

911 FROM YOUR SOUL: Are You Being Called?

LIGHT

OF CONSCIOUSNESS

JOURNAL OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Steps to Inner Peace

THE NET OF INDRA
Creating a Network
of Grateful Living

TUESDAYS IN JAIL
Teaching Journaling
for Transformation

**HELPING OTHERS
WITH DEATH
& DYING**

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LIGHT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

JOURNAL OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



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Insight

Who among us does not crave peace? The question is: how do we find it? In this issue's Satsang, Swami Amar Jyoti illuminates: "Peace is the one thing you cannot avoid. Nobody has to teach you this. You must have tasted it somehow, somewhere, therefore you are seeking it. You want peace because you have lost it... But if you bring in blocks—maybe doubts, maybe showing off, maybe feeling you want to be great—your peace is again blocked. You can have peace *any moment* if you care to have it."

Jonathan Ward shares in Forgiveness: Letting Go of Life's Hurts, "My first step toward forgiveness was meditation—absorbing that peace of God found in its practice. Also, carrying the effects of meditation into our daily lives can shield us against life's hurts. This castle of peace can prove unassailable if we can learn to live within its strong walls built in meditation."

Jeanine Thompson asks in 911 from Your Soul, "When was the last time you let a sunset take your breath away, or really listened to the sound of the ocean waves as the salty air caressed your face? When was the last time you felt totally at peace, or connected to something bigger than yourself? When was the last time you had a sacred experience, or knew that you *mattered*? This is what your Soul is calling you home to. You are *longing* for a path back to your sacred self."

Peace can be conveyed in innumerable ways and the humble intentions of Tina Welling to teach journaling to prisoners, shared in Tuesdays in Jail, is riveting and heart-opening. Pema Chödrön shares personal experience and compassionate wisdom in Helping Others with Death and Dying. And Clark Strand offers electrifying poems to the Divine Mother Kali in Now is the Hour of Her Return.

Lastly, we are thrilled to share an exquisite photo essay by Chris Rainier from his new book, *Sacred: In Search of Meaning*. A student of Ansel Adams, Chris's life work has been to record and celebrate the wonders of our Earth and humanity on film "as reminders of the past to future generations still unborn—as postcards to the future."

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Sita Stuhlmiller, Editor



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Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

Steps to Inner Peace

Do you want peace? Then you can have it just now. Not only because you may have faith in me, but because it is there. You are missing it only because you want something else.

YOU WANT TO BE THIS; you do not want to be that. You like this; you do not like that. Are these in tune with peace? As a matter of fact, even good things can disturb your peace. You may be eating good, healthy food and yet get a stomach ache. Nothing is necessary in order to have peace. Therefore, to make your peace dependent upon *anything* is missing the peace. But if this is

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too difficult, whatever you wish to have should not be such that it disturbs your peace.

The steps I am giving are not how to *get* peace but how to *reveal* your peace; how to remove your blocks on the way to peace. If you take these steps your peace will be abiding. Be genuine in your approach. Be honest and sincere. Do not have hidden motives behind your desire for peace. Be humble and follow your Master in whom you have faith. You will be tested. If you waver in your commitment, your peace will waver in direct proportion. Then you may say, "I am following the steps but still have no peace." That is a myth. Peace is in you as it is within me. *Therefore*, you are seeking, right? *Therefore*, you want to follow the way. But if you bring in blocks—maybe doubts, maybe showing off, maybe feeling you want to be great—your peace is again blocked. You can have peace *any moment* if you care to have it.

Peace is self-existent. Therefore, to make your peace dependent upon *anything* is missing the peace. When you say, "I want peace but I want this too," you are canceling peace. That is what I mean by a sincere approach to peace. Do you want peace, period? Being great will not give you peace; it will give you more headaches. When you are peaceful you have no headaches. More wealth will not give you peace. More property, friends or relations will not give you peace, but when you are peaceful other relationships are fulfilled. So, when you wish to have peace, do not compromise it for anything else. When you desire peace sincerely, at any cost, you will have it. It does not take time.

Yet even if you believe I can show you the way to peace, you have to receive it, and to receive it you have to be ready. You have to be genuine, humble and non-resistant. You have to forgive. But if you forgive only to make others think you are great, you are not forgiving. Because the time others think you are *not* great you will lose your humility. You will lose your selflessness as soon as your interests are affected. When someone touches your deep-rooted motives or desires, will you still work selflessly? Therefore, your desire for peace has to be genuine.

These steps are given not to realize God but to make you a recipient of peace. You cannot have peace and be a boss at the same time. You have to release my hands to show you the way. If you understand this you will be meek. By meek I do not mean weak. If you are weak, you are not meek. The meek are strong, actually. Meekness

Unless you learn humility, you cannot be great. If you truly become great others may praise you, but that will be a byproduct. You have to be free from attachment to praise or blame.


requires great inner strength. But if you feel weak you are not meek; you are just afraid. You may want to serve others but still hold on to your position. Unless you learn humility, you cannot be great. If you truly become great others may praise you, but that will be a byproduct. You have to be free from attachment to praise or blame. When you finally attain peace, it will descend like a dove. Then forgiveness will be your nature.

