.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWING UP

Here is where disappointment can become an ally: it wakes us from our trance, where we are locked in the mindset of a needy child seeking love outside to provide the fulfillment we lack inside. At first it seems painful to acknowledge our disillusionment, for it brings up deep feelings of loss, hunger, or grief. The emptiness we encounter here is an old, familiar feeling: it is the abyss we have been trying to fill with relationships all our life.

This feeling of emptiness is especially painful when we imagine it means that love and fulfillment do not belong to us, and that we need to get them from someone else, who is currently failing to provide them. As children we really did need others' love in order to develop confidence in our basic goodness. And while we may still need acknowledgment and caring, if we always expect others to provide these, instead of finding them within our-



TSU/BOB THOMAS

selves, we remain as a child in our relationships.

To remain as a child means seeing Other—our lover, the world, money, position, success—as the provider of nourishment which self must acquire in order to survive. To grow up means making a crucial transition—from a life focused on extracting as much as we can from Other, to a life of creativity and love, which flow naturally from our essential being. This requires a shift in our sense of who we are—from *the false self whose identity is based on old setups from the past, to the true self whose nature is an ongoing openness to what is.*

Ego—the known, familiar image of “me,” the self-concept that tells me who I am—is what the child-mind fabricated to provide orientation and security in an uncertain world. If we continue to buy this view of ourselves, we pay the price of imprisonment in the past, for the known “me” is always constructed out of old self/Other setups.

Instead, we need to find and manifest our true individuality—the living I, which is not a known concept, but a creative presence forever unfolding in new and unforeseen ways. This is the real growing up that needs to happen.

Since opening to our disappointment or emptiness does not feed the ego, it provides a step toward growing up. Yet as we turn toward these feelings, we may encounter a host of demons—primitive fears and stories from the past—that stand in the way. At this point it is important to realize that these fears belong to the child: “Yes, it is the child in me who is starving for recognition... who wants others to always be there when he needs them... who sees love as something *out there*...who imagines that his pain is bigger than he is, and that it will destroy him if he opens to it...” Naming the child-identity and its beliefs in this way calls forth our larger, reflective awareness. And this allows us to make room for the hunger, panic, or despair we could never let ourselves feel as a child—without becoming overwhelmed by them. In this way, we start to loosen our old identification with the child.

As we move through the whirlwind of primitive fears and beliefs surrounding our disappointment and emptiness, it is like entering the eye of a hurricane. Here at the center of the storm, we are no longer swirling around in confusion, trying to

escape from ourselves. As we relate more directly to our experience, our sadness seems more like tenderness, while our emptiness feels like expansive, open space.

RETURNING TO SOURCE

This larger openness, which feels like vast space, is understood in many spiritual traditions as the very core of consciousness, the pure source from which all positive human qualities arise. When we don't resist it, we find nothing here to fear. Instead, we discover what we have been looking for all along—a sense of fullness and depth where we naturally feel good, and at peace with ourselves. This is the wish-fulfilling gem from which all blessings flow. Once my wife, Jennifer, in such a moment of self-remembering, found this poem arising in her:

*The jewel inside has grown dusty.
What out there could have captured you so
That you forgot all about this one.
Feel the tragedy of that error.
And see: Even now, the tears of your grief
Are washing the dust away.*

This jewel of open presence is what we lost as children, out of fear, not recognizing it as the source of love and awakening. And we continue to feel the consequences of this loss as the anxious sense of lack we carry inside us, the dead spot, the hole, the abyss we try to fill with relationships, money, or worldly success. Until we are willing to face and enter this abyss, we will never discover that here is where we will find the treasure we lost long ago.

And so, when we can finally remain present in the middle of that seeming desert where we feel empty and unfulfilled, the water of new life unexpectedly springs forth. Antonio Machado describes this in one of his poems as a “spring breaking out inside my heart:”

*Along what secret aqueduct,
Oh water, are you coming to me now,
Water of a new life that I have never drunk
before?*

This water of new life—which tastes pure and fresh because it flows from the “secret aqueduct,”

the underground springs, the unconditioned source—is what we have been thirsting for all these years.

When we arrive at this deep source underneath our disappointment, things no longer seem so bad after all. We are no longer in hell. We have been thoroughly tenderized by the failure of our attempts to control reality. And this allows us simply to appreciate what is here—just being, feeling present and open, while also letting our partner just be, without expectations.

In such moments, when we let go of trying to grasp fulfillment *out there*, we experience something that all the sacred traditions regard as an essential step on the path of awakening—renunciation. According to Chogyam Trungpa, renunciation means letting down the barrier between self and Other,

making yourself more available, more gentle and open to others. The warrior who has accomplished true renunciation is completely naked and raw. He has no desire to manipulate situations. He is able to be, quite fearlessly, what he is. The result of [this] letting go is that [he] discover[s] a bank of self-existing energy that is always available. It is the energy of basic goodness.

DEVOTION FOR THE BELOVED

This kind of letting go usually happens only after a long, futile struggle to bend reality to our will. When our attempts to extract fulfillment from our partner lie shattered, broken open on the hard rocky ground of disappointment, the deeper object of our longing—which is no object, nothing Other at all—can make itself known. The Beloved we most long to join with is the mysterious power and wisdom of the universe flowing through us, animating and illuminating our soul.

Feeling devotion toward this Beloved is what draws it closer to us. Only when we are devoted to realizing our own true nature, with the intensity and passion we usually reserve for romantic pursuits, will we find the ultimate fulfillment we seek. Only when we are at-one with ourselves will our life be full, rich, and deep. “To find the Beloved,” as

Rumi points out, “you must become the Beloved.”

In the first half of life we tend to seek outside ourselves for the source of love and fulfillment. This is what draws us to a lover or a spiritual teacher. He or she seems to radiate something precious and marvelous, a depth and richness we have rarely glimpsed before. But if we become too dazzled by a spiritual master, we miss the true meaning of the work which is to discover who we really are. And if we look to a lover for fulfillment, the jewel inside only grows more dusty, leaving us feeling all the more dissatisfied.

It is only when we become disenchanted with this project of projecting our own greatness out there that we awaken to the deeper meaning of love—as an encounter with the sacred presence that lies at the heart of our being and at the heart of the world. Intimate relationship is the outer reflection of this secret love affair.

AN ALLIANCE OF WARRIORS

When I no longer put what is essentially a spiritual longing on my partner, this frees her of a great burden to make my life work, to fill up my abyss, to be the instrument of my salvation. It also frees me to see and love her as a real person, and to appreciate the real gifts she brings into my life. So as my devotional energy moves freely toward its deepest aim, it naturally infuses our relationship as well. I feel more devoted to my partner’s well-being and her deepest unfolding; I want her inner jewel to sparkle too.

When two partners move in this direction, they leave behind the old parent/child dynamic—“I’ll take care of you, and you take care of me.” And they forge a much deeper bond, based on encouraging each other to honor the sacred presence and basic goodness within them. This is a relationship between true adults, one that can allow for old feelings from childhood, without being driven by them. Then two lovers can appreciate their connection for what it is—not as heaven or hell on earth, but as an alliance of warriors, a loving communion of two fellow travelers on the path. •

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Heart Lessons

B E R N I E S I E G E L

This is the essence of how I help myself remain aware of my feelings: I write a poem whenever something moves me. This one came after watching a story on television about Lassie. "I love Lassie, Lassie loves me. Lassie is love. A dog, a dog, a dog teaches love. I'm going to set my sights on becoming a dog. I have a role model now." So that's how I manage. Whenever I wonder how to be more loving, I behave as if I were Lassie. Love is so important. When we're in pain, if someone is there for us, loving us, we receive the greatest gift in the world, and we ultimately hurt a lot less. I hope that someday we shall reach a point where it is normal for people to love well and fully. It's certainly not that we don't have enough information about how to love, but many of us don't have the ability, because we weren't loved ourselves. The best way around this problem is to practice and rehearse loving behavior daily.

TSI/BRUCE AYRES

Years ago, I asked the anthropologist Ashley Montagu how I could be a more loving human being. I said, “For example, if my mother-in-law moves into my house and I want to have a better relationship with her, be more loving with her, what can I do?” And he said, “When your mother-in-law comes in the room, behave as if you love her.” I thought this advice sounded superficial, but then I realized that I really wanted to achieve this mindset. I wasn’t trying to fool my mother-in-law or my wife or my children or anyone else. I only want to love them more. So I began to stop and think when somebody entered the room: “If I love this person, how would I behave toward him or her?” And, of course, what I found was that the more I acted this way, the more loving and sensitive I became. And the other people are changed by simply being loved; it really becomes easier to love them. With this basic approach, over time I changed myself, my body, my state of health, my relationships, and many other aspects of my life.

Learning to love more effectively merely involves performing and practicing like a movie star or an athlete. When someone says to actors or athletes, “Oh, you’re such a lucky person to be born with this skill,” they look at the person as if to say, “Wait a minute, I am a wonderful performer or athlete not because I was born with this skill, but because I spent a lot of time practicing and rehearsing and working my way up.” So becoming a lover works exactly the same way rehearsing and practicing. Find role models. A person could say, “What would the Buddha or Jesus do in this situation? Or Moses, Confucius, Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr.?” Or just imagine how a loving mother would act. And if that’s too hard, then you can always go back to “What would Lassie do?” A dog will lick your face, even if you ignore it. Unless repeatedly abused, a dog will lick your face, even when a vet has amputated a limb or is about to put it to death. It simply doesn’t hold onto hostility. It is here to love, be loved, and along the way teach us a few things.