If you do not have peace, practice virtues first. Have patience. Be tolerant. Be enduring, forbearing and forgiving. In this way your mind will become tempered.



Your pride, arrogance and egotism will lighten and come to a certain relaxation. Then you will be nearing peace. Virtues do not directly give you peace but they remove the blocks and prepare the way. For example, there may be five blocks on your path and you remove all of them. However, you still have to walk on your path. Peace is beyond your blocks but it is not attained just by removing them. Removing your blocks simply clears the way for you to proceed. Do not cover up your garbage with silken bed sheets. Do not hide or cling even subconsciously.

Search your subconscious: what are you holding on to? What are you clutching? What is causing you to feel crazy, lost or overwhelmed? Try to find out. You will see the roots of disturbance are greed, attachment, possessiveness, position lovingness, seeking name and fame, and so on. These are deep rooted from the subconscious mind to the conscious mind. You have to find them and dig out the roots. This requires sincerity. Then you will see the peace already within you—from the superconscious to the conscious to the subconscious. Throughout these three regions there



Peace is within you. Light is within you. You are the embodiment of That. Each one of us is a flame of light. Why do you not seek That?

will be a straight line. But if you have any gray or hazy sections in your mind, your peace is divided. And divided peace is not peace.

Peace has no place for doubts or fears. Anytime fear or doubt comes to you, feel sure there is something wrong. Either you are being selfish or you are clinging to things you do not want to give up or be exposed. If someone exposes these things, you freak out, weep or

react. Simplicity knows no cleverness. If you want to be peaceful, first be genuine. Do not have back thoughts. Do not resist. If you hold on to tension it will remain. You have to relax. You can practice releasing tension initially by lying down, then by gradually releasing it mentally. When you do this, you will see the tension subside and vanish in spite of the conditions as they were. A person who is relaxed within can do the work



of ten people, a hundred people. The body may become tired but the mind will not be disturbed.

You have to renounce your blocks. You may not renounce the goods outside you but the blocks within your mind have to be renounced. When you work or serve selflessly, at the day's end you will have peace. Observe yourself when someone tramples on your interests or gives your position to someone else. Are

you taking it contentedly or are you feeling resentment? Are you quietly manipulating or negative? You are tested in many ways: through your activities, duties and responsibilities. Your life routine, duties and responsibilities are not bondage; your bondage is due to your blocks and desires. So, search your heart and mind thoroughly and seek peace. It is there.

I say to relax so whatever is in your mind will emerge for you to see. You may say, "I am relaxed but I do not see God." But you did not remove your blocks. Will God come and remove your blocks? No. Because there are blocks there is no God. Not because He does not exist, but because you do not see Him. You are occupied with your blocks to the extent that even if He comes, you will not see Him. Even if He sends you love and joy and bliss, you will not receive it because of your blocks. Therefore, I say to be meek. When you are simple and humble your blocks leave you. You instantly get peace. I tell you: instant coffee takes time but instant peace does not. For instant coffee you have to take out a cup, open the jar, take out a spoon, heat the water and pour it into the cup, all of which takes time. Peace has nothing to do with time and space.

All blocks are conceptual, whether it is greed, attachment, possessiveness, ego, fame or self-gratification. And through these concepts we exist, crudely, to make them reality, though they are not really so. Blocks are flimsy, like clouds, vapor, but we cling to them as solid. Therefore, we lose our peace. Then some magician comes and removes the clouds and you have peace. You think, *He gave me peace*. You do not know it is magic, a trick. I am not giving you peace. Peace cannot be given; it is pervading, always, everywhere. I am just helping you remove your blocks. If the kingdom of God is within you, where is your peace? It should be at your feet. You invite suffering by blocking your own peace. God has already given you peace but you have lost it. You get thorns instead. You may be hurt for the time being, but out of that misery and suffering you will find peace again. Those sufferings become a blessing in disguise.

Forget being great. Forget being *anything*, if you can, and you will become everything. To be humble, truthful, simple, genuine and faithful is not against any culture. We have forgotten this due to our desires and motivations, hidden or surface. Peace is the one thing you cannot avoid. Nobody has to teach you this. You

Your greatest joy and bliss come out of absolute relaxation. Follow any method, you will reach the same goal. Be like children: simple at heart, then you shall see God.

must have tasted it somehow, somewhere, therefore you are seeking it. You want peace because you have lost it. When you say, "Thy will be done," do tears come in your eyes? He is your Lord, your beloved. Does taking the name of God fill your heart with joy? Do you remember God as indispensable? Have you made God your living Lord? Are you busy seeking God or are occupied with being great, with attachments, possessions and belonging? Are you occupied with investments, enterprises and achievements? Even God has become a kind of agent for fulfilling our desires.

Peace is within you. Light is within you. You are the embodiment of That. Each one of us is a flame of light. Why do you not seek That? Be simple and innocent and you will see it. If you want peace, be genuine. Forget anything else. Have faith, no doubts. Not only is light within you but you *are* light. You are conscious Being. You formed from pure consciousness by your own will and desire: the concepts you make materialize the body for you. It cannot be separate. Thou art That, just realize it. Those who begin with faith end with Realization. This is not denominational or dogmatic but supreme faith—faith in your Lord, faith in your spirit, faith in your being embodied Light. You are the embodiment of what you have willed. From that Substance you are made, which is Spirit, Light, Consciousness, Brahman. Remove your blocks and realize.

If you have insecurities, fears or doubts, if you worry about the past or future, it is only because you have desired that way and it has become so. Now if you want peace, you will have it. Everyone is qualified. Whosoever wants it will have it. Your deficiencies, inabilities and incapacities are created by you, by your desires, your own blindness. We could all have peace today. If I have peace, you can have peace. Why not? It is not my monopoly. I am not privileged. You have a right to have peace. Focus on this. Give up resistance and blocks. Can I disturb you and have my peace also? Can I harm or hurt you and also be happy? You cannot live isolated and have peace. Having peace is easier than anything if you want it. This moment you can have peace. Do not resist because this creates negativities.

Resistance is opposite of release; therefore, it comes back to you as blocks. When you do not resist you are released. You will see peace come from within you. If I give you peace, I do not lose my peace. But if you want to take my peace, you are bound to be disturbed. You cannot steal it or keep it as your own. It is all pervading. I do not lose peace when I give it to you. On the contrary, it becomes more established in me.

There are three sources from which you can attain peace: directly from God, directly from your Master, or directly from your inner Being. All three will give you equally. You choose according to your temperament. If you love your God with all your heart, mind and might, your ego will already be gone. If you relax totally, your ego will be gone. If you give up all desires, your ego will cease to exist. Ego feeds upon desires. Your omnipotence comes out of desirelessness. Your greatest joy and bliss come out of absolute relaxation. Follow any method, you will reach the same goal. Be like children: simple at heart, then you shall see God. If you are simple-hearted you will relax, you will love, you will *know*. Let me give an example. If there are scratches on a camera lens it will not accurately show the image. It will be distorted or blurred. It will not reveal the truth. But if the lens is clean the image will be quite sharp. In the same way, when you are simple you catch the truth. Everything reflects on you. You are not colored by your own complexities. Therefore, Jesus said, "Be simple at heart for thou shall see God." 🙏

© 2023 by Truth Consciousness. Teaching from the basis of eternal Truth, the message of Swami Amar Jyoti's Satsangs (Sanskrit: communion with Truth) is one of deep spiritual unity. His way is not to espouse a particular creed but to impart a spiritual way of life. During His work for four decades (1961–2001), He awakened and uplifted countless souls around the world to God Consciousness, disseminating the timeless Truth underlying all traditions and faiths. Swami Amar Jyoti is the author of several outstanding books; over 700 of His Satsangs (wisdom teachings) illuminating the classical path for modern times are available on CD and MP3 download. This Satsang was edited from *Steps to Inner Peace*, given in November 1978 at a retreat in Oracle, Arizona. A catalog of Audio Satsangs and Retreats by Swami Amar Jyoti, recorded live, is available at truthconsciousness.org. Photo on page 3: Swami Amar Jyoti at Crater Lake, OR, September 1977.





Sacred In Search of Meaning

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS RAINIER



FOR THE PAST FORTY YEARS, I have traveled the world as a photographer in search of sacred sites and landscapes. In that pursuit, I have always asked myself what sacredness really means in a world filled with different religions, unique identities, myriad cultural pursuits, consumption, consumerism, and ever increasing, overwhelming materialism.

The world as I have discovered it in all the years of my travels is not monolithic.



Rather, all cultures are born of multiple ways of being, of thinking, of seeing, and of defining what is sacred. I have journeyed and explored to try to understand these different ways of looking at our remarkable world and to discover what is sacred to me.

As a photographer, I look at the world with a particular lens: the lens of the visual medium. My life has unfolded in the focused pursuit of celebrating and exploring the wonders of the world—both natural and man-made. I experience equal joy in being awestruck by the sheer immensity of the Grand Canyon in the American Southwest as in standing before the ancient ruins of AIUla in the Saudi Arabian desert. All things natural and man-made are connected by a sacred,

primordial thread that entwines to make up the complex, beautiful world that is our planet.