All the world’s a theater, and we can choose how to act. We’re given a lifetime to practice and can become as good as we want to be. But we must remember that we cannot perform well all the time. Therefore, we need to be forgiving of ourselves and others, recognizing that we’re doing the best we can at any moment.

As a physician, I have found that being good at loving has

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nothing to do with physical health. There are plenty of wonderful lovers out there who are missing parts of their bodies or the ability to move. I call these “the healthy people,” but it has nothing to do with the state of their bodies or their physical health. Sometimes, in fact, it takes the threat of death for people to pay attention to love and to make it a priority. Our mortality can be a great teacher.

It’s hard for people who don’t know how to play, who’ve lost that childlike quality, to be lovers because they are more likely to be hostile. Love and play go together. People who have studied pathological killers say that many of them just don’t know how to play. They can’t kid around. Everything is serious.

Laughter brings out the child in everybody. It diffuses much of the fear and resentment people have of one another, making it easier to be loving. Just look at your baby picture, and you’ll know how easy it is to love that child. Now look in the mirror. Do you have the same feelings? Why not?

To encourage love at the hospital (this can also be done in any office), I give out rainbow pins with people’s names that say, “You make a difference.” If I saw people acting in a loving way, I would get their names and give them pins and thank them. Just think, if everybody who was dedicated to love wore a symbol, you would behave differently toward them when you saw them.

I was lucky to be brought up loved. Not that everything I did was liked, but I knew that I was loved—and knowing this gave me the ability and freedom to be who I wanted to be. Because I had my parents’ support, I didn’t need everybody else’s approval, and I could be loving and free. The benefit of this kind of support is that when you want to be different, you can, because you know you will always be accepted. When I married, I always knew

Just look at your baby picture, and you’ll know how easy it is to love that child. Now look in the mirror. Do you have the same feelings? Why not?

that I could come home to a loving person who accepted me. So, if I were a little bizarre, crazy, or whatever, I had a place to go. Even when disturbing things happened to me, I knew I could go home, where I was still number one.

Sadly, others are not so fortunate. People who have not been loved as children are often in a great deal of pain, even if they do not show it outwardly. We need to communicate about the pain we suffer and listen to one another in order to heal. We can’t assume that everyone thinks or feels like we do.

I suggest that we have an American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Humans, like the ASPCA. Basically, I want people to love themselves and others as they would a pet. Some people feed themselves things they would never feed

their pets. They’ll take drugs they wouldn’t give their pets. People exercise their pets, while they themselves just sit around. They hug their pets, but not their own families. People need to be as kind to themselves as they are to their pets. We have the information but not the inspiration.

In my practice, I’ve often seen that people wouldn’t take the necessary steps to stay healthy. I learned that for most people wellness becomes a spiritual journey. So in trying to inspire people, I ask them, “Why are you here? Why were you born? Why is the world the way it is? What is all this about?” And my answer is that we’re here to learn to love more fully, to be God or angels in disguise for one another, to show our love, to show our compassion, to be active in creation. That is the reason and the meaning behind our lives. Each of us has a choice about how to love the world in our unique way.

Wherever I lecture, I hear people complaining about how other people act at work or at home.

They often let their irritations ruin their lives. To have a happy life, we have to practice loving people, including their imperfections, which means learning and practicing tolerance and compassion. If you are here for a limited time, would you rather spend it being irritated or being loving?

Here's a story about how I once handled a disagreement with my wife, Bobbie. The handles broke off some cups because of the way I put them in the dishwasher. My wife wanted to throw them out. I didn't. I thought they were still useful. So I just put the cups in a bag to hide them and prevent divorce proceedings. I took them to our vacation house where my wife wouldn't see them as often. One morning while we were on Cape Cod, I went out jogging as usual with a plastic bag to pick up either things that God leaves me along the way or recyclables. I was running along and saw a cup with a broken handle lying in the road. I knew it was a message from God. So I ran over, picked it up, turned it over, and saw a drawing of two fat elephants hugging under mistletoe. Inscribed on the cup was "I love you just the way you are." I brought the cup home and showed it to Bobbie. Now the cup sits on a shelf in our house, reminding us every day of the real message of life. (The other cups are now accepted and used by my wife.)

When you're a lover, you don't destroy—whether it's nature, society, or an individual. Children who have plants and animals learn to care and nurture a reverence for life.

At any given time, our five children used to have up to a hundred creatures in our home, including

Making others laugh is such a loving act... Perhaps if we can all become a little less serious, laugh more often, and act more loving toward ourselves and others, we can live in a more loving world.

three dozen turtles in kiddie pools, lizards, dogs, skunks, and crickets. I tried to teach my kids that if they had a life in their hands, they cared for it and eventually became an expert in its care. I think a child brought up this way is going to be a lot different as an adult from one who learns that suffering is meaningless and it's okay to kill a neighbor or torture animals or that a neighbor isn't the right color, shape, or whatever. As our son Jeff said, "The animals get along because they're all the same color inside." So are we.

I suggest that people keep a journal or write a poem every day, like the one I wrote about Lassie. It helps them get in touch with all aspects of life, including the painful ones. It's important to write not only about the tough stuff, which we tend to remember, but also about the good and funny events. If people can see the humor in a tense situation, then they can laugh and diffuse the anger.

It's great when parents can act childlike, because their kids notice and then feel free to behave that way. Making others laugh is such a loving act, because if love didn't exist between people, they wouldn't be interested in laughing or in making another person laugh. Perhaps if we can all become a little less serious, laugh more often, and act more loving toward ourselves and others, we can live in a more loving world and, we can all fill our lives with love. •

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What Do You Want to Carry?

RICHARD LEIDER AND DAVID SHAPIRO

At many points on our journey through life, we have to decide what to take along and what to leave behind. And once we decide, how to carry it. Carrying too much weighs us down so heavily with work, people, and possessions that we are exhausted before we reach our destination. Carrying too little leaves us isolated and vulnerable, with little chance of reaching our goals. Our only hope of success is to first take stock of what we need and then figure out what's the best way to carry the load. So we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions. First, in general, "How much is enough?" And second, in relation to each specific item, "What do I really want to carry?"

IMAGE BANK/CO. RENTMEISTER

We also need to recognize that no matter how well we plan, our needs will change along the way. Many of the things we lay out on the bed before the trip come to seem a lot less important once we're on the road. It's through experience that we figure out what's really essential and how much we can comfortably carry. As a result, we often need to lighten our load along the way—not just physically, but psychologically as well. With each step up the mountain, we must ask ourselves, “What do we *really* need?” Dick recalls an experience of doing just that:

I was in Africa, leading a group of twelve trekkers up Mount Kilimanjaro on one of my inventure expeditions. As we labored above the clouds with fifty-pound packs, it's not all that surprising that we got around to discussing the “enoughness” questions: What are we carrying? What do we really need?

We wondered aloud about what moments and which situations had given us the most joy. Most of the group settled on the big events—marriages, births of children, promotions, that kind of thing.

But I struggled with the question, turning it over and over in my mind as we continued our ascent. Initially, I considered career highs—writing books, creating programs, giving major speeches—but those didn't quite cut it. Usually, in those situations, I was less happy than I was worried about how they would affect my career, success, or pocketbook.

That evening, while we camped above fifteen-thousand feet, we came up with a new way to frame the question: “When did you last feel truly alive?”

Given that most of us felt half-dead from the effects of altitude and exhaustion, it seemed an ironic way to put it. But even more ironic was the blinding glimpse of the obvious I suddenly experienced.

“I know exactly the last time,” I blurted. “Now! This is it. I've never felt so alive!”

It wasn't just about climbing the mountain or reaching the summit or having a safari adventure. Being up there together, with no one to help but ourselves, I felt as alive as a soul can feel.

There are many ways for people to escape the trap of carrying too much, or too much of the wrong thing. All involve making decisions—decisions about what is essential, what really matters. It is possible for harried people to live much as they do now and be much happier. It all boils down to how you answer two questions: “How much is enough?” and “What do I really want to carry?” In answering these questions, many people make the choice to live a “lifestyle rich in purpose.”

Lots of times, what really stops people from engaging in a process like this is called “zeteophobia.” Zeteophobia is the fear of searching out. It’s the feeling that stops so many of us in our tracks—the fear that the decision is just too big to make. We feel that we must decide “now” how we’re going to spend “the rest of our lives”! We see the life/work decisions as being too important—so crucial and overwhelming—that we can’t bear to face them. So we avoid repacking until the last possible moment. Or until it’s too late.

I felt on the edge!

Chasing that feeling of aliveness is what life—and mid-life crises—are all about. It doesn’t matter where the aliveness comes from. The feeling can arise from exploring our edges in any number of areas—mind, body, emotions, or spirit. One of the reasons people get old—lose their aliveness—is that they get weighed down by all their stuff. Richard Gregg called it “voluntary simplicity, the avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life.”

Dave adds his perspective: I went to college right after high school and dropped out after three weeks. I loaded much too much of what I owned into a knapsack and set out to hitchhike across Canada, from Toronto to Vancouver. The first day out, I sat by the shore of Lake Ontario and wrote in my journal: “For the first time in my life, I’m not afraid of death or anything. I’m doing what I want, and though of course I do not want to die, I could without regrets. I’m living more fully than I ever have.”

Now I ask myself how often do I still feel that way? The answer begins with a simple taking stock, what we call the Inventory.

THE INVENTORY

You do this every day. Inventory is simply asking yourself, “What do I have?” Rushing around the house searching for your car keys is one kind of inventory. Tearing through your closet looking for one last blouse or clean shirt to wear is another.

No matter what form it takes, inventorying is an activity from which we all can learn something. When was the last time you moved? As you packed box after box after box, were you amazed by how much stuff you’d accumulated over the period you’d lived in your house? Did you wish you’d taken the opportunity to do some culling through and winnowing out beforehand?

Dave remembers how his inventory has grown: The first time I made a major move in my life (from Pittsburgh to San Francisco after high school), I fit everything I owned into one very large knapsack. Five years later, when moving to Los Angeles, I carried three suitcases on the airplane. Four years after that, when I moved to Santa Fe,

New Mexico, my possessions filled up the entire back seat of my Chevy Nova. In Santa Fe, I got married, and when my wife, Jennifer, and I moved to Minnesota a few years later, we required a twelve-foot panel truck. The last time we moved, which was after five years here, it took a full-size moving van and three very large young men to transport our worldly goods.

Not all of this accumulation is mindless. But not all is mindful either. The point of your inventory is to simply check out what's there. So we encourage you now to do a quick inventory of your stuff. Take fifteen or twenty minutes to mentally or physically wander through your life. Consider all the things you're carrying. Open all your closets. How much of your accumulation is mindful? And how much is just stuff that's piled up? In other words, how much is helping you get where you're going and how much is just weighing you down?

Most people find this to be an incredibly liberating experience. Our friends Richard and Susie Peterson recently undertook a repacking inventory in which they reassessed everything in their lives—except their deep love and commitment to each other. Everything else could go—place, work, etc.—but the commitment to each other was to stay.

Going through their belongings and separating them into groups to keep, give away, or move to storage, gave them both an amazing new perspective. They quite literally felt a renewed sense of lightness in their lives—a feeling of aliveness that had been buried under the responsibilities associated with all they were carrying.

As you go through your inventory, you may find it useful to separate things into the categories that

Remember, repacking is a cradle-to-grave process. It's more than likely that one day in the not too distant future you'll need to repack whatever you are packing today.

Richard and Susie used, which follows:

- Things you *can't live without*.

This is the core foundation category. In Richard and Susie's case, it was their deep and abiding commitment to each other.

- Things you *don't want to live without*.

These are the things you want to keep. The items that contribute to your appreciation of life, the things you want around you in your home.

- Things you *aren't sure of*.

These are things you aren't ready to get rid of, but which you don't need to have at hand. For Richard and Susie, these are the

kind of things that went into storage.

- Things you want to *get rid of*.

These are items that have outlived their usefulness to you, or which you no longer find beautiful, or which you simply don't want—things that are weighing you down. See how much of a lift you feel by giving them away.

One final note about your inventory. As always, we encourage you to talk about your thinking and conclusions with your partner. Your partner's feedback will be invaluable in helping you make decisions and assessments. And be sure you talk things over with your spouse or partner before you get rid of anything! You never know. Something you want to get rid of could turn out to be someone else's lucky bowling shirt or favorite broken toy. •

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“I’m suggesting living a year so fully awake and alive that we cultivate a deep appreciation of the moment-to-moment process into which our lives disappear.”



A Year to Live

AN INTERVIEW WITH
STEPHEN LEVINE
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

Stephen Levine is a poet, author, and teacher of guided meditation and healing techniques. His books include “Who Dies?” “Healing into Life and Death,” “A Gradual Awakening,” and, with his wife Ondrea, “Embracing the Beloved.” His work encompasses the most painful experiences of the human spectrum to the farthest point on the human horizon, from hell to heaven.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: Your book A Year to Live,” is a loving guide for profound healing. Through your own preparations for death, you have given us a year long program to help us learn to fully live before we die. We are indebted to you and your wife, Ondrea’s willingness to live deeply into your beingness and to be guides for those of us on similar paths.

What prompted you to live as if you had one year to live, imagining that you would die at the end of the year?

STEPHEN LEVINE: I was fifty-eight-years-old when I began the year long experiment. When the Dalai Lama was fifty-eight-years-old, a reporter asked him what he was going to do next with his life. He answered that he was going to prepare for death. The interviewer inquired about his health, and the Dalai Lama replied that he wasn’t sick, but that his body was impermanent. When I heard about that conversation, I thought that preparing for death was the natural thing to do.

How did the one-year-to-live experiment impact your life?

The year-to-live offered extraordinary insights into the places where I had been numb, and into the still small voice within, which became more pronounced. But the most profound influence was an increase in courage. When you have one year left, fear makes you too small. You better live that life that you’re going to be so unhappy to think you are leaving. In twenty years of being with people dying, my wife Andrea and I have seen miraculous things happen. Relationships untouched for twenty-five years blossom into something you wonder how that person could have lived without. What happens when we find out we only have one year to live? When we know we can’t be hurt anymore, that we might die, we feel safe. Why should knowing that we are going to die make us feel safe? It makes us feel unsafe too, but there is this place inside of us that feels safe, that allows us to see what holds back from life, yet says it hates to lose life. How much life we trade off. We trade off more life after we are born than we do after we die.

You said that during that year you wanted to complete your birth. What do you mean?

Most people live with one foot in the womb, hopping around the world, never quite coming out. Completing our birth is a process of becoming grounded, putting both feet on the ground. It is taking responsibility for being born, but not responsibility as blame. People say they are respon-

Life lasts only a moment. Then another moment arises and dissolves into the flow. We live our life from instant to instant never knowing what the next unfolding will provide. We realize that every experience of our lifetime has been impermanent, except one. That there is an unchanging spaciousness in which all our changes float... This underlying sense of being is as present as we are, and does not change from birth to death. It is the constant hum of being in our ever-changing cells.

We have been with many people on their deathbed who lamented that they could not die at peace because they felt a failure. It is an all too common stage we go through, to the degree that we were more attached to the objects of life than appreciative of its evolutionary unfolding... To discover what we already possess is to go beyond our limited idea of who, and even what, we are. Discovering our true nature is called “finding our lotus” by some.

sible for their illness. We are not responsible *for* our illness, we are responsible *to* our illness. We are not responsible *for* our incarnation, we are responsible *to* our incarnation.

Human beings, when not stressed, are utterly beautiful. It is only when we are confused that our hearts shrivel and our minds figure crafty ways out of situations. The rational mind is a completely amoral, problem-solving device. When we relate to life from our minds, we take our feet off the ground. It's like not wanting to touch the floor, fearing that we will be burned. To take birth, we need to put both feet flat on the floor, while recognizing that we're in a world filled with suffering. One-half of all people go to sleep hungry at night. Forty-thousand children will starve to death today and tomorrow and the day after. If you have only one foot on the ground, you are unstable, and suffering can push you over. With both feet on the ground, you see that you are not responsible *for* those children dying, but you can respond *to* their dying. It may be tithing some charitable group that feeds, doing hospice volunteer work, or strengthening your own practice so that nothing comes out of you that creates more suffering in this terribly suffering world. Birthing is a cleaning up. A lot of people don't want to take off the afterbirth. They want to think they can slip out at any time, that they don't have to take responsibility.

There is absolute joy in completing your birth. Conducting a life review helps the birthing process. Practicing forgiveness and gratitude are aspects of a life review. I went back to images in my head of untoward things I have done in my life. Slowly and gently I approached images that I never wanted to go near again, because I felt shame, guilt, and anger. It completes your birth to bring your own life into your heart with mercy. This may not be easy, but it is incredibly fruitful. Most people have a group of thoughts in their head that they are afraid to think around other people, for fear that shame will leak out their ears and be known. We can't live like that. That kind of fear makes us violent and hard to be around. It causes us not to want to put that second foot on the ground.

You stated that when you were exploring the fear of death, it became clear that the fear of life needed to be investigated first.

Life has difficulties in it, but the power we have to deal with life, which might never be called on if life weren't difficult at times, is miraculous. Facing life responsibly gives you confidence. The enormous power of the heart, and the power we have to receive the healing we took birth for, is

within us all. If life's difficulties weren't jiggling us, we wouldn't spread our legs enough to get our balance.

Yet we are conditioned to retreat from the unpleasant.

That's what keeps this world small. That's why forty-thousand children will starve to death today.

Why do we avoid the unpleasant?

Because it's painful. Aversion to pain is the greatest decrier of life experience. When you always turn away from difficulties, you're not going to go far. Anyone who has done genuine, long-range spiritual practice knows there are periods that are very difficult. Letting go of our suffering is the hardest work we do.

You've written that in order to heal, we respond to rather than react to discomfort. We begin to experience discomfort as the pain, not our pain. What's the importance of this?

It's another way to discuss being responsible *for* and being responsible *to*. When it's *my* cancer, I'm *alone* with *my* cancer. I have nobody, just me and my cancer, and it looks like there is no way out. When I realize it isn't *my* cancer, but *the* cancer, there is space to work on it. *My* depression, *my* cancer, crams me in, like being in a phone booth full of *my* life. You *open* the phone booth and see that everybody is standing outside of their phone booth. It's isn't *my* depression, it's *the* depression. When it's *the* cancer, I am in this *flow* of *human-kind*, with all the energy of four or five million other people going through the same thing at this same moment. You connect to something *universal*, which brings peace.

Is the same true for the dying, rather than my dying?

Yes. *My* dying is terrible, but on the day *I* die, on the day that everyone dies, roughly two-hundred and fifty-thousand *other* people will die. The death rate on the planet is about a quarter of a million a day. The death, if I believe in reincarnation, means I've been through this dozens of times before. One friend of mine says, "Can't you take a bad day well?" One of the teachings of being responsible to your life may be learning to take the bad days well.