My life has been and remains committed to recording and celebrating these wonders on film as reminders of the past to future generations still

PREVIOUS PAGES:
Fagradalsfjall volcano, Iceland; LEFT: Monks and Buddhist circle of life symbol, Tibet; BELOW: Bisti Badlands, New Mexico, USA; OPPOSITE: (TOP) Sacred bamboo grove, Kyoto, Japan; (BOTTOM) Sacred panel, Canyonlands, Utah, USA





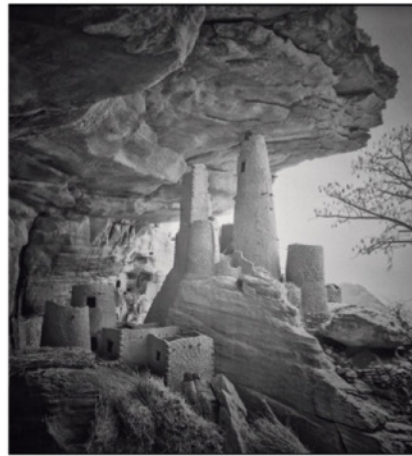
I feel an urgent need to document and to help save the fragile ecosystems that have survived for thousands of generations and that are now under such duress. We are changing the planet rapidly and beyond recognition—and if we are not careful, it may be to our own demise.





unborn—as postcards to the future. With the pressure of the tsunami of modernity sweeping across the planet and our human presence and impact growing ever greater, I feel an urgent need to document and to help save the fragile ecosystems that have survived for thousands of generations and that are now under such duress. We are changing the planet rapidly and beyond recognition—and if we are not careful, it may be to our own demise.

My career began with the teachings and tutelage of the noted landscape photographer Ansel Adams. As his last assistant, he taught me the importance of using photography as a social tool for good. His photographs in all of their artistic beauty are testimonies to the urgent need to preserve and protect the last areas of



TOP: Sacred handprints, Utah, USA; **CENTER:** (LEFT) Iceberg, Black Diamond Beach, Iceland; (RIGHT) Dogon village, Mali, West Africa; **BOTTOM:** Whirling Dervishes, Turkey; **OPPOSITE:** (TOP) Northern lights, northwest Iceland; (BOTTOM) Woman praying, Varanasi, India





true wilderness in the North American landscape. I took his wisdom and his dedication to heart, and I have tried to apply them to my mission in life. The world's human population has almost doubled since I worked with Ansel in the 1980s, and it has become all too clear that there are very few untouched and unchanged places on the planet left. My mission will always be to

photograph the last "wild," and truly sacred places that remain.

Without the support and blessing of many of the First Nation people whose land I photographed on around the world, this book would be impossible. I want to thank many of the people of the Southwestern desert of North America, India, Tibet, Bhutan,

Mongolia, Mali, and Australia. And my deepest respect goes to the shamans, wise men and women, spiritual leaders, First Nation peoples and tribes, travelers, nomads, and lifetime traveling gypsies with whom through all these years I shared a campfire or two under the stars while speaking of the journey toward a sense of sacred we have sought. 🌸



Excerpted from *Sacred: In Search of Meaning*, text and illustrations © 2022 by Chris Rainier, published by Mandala Publishing, MandalaEarth.com. Chris Rainier is a documentary photographer, filmmaker and author of seven books. He is the director of The Cultural Sanctuaries Foundation, a global program focused on preserving biodiversity and traditional cultural knowledge, which helps create protected wilderness areas on indigenous lands. For more information visit culturalsanctuaries.org and MandalaEarth.com.

Recognizing the Conditioned Mind

For the first time I recognized a pattern with the voice that had previously been in the background of my experience—like the background music in a shopping center that you don't notice . . . until you do. **BY CAVERLY MORGAN**

Why are you unhappy?
Because 99.9 percent
Of everything you think,
And of everything you do,
Is for yourself—
And there isn't one.
—Wei Wu Wei

I WAS ASSIGNED TO CLEAN THE outhouses. Eight of them spread throughout the property. A bucket of cleaning supplies in one hand, a bucket of lime in the other, I headed off, albeit grumbling. I was a monk, so whether I wanted a particular task or not was irrelevant—deeply irrelevant.

One of the gifts of being a monk is that whatever your task seemed to be wasn't what your task actually was. Yes, there was an expectation that the out-houses would be cleaned by the end of the work period. However, there was a much greater expectation that you would be paying close attention to your experience as you went about your task, no matter what your task was. There was an understanding that you would be practicing directing your attention to the present moment, noticing when it wandered and, specifically, where it went. Then consciously returning your attention to now.

I remember where I was on the cedar chip path—outhouse #1 to my right, outhouse #2 to my left—when I got it that the tape loop playing in my mind was just that: a tape loop. (This dates me, doesn't it? If you weren't alive in an era when music was recorded on cassette tapes, then hang with me here. What's great about the analogy of a tape loop, what's most significant, is that the same songs repeat over and over and over. They'll play until you turn the machine off, the batteries run down, or the tape breaks.)

On this blistering summer outhouse cleaning day, the voice of the conditioned mind was clear:

If only it weren't so hot.

If only I had been given an indoor assignment today.

If only it were Sunday. (Sunday afternoons, which we called Holy Leisure, were the only unscheduled times at the monastery.)

In a flash of insight, I got it that "if only" was a scam. I got it that "if only" implies that the external content of my life was responsible for my internal state of being.

I recall putting the buckets down, hands on hips, pausing. For the first time I recognized a *pattern* with the voice that had previously been in the background of my experience—like the background music in a shopping center that you don't notice . . . until you do. I had recognized my internal dialogue before—the chatter that prior to awareness practice I had assumed was simply "me." However, I hadn't caught on to the pattern of the chatter. It's as though I had noticed the songs that were playing but, though they felt familiar, I hadn't noticed that they were on repeat—over and over and over.

As the test of reality, one reason I value experience over theory is because my experience cannot be argued with. It's not debatable. No one will ever be able to convince me that any internal conversation that begins with "If only . . ." will lead anywhere promising—ever. If you haven't already, test it out for yourself.

Be curious.

Open.

Find out.

To be clear, there's value in an insight that comes in the form of a creative solution to a problem. That's not the "if only" thought I'm referring to, however. I'm referring to the voice of the conditioned mind that is continually asserting that you should be different; that life should be different; that if X, Y, or Z would change, then you would *finally* be happy.

When we first introduce the notion of the conditioned mind in our Mindful Studies classes, we ask the teens to describe what they think that term



might mean. Young people are quick to describe it as the mind of limitation. The mind that has been shaped and influenced by parents, school, society, culture. The mind that is habituated to think in a particular way. The mind that believes what we were taught: *This is how I'm supposed to be. This is how life is supposed to be.* The mind that regrets the past and worries about the future.

Have you ever rescued a dog, cat, or horse? It's really common for rescue animals to be more fearful. This is because sometimes they've been conditioned to be that way based on their previous experiences. They're just trying to survive, right?

It's the same for us. The conditioned mind isn't bad or wrong. It's often just how we are trying to survive. Underneath the masks we put on is often a deep desire to belong. One way we could talk about our conditioning is that it's how we've learned to try to achieve belonging. So while the conditioned mind isn't bad or wrong, it can be really limiting. It assumes, for example, that we don't inherently belong. That's why we also talk about it as "the mind of limitation." Over time, and with practice, this can change.