How do we become responsible to our death?

We start relating to it. There is no better way to be responsible to your death than practicing a year to live. Most people who are going to die this year have no idea they will die in less than a year. Even those who have been told they have a serious illness don't know when it will culminate, or if it will go into remission. In the last year of life, people's energies are compromised. Concentration is diminished by medications, pain, fatigue, and sleeplessness. Malnutrition may develop. Various conditions arise, that if one is more stable, with both feet on the ground, are easier to go through, for themselves and for the people around them. This year-to-live healing is not just done for you, it helps your world. It's a way of cleaning up the world, in a very nice way. One of the most lovely aspects of the year-to-live was the life review. I went to each person who had been kind to me and thanked them. It took a long time and it was delicious. It broke open my heart. It also balanced the other part of a life review where I dealt with resentments and forgiveness.

You described the life review as essential to the year-to-live practice. What does it involve?

The life review consists of practicing gratitude and forgiveness. Start gently, almost casually in the beginning. Let memories come up, and rather than reliving them—tasting that steak, feeling that slap, or crying those tears—watch and relate *to* the memories, instead of solely *from* them. Don't push anything away, allow memories, bring them in so they can pass through. A lot of memories are stuck in the mind. It's the same process as dealing with hardness in the belly. We soften, and there is still something hard there, and then that hard thing starts to flow, and we relate *to* it instead of *from* it. We start meeting our memories more softly, just like the hard belly softening the muscles and not pushing, not letting aversion to the past keep you from living in the present.

When I ask men how many have had homosexual experiences, about twenty percent raise their hand, yet about eighty percent have had some homosexual experience. If you can't go to memories of being sexual with someone in day camp, how can you touch the memory about the guy you killed in

Vietnam? Or the wife you cheated on? I know people dying with AIDS, who had unprotected sex with people after they had AIDS. They are dying in such self-hatred. They did a terrible thing, a stupid, angry thing. However, this is a human being dying. Just as you don't want them to live in the context of their self-hatred and shame, you don't want them to be seen that way in yourself. Forgiveness is very powerful. Had those AIDS patients been practicing a-year-to-live, they may have not been so compulsive in acting out their desires. These are good people. They are lonely and AIDS has them scared and they do something stupid. Everybody has done something they regret. Imagine doing something you regret that you can't take back. Forgiveness acknowledges our human vulnerability. Forgiveness does not condone unskilled actions.

There is no place where forgiveness is inappropriate, although it may take time. People who had terrible things done to them have to have both feet on the ground to be able to forgive. They have to examine their anger, possibly even homicidal rage at the person who hurt them, to get that other foot down on the ground. If you are afraid of anger, you push it out of consciousness, then it pops up and you act on it spontaneously. The more you know that which causes you pain, the less potential it has for causing you pain.

During a-year-to-live, fear of death is faced. How do we face it?

Fears arise everyday that are like five or ten pound fears. We've become accustomed to these little ones and are able to submerge them with no problem. We think submerging is a sign of our strength, a sign of how far we've gone. It is not. Those fears are opportunities for liberation. They are five and ten-pound hindrances that we can learn to handle by thorough investigation. You can't investigate pain during bone cancer if you've never done pain meditation before. You can't even investigate pain during a stubbed toe usually. Most people stub their toe and send hatred into it. They are merciless and wish it would be gone. What pain in us most needs is to be *embraced*. We have learned to be *absent*. We feel abandoned by the part of us that could make us feel whole. We scared it off. When

you prepare to work with the fear of death, start working with little fears. You step off the curb, a moment of fear. You meet a stranger, a moment of fear. Start with the five and ten-pound fears because they're workable. We're familiar with them and they don't close our heart. They might tighten our belly a little bit, but we're working with soft belly. Eventually we increase our capacity to work with larger fear. If we went to the gymnasium to pick up the five-hundred-pound weight, the fear of death, we couldn't do it. But we can work out with five and ten-pound weights. We open to the little angers, fears, and doubts, not circumventing them just because we are able to, which decreases aversion to pain and displeasure, and increases our ability to do the work that we were born to do.

Talk more about the soft belly practice. How do we soften into fear?

You start soft belly by physically letting each inward breath that you breath push the belly out. No more holding the belly. You physically open, letting the muscles soften, letting the tissue soften. In the beginning, you may even push your belly out a little, just to let it know it can go out, that it doesn't have to take half a breath. You start to breath in to your belly, which is quite a wonderful experience. One foot on the ground may be that we take our breath only into the top third of our body. Eventually, you'll be able to breath out the bottom of your feet, so to speak, without even trying.

This opens us to what is in our belly?

Yes. You practice softening and begin to notice that, although your intention is to soften, there is something hard there. Your heart decides it is time to face that which has caused you to turn away from life. You start allowing thoughts, and they can come and go. You make space around thoughts, moment to moment, every exhale letting go. In the course of this, you find out what letting go means. One of the extraordinary things about soft belly practice is that it is a physical trigger for the mental state of letting go. People lose their breath when they're watching death or during a moment of anger. That's the time to practice soft belly. Start to look at little angers, doubts, and fears. In softening the belly, you let space be there and thoughts and feel-

ings pass through like bubbles. You don't stop anything. Let it all flow. The difference between *my* pain and *the* pain is the *space* it *floats* in.

This allows us to experience the passing show of consciousness from a place of spaciousness.

Precisely. Many people have learned soft belly and found it particularly useful in the last year of their life. You can test and verify the benefit of this in your own laboratory, your body. Notice, whenever your belly is hard, which it is almost all the time, what you are holding. You just have to pay attention. I've been doing this practice for forty years, and I still soften my belly one-hundred times a day.

Noting seems essential to this practice.

Noting is knowing what is happening while it's happening. It is an aid to keep you on the mark. When you open to those five and ten-pound pains, call them what they are. Note them. If it's an anger feeling in the belly of hardness, notice the mental state. Note what is in the stillness of the deeper mind. Recognize and label, just in passing, not holding. At first it's anger. Then it's frustration, and soon you see desire, frustration, pride, fear, aggression, guilt, and shame. You see all those different qualities that make up that single state of mind we call anger. Things become more precise. You go from generalized fear, anger, doubt, or hardness in the belly to more subtle reflections, insights, and sudden wordless understandings into what is going on. Noting keeps us steady. Particularly when it's a fifty-pound fear. You're afraid your child is on drugs, that your wife is going to leave you, or that your parent's x-ray is going to reveal cancer. This is the heavier pain of fear. Keep noting to yourself, fear, fear, and going into the sensation, softening. The more familiar you become with any state, the sooner you'll recognize it and the less your natural resistance, your desire to hide, will keep you safe. The closer to its inception you notice, the lighter the weight, and you can exercise more of what seems like free will.

So we relate to these states rather than being consumed by them?

Relating *to* our pain instead of *from* our pain is the whole game. Relating *to* our pain is *joyous*. Running *from* our pain is *misery*. If we could contain our pain it would be different. At this state of evolution, human beings cannot contain pain without causing others to suffer. We just can't do it, we are incapable of it. People think that they keep it together by not showing how much pain they're in. They live with the absence of joy, which shows how much pain they actually

Reviewing our life story, with an intention to both honor and heal the past, can take a few weeks, a few months, or the rest of our lives, as unseen levels of holding gradually arise into awareness and present themselves for recuperation. Allowing the heart to explore the mind's memories of the past reminds us how difficult it is to let go of our suffering as well as how much we've learned and have to be thankful for.

are in. Joy is a natural state, pain is acquired.

This is the process of letting go of the suffering around pain. How do you distinguish between pain and suffering?

Pain is a given. If you have a body and a mind, there is pain. It is an aspect of the law of conservation of matter. Only one thing can occupy any space at one time. When your body walks along and hits a table, the table holds that space and you get hurt. A sensation comes up your arm and your nerve net catches it. If it's small, it goes through the net and we notice it as a distinct sensation. If it's big enough, it gets caught in that net and we experience pain. It is the same with thoughts. We have some idea of who we are, so when another idea comes in, both can't occupy the same space at the same time. Conflicting conditioning results in mental pain.

The pain of being born is a given. Suffering is not a given. *Suffering* is how we *work* with our *pain*. I have seen people who can deal with pain, but are still suffering. Physical pain can intercede in your practice. Pain can make it difficult to be concentrated and stable, to not be frightened or angry. Mental and physical pain attracts grief. Our latent grief comes up. In relating to physical pain, don't wait until it's a three-hundred pounder. Bumping your elbow is an opportunity for liberation. Work with it. It takes you to the edge, but it's just the edge, and when you get there, you'll see that wasn't the edge at all. We can take a lot more than that, unfortunately. Sit with those pains and send mercy into them. See the anger that collects around pain, trying to blame. Grief is separation and separation comes up to meet injuries, physical or mental. If we want to be free, that's where we have to work. Little pain gives us the opportunity to clear out enormous pain. Suffering is *resistance* to pain. A lot of it is volitional, but some of it isn't, so have mercy on yourself. When working with pain, don't be a tough guy. A tough guy is a weak guy. Toughness is an escape, not an opening.

Do you differentiate between death and dying?

Dying is a process of shaking loose of the body. Death is a process of being no longer obstructed by a body. Because we have an idea that we are a body,

we limit our understanding and insight. During the year-to-live, you see that you live in this body. You see that your body and your experience float in something bigger, which is why you can feel an inch beyond your skin. Death is the waking dream that we experience sometimes at night, or during insight, or while making love. Death is always present but is obscured by the trappings of having taken form. Death is consciousness, the ongoing flow of object awareness. Objects of awareness are no less real in a dream than they are in the world. Your dream of a tiger is as frightening as a waking experience with a tiger. In fact, your dream of a tiger may be more frightening because real fear comes up. We're not so clever in dreams. Usually our cleverness is sufficient to keep us safe. In dreams we let go and open. My idea is that death is like a waking dream. Those who do lucid dream practice have an advantage. Death is not so different than life. I think that people are going to be surprised. You are not going to have a chocolate soda, as far as it seems. But since most of our experience is mental, an inner experience of what is going on outside, death is not going to be much different.

Is there a moment of death?

There is a moment of death when the person standing next to the bed can no longer make contact with the person in the bed. The doctor's instruments no longer measure life in the body. For the individual inside, it's like asking if there is a moment when you fall asleep. There is, but if you're awake in that dream you say, "I'm asleep," and that's the last thought you have. In death it isn't the last thought you have. You recognize that you are in another process. Your philosophy before hand may define what that process is. I think many people believe they are not dead. They don't think they can be, since they are still conscious. That may be purgatory. There is little more helpful you can do for a friend after they've died, than to touch them lovingly, saying, "Whatever you are going through now, you just died, that's all." That may sound stupid, but imagine if it would help. What have you done to help them as much? I think the individual dying notices that something is happening. They

notice they are literally getting high. When you look at a person who has just died, you notice they are immobile. The predominance of the solidity element has fallen away. They start to feel like an ocean, like a flow, instead of a boulder. The process is one of letting go. First they let go of the solid elements. Outside, the person can't move, but inside, they are free of solidity. Next you notice that the loved one's circulation system has stopped, their fluids have closed down in their body. You are now certain they are dead because the body is starting to stiffen. Inside, the person feels like fluid and as the fluidity stops, they start to feel like air. As the body hardens, even the air goes away and they become pure energy. It's like an ice cube melting. The edges disappear and there's a pool of water. The pool takes on room temperature which causes it to evaporate. Eventually it goes from a solid cube with defined edges, to being invisible, because it has become gas and is filling the room equally in all its parts. You may think that is an awful thing to see happen to a body. But remember, when the ice cube evaporates, it remains H₂O. It hasn't changed a bit and neither does human consciousness. It is just contained in a different way, experienced in a different form.

Who or what dies?

The *body* dies. I don't think *anybody* dies. It's reverse recycling. With human beings, the container is discarded, and the contents are recycled. The person who is in the body, as a mental structure, goes on, but in a very different way. There have been times when, having the same mind you have now, you have been absolutely joyous, clear, and free. The mind you have does not obstruct free-

Most people are not prepared for their loved one's death, even if they have been beside their bed for a year. When loved ones die, their absence is momentous. Transitional rituals help acknowledge death.

dom, how you relate to the mind obstructs freedom. The beneficence of the process of dying is that we're given perspective on our suffering, which shifts from *my* suffering to *the* suffering.

Are people afraid of death after having a near death experience?

I am still afraid of death, and I have been there. Through various means, I occasionally have been beyond the threshold. I know experientially what a few steps into death is. I know that death is perfectly safe. It's like taking off a shoe that is too tight. Even with this knowing, even with seeing some people die as beautifully as saints, the conditioned mind still holds the fear of death. It is fascinating to watch. If even half the mind were evolved enough so that when it received a new piece of truth, it could discard the other half truth, we would be in better shape. The mind is able to hold conflicting conditioning.

The earlier our conditioning, the more deeply rooted it is, and the more difficult it is to balance, to let float. It is so rooted, it holds on to the earth for dear life.

What insights do near-death experiences provide?

Near-death experiences, where we see that we are not the body, and that death draws us to a center of love, are great wisdom teachings. They also show that the ignorance we pick up during life doesn't go away easily. When people come back, they say, "I met Buddha or Jesus," or some other image of omnipotence. Few people come back and say, "I saw my true nature, my original face. It was remarkable and reinforcing. I know the healing I was born for, I know what I am made of." People

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 74

Finding Joy

D A N N E L S C H W A R T Z

Mytics understood the simple truth of human existence: Happiness is to be treasured and welcomed into every life. The key to this thinking is found in the Talmud, which tells us that upon death every person will be asked the following questions to determine their eternal fate:

Were you honest in business?

Did you set aside time for study?

Did you have hope?

Did you enjoy all the permitted pleasures of life?

Or, why weren't you happy with those pleasures you did experience?

For many of us, the problem is as simple as not understanding what true happiness is and not recognizing that the cloth of contentment and joy is woven with the threads of spirituality. Happiness results from a frequency of positive emotions and a minimizing of life's pain. It is the sum total of all the positive emotions we can muster. By concentrating on the positive, we can create happiness which can help put the painful, problematic parts of our lives into perspective.

I had a professor in college who, at the first class in each semester of his beginning-level psychology course, before even introducing himself or telling his students what they'd learn, would draw a large dot in the center of a sheet of white paper. He then held the paper over his head and asked his curious students: "What do you see?"

Dozens of answers came from every corner of the lecture hall. Many of the professor's more clever students who thought the dot was a Rorschach test let their minds wander: a butterfly, the earth, the tip of a very red rose. Others were more literal. They saw a black dot or a maybe a black dot with tiny white specks in it.

When the students became quiet, the professor lowered the drawing, looked at it as if he were trying to assess each answer he'd received, and said: "I see a sheet of paper with a dot in its center, eight and a half by eleven inches with a spot that perhaps covers twenty percent of the total writing surface available on this one side. I could write the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta, the entire Bill of Rights on this one sheet of paper. Yet, all you saw was the black dot."

He paused, allowing his point to penetrate. Then he drove that point home: "That is how most people view their lives. Let that be your first lesson in psychology."

My professor's point is that most of us are so busy studying the black dots that mar our lives that we lose sight of the bold whiteness of possibility that surrounds those dots. We don't see our accomplishments and how we touched the world in a positive way because of those insignificant dots, the problems, the troubles large and small over which we have no control. We just know we'll never be happy. And, if we're not happy, something must be wrong.

HAPPINESS COMES WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE

We don't partake of what the Talmud calls "the permissible pleasures," because we let the black spots block our view. Minimizing those obstacles and maximizing the possibilities that surround them is the goal of practical spirituality.

It's not that easy, though. Even mystics and spiritual people throughout history realized that the world conspires to make the average person unhappy. It is not a plot devised by some evil genie or a cosmic joke or a test created by a divinity eager to

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Happiness means: accepting ourselves as we are, accepting the fact that we are vulnerable and can be hurt, accepting that all of us will fail, at times, and accepting that, in order to be happy, we need to take risks. No matter how frightened we are that failure will lead to embarrassment, no matter how terrified we are by the chance that love will lead to rejection and loneliness, no matter how weak we feel because of loss, we must accept these things and take a chance. A chance on ourselves, on our happiness, on the good people around us. What else can we really do? What choice do we really have?

grade us on our grace under pressure. Things happen, pain happens, problems happen, sometimes for no apparent reason. There are times when we will be exposed to the worst that life has to offer. Even barring that, none of us is immune from the scrapes and crises of everyday life, no matter how rich or well-known we may be. The fancy new car *will* squeak. It *will* get dirty. It might even break down.

The black dot that makes a day miserable is frequently a small problem. A tiny hole in an otherwise unconsidered tooth. Thousands of our body parts may be working perfectly, but one small sprain of an obscure tendon and our well-exercised machine can become an utter wreck that seems to demand our full attention and energy. Once we're miserable, we seek out like company and spread gloom to others.

Think of all the ways a day can be ruined in the first hour after awakening. The toast can burn; the milk can be sour. Your spouse can be a bit surly. The school bus may come too early or your child may get out the door too late. Good mornings are hard to come by if you let the pain of living get you down.

Jewish mystics teach that a happy person is not someone who has just the right set of circumstances. Instead, the happy person is someone who has the right attitude about any circumstance and is able to communicate that attitude to his or her soul, and then do something either to heighten a positive experience or lessen a negative one. It is crucial, mystics say, to realize that the sharpest stones beneath our bare feet can be diamonds, if we just recognize them as such. In other words, a happy person can bounce back from failure or defeat not only by looking at the bright side, but also by learning from the dark side.

Remember that Albert Einstein flunked math in grade school. Edgar Allan Poe and Salvador Dali were expelled from college. Thomas Edison was at the bottom of his class. Every genius and every true talent has a way of finally blossoming.

JOY MUST BE PRACTICED

The mystics advise a simple strategy to avoid losing it." Because holiness, they say, is wrapped in very ordinary clothing, we just need to be focused enough to see what's special in the familiar things around us. Like muscles that have to be used to avoid atrophy, the soul must be constantly aware and interact with the physical side of life or it will lose its ability to buoy us when we are down or temper our emotions when we are up. This strategy is what the mystics

call the daily exercise of the soul: practice.

So, like an athlete, we practice, but still we're troubled. What is the goal of our practice? When do we know whether we've succeeded?

Jewish tradition gives us a goal: we should say one-hundred blessings each day. When we try it, we discover that it's quite difficult to find one-hundred things each day for which to be thankful. So difficult, in fact, that we spend most of our time looking.