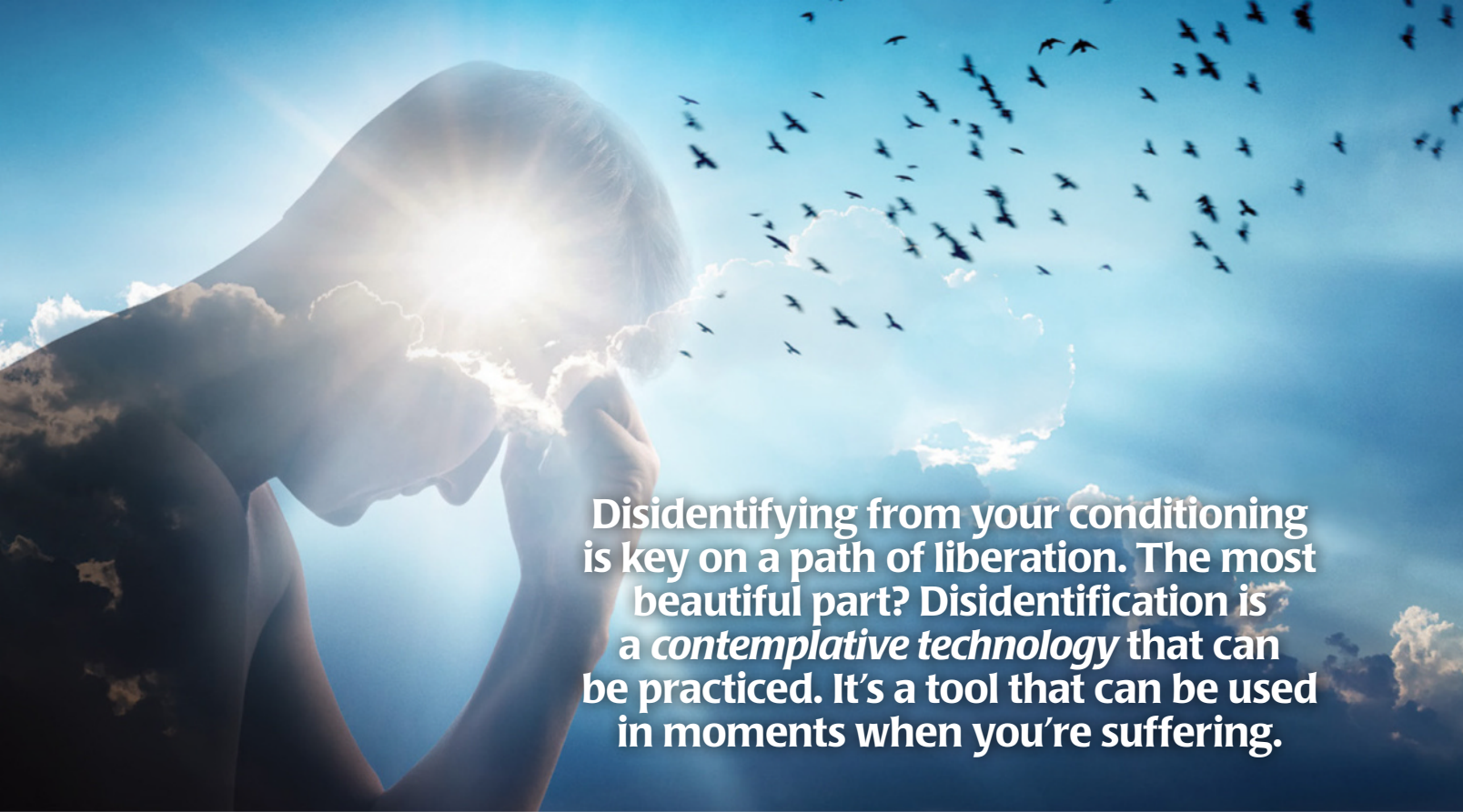
From the Personal to the Collective

CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT how we collectively identify with "if only" conditioning. Our capitalist structure is born of and thrives in an "if only" environment. From a very young age, we are conditioned to believe that "if only" we had [fill in the blank], then we'd be happy. This way of thinking assumes that our well-being is intimately tied to the content of our lives: happiness is an outside job.

In the same way we've inherited *individual* conditioning (I am conditioned to believe that in order to receive love, it's important to get things right, for example), we also inherit, absorb, adopt *collective* conditioning. The two are so intimately woven that they cannot, with accuracy, be called "two."

The Limitation of Individual Conditioning

CONSIDER THE VARIOUS WAYS you've been conditioned—by parents, school, society, community, culture. Consider the set of beliefs and assumptions you refer to in your mind, perhaps in order to touch an experience of wholeness. Writing is an



Disidentifying from your conditioning is key on a path of liberation. The most beautiful part? Disidentification is a *contemplative technology* that can be practiced. It's a tool that can be used in moments when you're suffering.

opportunity to get a belief or assumption an arm's length away. If you can write it down, you (at least intellectually) can recognize that what you are writing down is not you. This step is critical in any form of awareness practice, to recognize yourself as the observer of your thoughts and beliefs rather than the thoughts and beliefs themselves.

One way you can access how you've been conditioned is to respond to the prompts below. Should you take this on, be sure not to edit yourself. Remember, you want to reveal the conditioning that is often lying quietly in the backdrop of your experience.

A Practice: Fleshing Out Our Conditioning

WE ARE INTENTIONALLY pulling what's been in the backdrop of experience to the forefront. We want to see what's been in the shadows. Write without editing, without indulging internal commentary. Some prompts to get you started:

- In order to be loved, I need to . . .
- During times of conflict, I should . . .
- My parents always taught me that . . .
- I deserve . . .
- I'll be comfortable when . . .
- I'll be happy when . . .
- I know I should avoid . . .
- If only . . .
- Other people would be happy if I . . .

It's best not to . . .

I'm usually afraid of . . .

To feel successful I need to . . .

The thing I should most watch out for is . . .

I never seem to be able to . . .

Obviously you can keep going with this. The point is to begin to get a map of your conditioning. This map, this opportunity to have your conditioning at an arm's length, creates a concrete way for you to disidentify from the conditioned mind, to recognize yourself as more than the mind of limitation.

You are *aware* of your conditioning.

You are *not* your conditioning.

Disidentifying from your conditioning is key on a path of liberation. The most beautiful part? Disidentification is a *contemplative technology* that can be practiced. It's a tool that can be used in moments when you're suffering. As a practice, it becomes more and more refined. Over time, your capacity to catch the subtleties around disidentification increases.

For example, when you're new to the practice, you might catch that you're identified with the conditioned mind *after* you've raked a family member over the coals and really given them "a piece of your mind." With practice, you'll catch the identification as it forms rather than in the aftermath. You'll feel your body tighten in a particular way. You'll notice an internal energetic

shift. You'll catch a change in the landscape of the mind. You'll notice the quality or tone of your thoughts shift. With practice, you'll be able to step off the train of suffering sooner and sooner—until eventually you won't be called to board.

Being with Discomfort, Cultivating Courage

An important part of my own journey has been learning about the distortion of internalized white superiority. I did not grow up with an awareness of how indoctrinated I was into this mindset, this collective conditioning. I did not grow up seeing that even when white people know intellectually that we are not superior to people of other races, we often don't recognize how we play out this distortion. When we actively deny the conditioning we've been indoctrinated into, we are stuck with it.

Without seeing through and uprooting our conditioned beliefs, we cannot be free. And we cannot let others be free.

Often the most harmful conditioning operates under the radar of our conscious awareness. Here's where practice becomes our lifeboat. We practice not only seeing the unseen but also being with the discomfort that arises as we confront our conditioning.

Knowing how to fully be with discomfort allows for openness.

In openness, transformation is possible.

Have you ever met anyone who is comfortable admitting that they are racist? Or that they think of themselves as superior? It seems to me that in most cases, the conditioning of racism is so embedded and ingrained, and so deeply upheld by our conditioned systems at large, that many white people don't even see it. We've been conditioned not to.

In the same way that at the monastery I was trained to see how my personal conditioning manifests, I've more recently been steeped in seeing and learning about all of the collective conditioning that I did not grow up recognizing.

We cannot admit to something that we do not see. Step one is to see.

In my experience, to even begin to see how we are all impacted by racism, that we all absorb and perpetuate racism, brings about tremendous discomfort for most white people. Then, of course, there's the

conditioned process of denial that serves to ensure that we can avoid such discomfort. Ironically enough, we are deeply conditioned to go through great pains to avoid discomfort!

While starting to see how such conditioned systems like white supremacy have been absorbed can be uncomfortable, we can't release what we can't see. Conditioned systems that create harm can only be maintained in a landscape of ignorance. There is a lot of collective conditioning that supports the eyes staying closed.

What I value about the Buddha and countless other spiritual heroes is that their eyes were open. They were awake. Our heroes commonly do not describe waking up as a comfortable process. We can learn to accept this—even embrace it. In discomfort there is often growth, a particular aliveness.

Practice teaches us how to cultivate courage.

It takes courage to go up against personal conditioning. It also takes courage, of course, to go up against collective conditioning. There's a tremendous momentum that keeps personal conditioning in place.

Now multiply that by the masses when reflecting on collective conditioning. This momentum is one of the many reasons collective change can be slow. To transform personally and collectively, we must show up, see how we've been conditioned, witness our habit to avoid the discomfort that may arise as we seek truth, and keep our eyes on wholeness all the while. Returning to wholeness again and again when we forget.

Our lighthouse is liberation.

The freedom we realize together.

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Now Is the Hour of Her Return

Poems in Praise of the Divine Mother Kali

Mother Kali is a mixture of dirt and stardust. She guides the plants and animals through vast chains of birth, death, and regeneration...and holds the orbits of the planets in Her embrace. She is the Dark Matter of the universe, and its Dark Mater, too—the Mother at the bottom of it all. **BY CLARK STRAND**



ONE MORNING IN THE early winter of 2011, I woke before dawn with a poem fully formed on my tongue. I took a notebook from the bedside table and wrote out the words without pausing to consider their content. I wanted to get them down as quickly as I could.

When I read the finished poem, I realized that I had never written anything like it before. The normal buffer between the inspiration for a poem and the poem itself was entirely absent. I wasn't sure how it had happened, and I wasn't sure I could do it again. Two days later, having failed to find the answer to this mystery within myself, I asked aloud, "How am I to do this?"

A voice replied, "To those who give hearts, words are given in return."

In Sanskrit, the Ma of Ma Kali means "Mother," while Kali itself means "Black." Ma Kali is therefore a "Black Mother"—a chthonic goddess as vast as the universe and, at the same time, able to chart the course of a pebble as it drifts through countless tides on its way to becoming a grain of sand.

To understand the poems which follow, it will be helpful to know a little about that Black Mother in her Hindu incarnation—specifically, her story and the iconography associated with her statues and images.

A great cosmic battle was being fought between the gods and Raktabīja,¹ a demon whose every drop of blood became the seed from which an identical demon would grow. There was no way to defeat this aberrant male energy by following the rules of ordinary warfare. Wounding it only made it stronger. It was the goddess Durga who finally saw the futility of this. Summoning from within herself the ultimately destructive female force, she produced Ma Kali—a dark warrior goddess who swallowed every drop of the demons' blood, annihilating them once and for all.

Sadly, once unleashed, there was no stopping that rampaging female power. To prevent the destruction of the entire universe, the god Shiva entered the field of battle and threw himself beneath Kali's feet. Finding the body of her husband beneath her, Kali returned to her senses and, with Raktabīja's army of demons now vanquished, the order of the world was restored.

When we consider the acceleration of species extinction brought on by the Anthropocene—the "Age of Humans"—it is clear that we are now living in that time. It was only with the widespread use of fossil fuels and petro-chemicals beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, that a force like Raktabīja has appeared.

The poems which follow celebrate the Return of the Mother in both her tender and terrible aspects, for she is both of these at once and each of us gets to decide which face we see. A battle is coming, but there is no question who will win that battle in the end.



Now Is the Hour of Her Return

Kali Ma arrived last night from Canada
Without Her sword. It was the only place
She could get in. The borders had been closed.

"Mother, you're defenseless now," I cried.
"The people here won't respect a naked
Village girl with empty hands and pockets

And hair so long it trails the ground—
We must hide You on an altar somewhere."
But Kali said, "That's not what I intend.