In the course of looking, we find many things worth noting that might have otherwise passed us by. That's the goal. The practiced eye sees far more than the lazy one. As a result, the more we look for happiness, the more we can see it. Happiness then becomes not a final state to be achieved, but a process, a way of life and of living it in a spiritual way. It's something that we can do day in and day out.

This process of searching for one-hundred blessings also creates an important awareness—that it is impossible to be happy all the time. We may never reach one-hundred blessings, but there's still plenty to be happy about. Many things bring us joy, no matter what our struggles or misfortunes.

There's a wonderful story, popularized by the writer Robert Fulghum, about a man who felt discouraged because he was only happy half the time. He went to his rabbi in tears, moaning that he felt like a failure. The rabbi stroked his beard (all rabbis in stories seem to have beards), nodded his head wisely and suggested cryptically that the man refer to a specific page of the current *World Almanac of Facts*.

The surprised fellow dutifully followed the

First write down what makes you happy. Is it a whim or is it truly what you want more than anything else in life? Then craft a plan for every day that includes as much as possible of what makes you happy.

rabbi's instruction and came back, confused. "I don't understand," said the troubled man, showing the rabbi the book. "All I can find on that page is a list of baseball-batting statistics."

The rabbi pointed at a line on the page. The man read it aloud: "Highest lifetime batting averages."

"And who is at the top of that list?" the rabbi asked.

The man answered: "Ty Cobb, with a lifetime average of .367."

The rabbi looked deeply into the man's disconsolate eyes and said: "So?"

The man was disturbed. "I don't understand," he said.

"Listen, my friend," the rabbi answered. "Ty Cobb only got a base hit once every three times, but still he was the best, still he made the Hall of Fame."

The man, in despair, twisted his hands together anxiously. "I'm not a baseball fan," he said. "I don't understand."

The rabbi rose from behind his desk, frustrated. "If one out of three got Ty Cobb into the Hall of Fame, then you are a superstar, because you told me you were happy one of every

two days," the rabbi said. "You're batting .500. So don't complain."

What the rabbi didn't say is that, with a little practice, who knows what heights the man might have reached. With a little practice, when asked that fateful question upon his death, "Why didn't you enjoy all the permitted pleasures?" he could answer, "But I did."•

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Book Reviews



BARBARA NEIGHBORS DEAL

Two men who have done much to shape our culture's view of psyche and spirit have recently written books on love. Sam Keen and Deepak Chopra explore many of the same themes—romantic love, intimacy, passion—and each explores some aspects of love that the other doesn't touch. The basic, underlying truth about love they both explore is the same, however. Keen says the possibility of love seems to be built into us, into our very human nature, while Chopra expresses it similarly, that to grow in love is why we're here, and that love is the spiritual goal of life.

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

By Sam Keen. Bantam Books, July 1997.

243 pages, paperback. \$21.95.

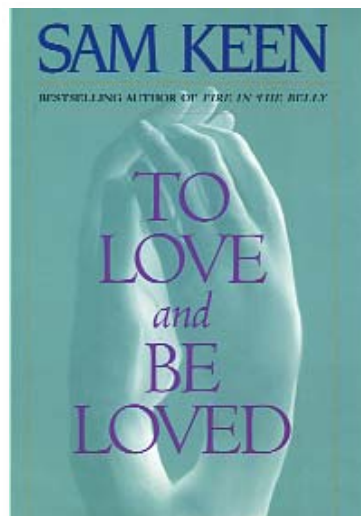
Sam Keen, longtime consulting editor for *Psychology Today* and author of such top selling books as *To a Dancing God* and *Fire in the Belly*, defines love not as a feeling but as an art, an art that requires talents and skills that can be nurtured and grown. In Part 1, "Becoming a Lover," Keen posits his premise: "In the depths of our being, in body, mind, and spirit, we know we are created to love and be loved. Fulfilling this imperative, responding to this vocation, is the central meaning of our life." He describes the many detours humans take as they mis-identify and seek to respond to this imperative, including various addictions to people, substances, success, and other diversions, and suggests that pur-

suage each of these to its limits only reveals such pursuits as unfulfilling—"...it didn't satisfy us because we can never get enough of what we didn't want in the first place."

The good news, according to Keen, is that the quest for love points to the possibility of love, and that possibility "seems to be built into human nature."

Keen examines current cultural notions about love, and finds them sadly lacking. He identifies four serious flaws: a near-exclusive focus on coupling that excludes others; individualism gone awry; crediting mysterious "chemistry" to explain attraction and romantic bonding; by adopting "intimacy" as the exclusive test and proof of love we "miss the infinite variety of forms that human love can take (love of neighbor, love of other creatures, love for the planet); and that we continually ask the wrong question—"How do I choose my rightful partner?" when the question needs to be, "How do I become a loving person?"

The concepts and principles of the book are presented with three components. The first is theory, evolving from his concept of love as "a broad and complex spectrum composed of many simple elements, all of which we must understand if we are to develop a lifelong practice of love." The second component is stories, drawn from the experience of friends, his work, and Keen's sharing his own path in learning to live an inclusive love. The third is practice, an



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living being, from a bouncing baby to an indigo bunting, is equally an expression of the life-force and the love-force. Seen in this light, the life of every sentient being may become as precious as your life is to you... Imagine that your yearning for fulfillment is the immanence of the divine presence, Spirit inspiring spirit, Brahman within Atman..."

Perhaps the most valuable gift in Keen's book is its vision of a greater love, a vast, all-inclusive, personal and impersonal love that can take us beyond self and relationship to participate in the nature of God.

THE PATH TO LOVE, Renewing the Power of Spirit in Your Life, By Deepak Chopra. Harmony Books, 1997. 338 pages, hardbound.

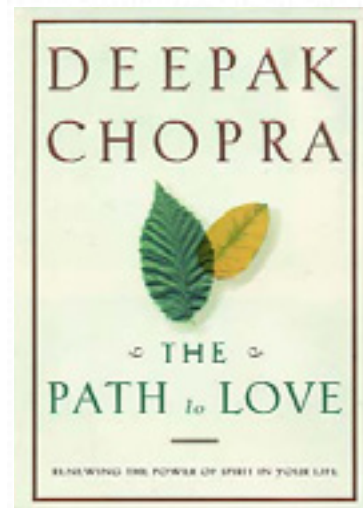
There is hardly a person in America who doesn't know Dr. Deepak Chopra's work, whether through his 16 books, including *Quantum Healing, Ageless Body, Timeless Mind, The Seven Spiritual Laws Of Success, The Return Of Merlin,* or *The Way Of The Wizard,* or through his many popular public television series. In this, his latest book, Chopra turns his attention to love, and how to ground a relationship in love through surrender, nonattachment, renewal of passion, and ecstasy.

The first chapter begins with a sweeping theme, "All of us need to believe that we are loved and lovable. We began life with confidence on both points, bathed in a mother's love and swaddled in our own innocence. Love was never in question, but over time our certainty clouded. When you look at yourself today, can you still make the two statements every infant could if it had the words?"

"I am completely loved."

"I am completely lovable."

As a psychologist with many years invested in marriage, family, and child counseling, working with people who never had that experience of early unconditional love, I only wish the above statement were true for every infant. Far too many children are neither wanted nor treasured, and are abandoned either physically or emotionally. Many who approach this book without this critical experience of unconditional love as an infant will find some of it tough going.



Chopra continues, "You were created to be completely loved and completely lovable for your whole life," and if one finds that his or her experience does not meet this intent of Creation, he promises that this can change. By identifying with one's essential nature, by restoring the spiritual nature, one can come to know this experience of being totally loved and lovable. Becoming love, becoming completely love, is why we're here, and the "spiritual goal of life."

The book traces the path to love in relationship, from the spirit of romance (attraction, infatuation, courtship, intimacy) to surrender, to passion, and finally to ecstasy.

Reviews

invitation to the reader to explore the theory in one's own life experience, through specific questions Keen asks.

Part II explores "The Elements of Love." Keen begins with attention, noting that paying attention is the opposite of taking for granted, and examines the many facets of love expressed in desire, knowledge, sensuality, empathy, compassion, enjoyment, and care. Drawing on the wisdom of the great spiritual traditions, Keen urges the reader to plumb love, in chapters on storytelling, repenting, self-love, commitment, co-creation, adoration, sexuality, and enchantment. Looking well beyond one-to-one pair bonding, Keen offers love as a stance toward life, toward every relationship, toward perception and interaction with everything in our world. Each of the expressions of love comes alive with rich examples and stories, and compelling actions and exercises are suggested throughout that can lead the reader to an experience of these elements of love.

The final section of the book, "Meditation on Faith, Hope, and Love," attends to love and the meaning of life. "We need to explore the ancient and perennial hope that the interpersonal love that joins us to our dearest ones is of the same substance as the energy that informs our personal origin and destination and the mind-force that is continually creating the cosmos." Keen finds at the core of every religious tradition one truth: "Love is both the pathway to and the revelation of what is most real." He proposes several "what-if's" about the Cosmos and the nature of reality, and urges the reader to use imagination to explore them. For example, "Imagine that every

OPENING TO THE INFINITE

BY RICHARD MOSS

Opening to the Infinite is a primer for using everyday life as a catalyst for spiritual growth. What does it mean to be "radically alive?" Richard Moss healer and author of *The Second Miracle*—teaches that to fully awaken into life, the ego self must dissolve, like a sugar cube, into the expansive ocean of the Larger Intelligence, God the Infinite. Here are the timeless principles for contacting this great source and more... how to use relationships as a tool for awakening, how to use meditation for expanding the self and how to tap your body sensations for insight.



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Like Keen, Chopra shares in depth from his own experience on the path of love, and experiences from his friends, family, and patients. Each chapter includes practical exercises designed to “enable you to ground yourself in the insights discussed in the text.” This, too, is a book to be practiced.

Of particular interest is the chapter, “Is Attachment Really Love?” In it, Chopra addresses questions that many couples don’t, and draws a clear distinction between love and attachment. Some of the criteria he suggests include:

“Love allows your beloved the freedom to be unlike you. Attachment asks for conformity to your needs and desires.

Love imposes no demands. Attachment expresses an overwhelming demand—‘Make me feel whole.’

Love expands beyond the limits of two people. Attachment tries to exclude everything but two people.”

As an alternative to attachment, Chopra proposes “nonattachment,” and defines it as allowing the other to be who he or she is, a “state of freedom that preserves and even increases your love for another.” This allowing leaves no room for controlling, for fear, for resentment. He points out differences between one’s ego and one’s spirit, that it is important to choose love, and that to choose is to choose spirit.

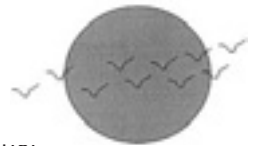
Chopra brings interesting Eastern insight to the chapter on passion. Drawing on the Vedic stories of Shakti and Shiva, he explores passion in human relationships, and then looks beyond the personal to passion in universal application—in creation, in art, in music, in writ-

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Resources for Personal Transformation



A Year to Live
By Stephen Levine

Most of us go to extraordinary lengths to ignore, laugh off, or deny the fact that we are going to die, but preparing for death is one of the most rational and rewarding acts of a lifetime. *A Year to Live* offers you the opportunity to deal with unfinished business and enter into a new and vibrant relationship with life, so that whenever the ultimate moment does arrive, you will not feel that it has come too soon. 189 pp., \$20.00.

Finding Joy
By Dannel I. Schwartz

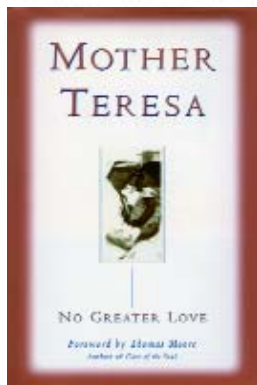
Searching for happiness in our modern world of stress and struggle is common; finding it is more unusual. This guide explores and explains how to find joy through a creative and surprisingly practical approach based on the teachings of Jewish mysticism. *Finding Joy* is not an instant cure for modern life's burdens, but a guide to a time-honored method for thinking and living...and finding real joy. 183pp., \$19.95.

The Healing Art of Storytelling
By Richard Stone

The Healing Art of Storytelling guides us into the healing process: remembering ourselves, speaking our truth, and finding ultimate meaning in telling our story. Stone has created a wondrous blend of vibrant stories and his own step-by-step approach to making effective story a part of our own lives. For all explorers down the path of story, for all rebuilders of family and community, this is a highly recommended companion. 238 pp., \$12.95.

No Greater Love
By Mother Teresa

Considered by many to be a living saint, Mother Teresa has been a steadfast voice of love and faith, providing immeasurable kindness and guidance to the world's downtrodden. *No Greater Love* is the most accessible and inspirational collection of her teachings ever published, featuring love, prayer, giving, service, poverty, forgiveness, Jesus, and more. 206 pp., \$21.00.



Repacking Your Bags
By Richard J. Leider & David A. Shapiro

This book takes you on an enlightening journey—providing a unique opportunity to set down the burdens you're carrying, check them out to see if they're really making you happy, and discover new ways to lighten your load. Live-ly and intelligent writing, personal examples, and stories collected in hundreds of interviews illustrate a comprehensive guide for balancing the demands of work, love, and place, in order to create and live your own vision of success. 230 pp., \$14.95.

Love and Awakening
By John Welwood

Original, honest, and profound, this book offers a powerful new message for love and intimacy, examining human relationship at the unique juncture where psychology and spirituality meet. Combining Eastern philosophy with Western teachings, Welwood welcomes you to the magic of your innermost nature as reflected in the gaze and soul of the beloved. 255 pp., \$13.00.

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Edited By Richard Carlson & Benjamin Shield

Drawing on their own personal experiences and insights, these celebrated authors inspire, enlighten, and edify with original essays written specially for this book. *Handbook for the Heart* is an unprecedented compilation of inspiration and advice for everyone who wants to explore the enduring power and spiritual significance of love. 226 pp., \$22.95.



Choose To Be Happy
By Swami Chetanananda

This book articulates an alternative to the anxiety implicit in modern existence. While it may be impossible to control everything that happens, you can decide how you choose to respond to circumstances and the spirit in which you live. If you choose to be happy every day, regardless of your situation, the effects are far-reaching and profound. 299 pp., \$14.95.

The Soul Unearthed
Edited by Cass Adams

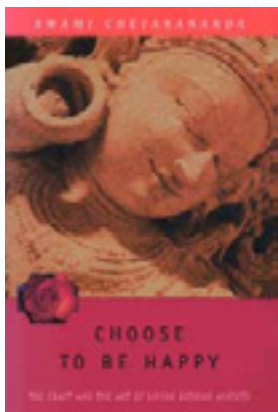
This unusual and inspiring collection of more than sixty stories, essays, poems, and interviews revolves around the central theme of how wilderness affects us spiritually. With fresh vision, the contributors to *The Soul Unearthed* explore transformation through their personal experiences. For those who love all that is wild, this book will be enlightening and invigorating. 288 pp., \$14.95

The Heart of Conflict
By Brian Muldoon

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flict, in terms of both achieving practical results and making sense of our inevitable differences. Above all, it demonstrates that conflict follows a predictable course and that by understanding its fundamental nature, we can learn to control it, rather than become its victim. 257 pp., \$22.95.



The Art of Living Consciously
By Nathaniel Branden

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By Paul Pearsall, Ph.D.

Psychologist and author Paul Pearsall is an expert on the relationship between pleasure, stress, and the immune system. This book gives simple tests to find areas of particular stress and unhappiness in our lives, and offers practical suggestions for dealing with our real, everyday challenges—in relationships, on the job, as parents, and in

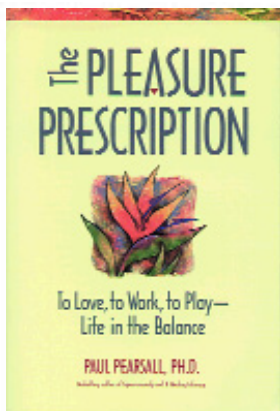
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The Wings of Joy
By Sri Chinmoy

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Soul Food
By Jack Kornfield & Christina Feldman

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Close to the Bone
By Jean Shinoda Bolen

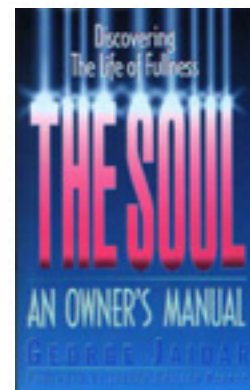
Close to the Bone is a beautifully written and profoundly affecting book that explores what it means when serious illness brings one close to the soul’s needs. Using her extraordinary skills as a therapist and storyteller, Dr. Bolen serves as a guide in this life-threatening but ultimately life-affirming journey, helping us to find our way out of the underworld and back into our lives, forever changed. 212 pp. \$23.00.

Time Shifting
By Stephan Rechtschaffen

This book clearly explains that time is manufactured in consciousness, processed in the mind, and metabolized in the body and the material world. Rechtschaffen demonstrates that by learning to make conscious choices in present-centered awareness, we can create joy in our lives and become masters of our destiny. 233 pp. \$22.95.

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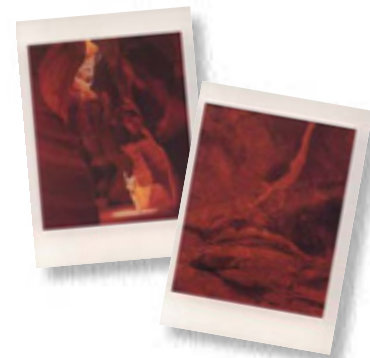


The Soul: An Owner's Manual
By George Jaidar

George Jaidar guides us on this unfamiliar, unpredictable, and adventurous journey of transcending to a new level of human consciousness. Jaidar urges us beyond our fear and despair to choose to look at life in new and provocative ways. He critiques the fundamental assumptions of all our cultures, religions, and societies while pointing humanity to a new direction. Hard cover, 142 pp., \$18.95.

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Winter 1991

Authors: Joanna Macy, Kathryn and Gay Hendricks, Jacques Cousteau, Joan Borysenko, Bernie Siegel... Contents: Conscious Loving: A New World of Intimacy, World as Lover, World as Self, Remembering Who We Really Are, Loving Your Work, The Whispering of the Walls...

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Summer 1992

Authors: Robert Johnson,

Thomas Berry, Sam Keen, Anne Valley-Fox... Contents: Love and Forgiveness, Ecstasy, Deep Cultural Therapy, Whole Parenting, Our Shadow Side, The Journey for Meaning, The Pilgrimage for Peaceful Self, Your Past Is Not Your Future, Living Your Dreams...

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Authors: Ann Wilson Schaefer, Robert Fritz, Nathaniel Branden, Peter Russell, The Dalai Lama... Contents: Facing the Aging Challenge, Healing the Wounded Adult, Life beyond Therapy, The Role of Courtship, Getting beyond Your Past...

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Authors: Brenda Schaeffer, Thomas Crum, Jerry Mander, Thich Nhat Hanh, Eric Klinger... Contents: Transcending Who We Are, Loving Me, Loving You, TV—Society's Toxic Medium, Looking Deeply Within, Living as a Hero, Experiencing Abundance...

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Authors: Elizabeth Harper Neeld, Rollo May, Anthony DeMello, Marilyn Mason... Contents: Taking Steps to a New Life, Creativity and Aging, Understanding Shame, Standing Up and Speaking Out, Living Your Vision, Your Golden Shadow...

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Authors: Tom Rusk, John Welwood, Eknath Easwaran, Erich Fromm, Virginia Satir... Contents: Ethical Persuasion, The Damaging Effects of Perfection, Reducing the Trauma of Divorce, Redefining Gender Roles, Relationship as a Spiritual Journey, Ethical Persuasion...

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Authors: Sidney and Suzanne

Simon, Jack Kornfield, Lewis Smedes... Contents: Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past, Know Your Boundaries, Inner Directedness, You Can Make a Difference, Profound Personal Healing, Understanding Your Family Patterns to Change Your Life...

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Authors: Joan Borysenko, Brenda Schaeffer, Bernard Siegal, Janet Woititz, Cristina Goff, Robert Fritz... Contents: The Heart of Optimism, Becoming Truly Alive, Deepening Family Ties, Going Beyond Competition, Dreams and Spontaneous Drawings, The Path of Transformation, Involvement: the Key to Excellence...

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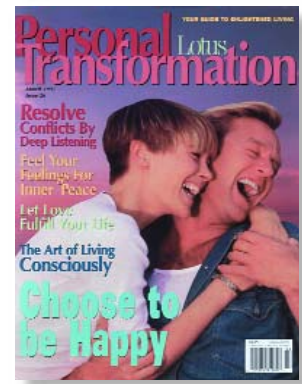
BettyClare Moffatt, Swam-Chetanananda... Contents: Re-Enchantment in Everyday Life, A Dream Worth Dreaming, Our Bodies Are Spiritual, The Moment of Death, What is Forgiveness...

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January 1997

Authors: Jean Shinoda Bolen, Larry Dossey, Jill Mellick, Shoni Labowitz, James and Evelyn Whitehead, Daniel Taylor... Contents: Illness and the Search for Meaning, How to Deal with Anger, Death and Dying, Dreaming as a Creative Art, The Healing Effect of Pets, Motivate Yourself, Healing Broken Stories, Energy



Leaks that Hold You Back...

March 1997

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Transformation

Continued from page 33

with chronic illnesses. I was doing a guided meditation one night, and afterward I asked how the experience was for the class. One woman immediately said that I needed to do a meditation tape. That's all that needed to be said. I got the message that Cubby's death was the catalyst for me to embark on a path to healing from pet loss. I also discovered that I needed to incorporate the spiritual dimension, as I saw that was a missing link.

As a result, I made a meditation tape called "Angels of Healing" for people who have lost a cat or a dog. I also developed ten points that I feel are valuable tools to heal from that loss. One of those points is that the loss is so painful because the connection that we make with our pets is at the soul level. This is the level where unconditional love resides, and this is the expression that our animals bring to us each day of their lives. The result of having such a deep connection is a deep sense of loss when that pet dies. When the animal companion dies, we feel the separation from the unconditional love. This separation, I found, is our separation from God. The meditation tape is a way for the person to re-experience the love within, by seeing their beloved pet again. The person is able to say good-bye to their pet, but know that the love is still within. Each of the many times that I did the tape, I healed a little more.

What I learned from this experience is that pets are very powerful in the way they bring us lessons. We can gain power if we choose to learn from the animals in our life. As I review my life with Cubby, I see how he was following the plan the Universe had set for him during this life. He had surrendered to this plan totally. From seeing this

demonstration of surrender, I have looked at my own life and surrendered to the power of the Universe. Even though Cubby is no longer walking this earth, he is still teaching me valuable lessons. •

A Year to Live

Continued from page 59

see that luminosity as something different than themselves. This is the ignorance we carry in our life. I had a teacher whose whole practice was letting go of every thought except that he was God. He became enlightened.

What is the importance of funeral preparations?

Most people are not prepared for their loved one's death, even if they have been beside their bed for a year. When loved ones die, their absence is momentous. Transitional rituals help acknowledge death. The mind will have things to say for a while around the death. Grief is not just sadness; grief is remorse, guilt, anger, distrust, and feelings of abandonment. It is important to be grounded. There is no time that we want to take one foot off the ground more than when we are in grief, and there is no time that it is more dangerous to do so.

Relationships do not end when a person dies. Some other aspect of it deepens and begins. Your relationship isn't over, it is just no longer externalized. The pain involved is the consequence of love. That's what love costs. Some people say the price of love is too high. They will take many incarnations to get by that fear, which is fine. However, there is a point in which fear does not lead our life anymore. We are willing to love even if it is painful at times. I become ecstatic when I talk about what is on the other side of the

pain, but it is not right for me to say your pain will go away after a one-year practice, because it may not. It will start to recede in the background and float in something bigger than your pain.

What else would you like to add?

I learned from the-year-to-live that *love* is the only rational act of a lifetime. Everything else pales in comparison. Things that are motivated by love can still turn out badly in the physical world, but the *intention* for love does not turn out badly, it can only bring a deeper *capacity* for love. •

Tell Your Story

Continued from page 39

require years of telling and retelling in conjunction with other healing modalities until the metamorphosis is complete, a new equilibrium is found, and the person once again discovers wholeness within. To weave together the slender threads of a torn life into a firm pattern of meaning that can give even the most pernicious emotional and physical injuries a role of honor in our experience—this is the power of story. •

From "The Healing Art of Storytelling," by Richard Stone. Copyright 1996 by Richard Stone. Printed with permission from Hyperion.

Spirit Rest
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Transformation

Continued from page 32

and alive, I feel a radiating warmth, an expansive vitality there. Sometimes I feel a pulsing; sometimes I feel a stirring or spinning sensation, as if a small world is turning there. Often I feel a spaciousness and a satisfaction in my belly, a sensation of being full and whole.

When my belly is awake and energized, I feel a resonance with the center of the earth, as if there's an invisible cord extending from the center of my body to the planet's center. I feel that from my belly center I'm umbilically linked to the loving, protecting, nurturing, guiding energy that surrounds us. I feel that I belong, that I'm included, that I'm welcome in this world.

Designing and practicing the "Honoring Your Belly" movement ritual saved my life, and it keeps on feeding my soul with what truly satisfies. Continuing to develop hara by honoring and energizing my belly with movement and breath—and sharing what I've learned with others—is the purpose which informs my life. •

Book Reviews

Continued from page 69

ing. Passion can point us to the passionate God, who ever reveals Godself through the events of our lives. "To know God is a process that unfolds over time. It isn't a

sudden experience that is finished once and for all. One can never be finished with God; moments of recognition only serve to draw you closer. Hidden in every event of your life is a possible epiphany about love, as it communicates to you from the source..."

In a chapter on ecstasy, Chopra wonders if that blissful state is only available to poets and mystics, or is it "so close that we miss it because no one has shown us how to touch it?" The key, he says, to ecstasy is realizing that it is the final stage of intimacy with oneself. True ecstasy is realizing that beyond the apparent duality of self and other, of self and God, there is only One, and Oneness.

In the final chapter, "You Are Loved," Chopra tells a moving story of a woman, estranged from her family, who quite "coincidentally" found someone at a meeting whom she'd known in childhood and shared a traumatic event. This experience brought to life for her a final promise, that there is a "web of delicate caring that encloses all of us, though we do not notice it." Through her experience, the woman learned a compassion that prompted her to go to her family and offer reconciliation. Chopra cites compassion as an expression of unconditional divine love, a love which recognizes each one as "infi-

nately precious in the eyes of spirit."

"Love is the beginning of the journey, its end, and the journey itself." •

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Website

John Francis Peters Art <http://www.hyperweb.com/jfpeters> ("Visitation"
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Second Half of Life

Continued from page 35

you will be like a lotus opening in
 the rays of the morning sun. The
 lotus doesn't need to say, "Where
 are the bees?" The bees are look-
 ing for the lotus. All of us, inward-
 ly, are looking for this kind of
 beauty and love that grows with
 the passage of time. •

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No Greater Love

M O T H E R T E R E S A

If we really want to conquer the world, we will not be able to do it with bombs or with other weapons of destruction. Let us conquer the world with our love. Let us interweave our lives with bonds of sacrifice and love, and it will be possible for us to conquer the world.

We do not need to carry out grand things in order to show a great love for God and for our neighbor. It is the intensity of love we put into our gestures that makes them into something beautiful for God.

Peace and war start within one's own home. If we really want peace for the world, let us start by loving one another within our families. Sometimes it is hard for us to smile at one another. It is often difficult for the husband to smile at his wife or for the wife to smile at her husband.

In order for love to be genuine, it has to be above all a love for our neighbor. We must love those who are nearest to us, in our own family. From there, love spreads toward whoever may need us.

It is easy to love those who live far away. It is not always easy to love those who live right next to us. It is easier to offer a dish of rice to meet the hunger of a needy person than to comfort the loneliness and the anguish of someone in our own home who does not feel loved.

I want you to go and find the poor in your homes. Above all, your love has to start there. I want you to be the good news to those around you. I want you to be concerned about your next-door neighbor. Do you know who your neighbor is? •

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