For when they seize My hand to take Me
And bind Me to their oblivion, that's just
When I begin to dance. You're too young

To remember a time that happened
At the close of an age, when men forgot
Their Maker. I always come like this,

My defenseless body an invitation
They will never be able to resist.
I am the knife too sharp for any sheath.

Do they suppose I have forgotten
How their bones were put together?
Every good cook maid knows her meat."

The Night We First Made Love

The night we first made love I thought
To take Her as a man does a woman
Whose surrender is complete,
But Ma Kali said, "Not so fast!"

Next thing I knew, I was on my back.
She was crushing me with Her feet.
"Where'd You learn that?" I snapped.
"From some other lover, no doubt."

"Lord, no!" laughed Kali. "There's nothing
I don't know about dancing men to dust.
But if you keep talking you will spoil it.

If you have to talk, talk dirty. Say things
Too shameful for anyone but Kali to hear.
Do you think I blush who've suckled and

Bedded and buried you a billion times
Before now? Save your shame for some
Pious, pretty thing who likes that kind

Of love. I want a man whose heart I
Can dance on. Just be a lotus. It doesn't
Matter if your roots are in the mud."



When Bengal Came to Me

I fell asleep and woke
In Bengal. OK, that's not
Exactly how it happened
But it's what I usually
Say, because the truth is
Too shocking—which is this:

That Bengal came to me.
First She sent her tigers
To eat me, but they did not.
Next She commanded jackals
But they, too, grew bored
And fell asleep.

Before long I had this
Whole menagerie of crazy
Creatures all sleeping
At my feet. I can't tell you
What a funk they sent up.

The cleaning lady quit,
Said, "You need Mother Kali
For this kind of work.
I can't do it." "Alright, then,"
I said. "Do you have
Her number?" And she did.



Show Me the Man Who Will Listen

Ma Kali, what servants You must have
That you can lavish so many on my education!
That You've sent seven women can't speak well
Of me. Surely one or two should have been

Enough to set an ordinary sinner to rights.
Don't You have anyone else whose heart needs
Reconnoitering? "The number of women,"
Said Mother, "who want this work is greater

Than you imagine. They say, 'Show me the man
Who will listen and I will depart for his world
At once—he need not even listen well or long!'"
"It's the miracle of low expectations," said Kali.

That put things in perspective, though it didn't
Change me one iota. I wore my thoughtful
Listening look for seven days after that. Then
Mother said, "Enough! Be what you are.

But know that most would give their lives
For you, and some of them already have.
When you have seen the misery of women
For what it is, the world shall be remade. Men

Think the work of creation is shaping a stone
Into a tool, and then a tool into a world. Try
Shaping that stone inside your belly and then
Birth it, and watch it shatter on the ground."

Call Me Mother

I heard a voice that said,
You have tainted Kali Ma!
For days I was so ashamed
I could barely call Her name.

Finally, She found me hiding
And said, I hold you close
And sing and whisper things
I never tell even the righteous.
Don't you think I deserve a call?

What is true of an ordinary girl
Is also true of Kali Ma.
Would you hold Me distant?
Would you have Me indifferent?

An infant cries and the milk
Lets down. The same is true
For Kali and Her lovers.
If you love Me, call Me Mother,
Daughter, Sister, Lover, Bride.
Treat Me like a Beloved
If you want to feel My embrace.



What Kind of Mother Does That?

Mother hasn't any clothes but
Hands and heads. I asked about these,
But She was noncommittal.

"I've lost track of who they once
Belonged to," said Kali. "All I know is
My children fly apart at the sight of Me,

And I am left to gather them up.
What else can I do
But fasten their parts about My body?

Should I abandon the dead
And love only the living?
What kind of a Mother does that?"

To Lay One's Heart Upon the Ground

Mother, tonight I have taken my heart
From its cage and laid it at Your feet.
The rapture of this was indescribable.

For one thing, I didn't die as I thought.
I discovered that hearts were for giving
And not for having. This was the first

Lesson of the night. The second came
When I understood what it felt like
To lay one's heart upon the ground.

I wept to think how many years of life
I wasted not knowing where a heart
Belonged. Those were lessons enough,

But then You rested Your foot upon me
And I saw the Universe from the bottom up
The only way it could be witnessed.

That was as much as I could bear,
And there was no lesson in it, for it was
More than anyone could learn.

In the end I've decided to leave
This heart in Your keeping. Do with it just
What You do with the Universe,

And that will be good enough for me.



Notes

¹ Ed— In Hinduism, "gods" refer to angels or "devas," and their nemesis, in this story, is the demon Raktabīja.

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911 from your Soul

Are you being called?

BY JEANINE THOMPSON

Life is a spiritual journey. Every breath, every relationship, every joy and sorrow are calling you to remember who you really are, and to be and experience all that you came here for.

Our discomforts, challenges, and even crises are invitations to free ourselves, expand our wings and rise into our highest expression—for ourselves, for those we love, and for all of humanity.

For each of us, there will come a time when our Soul longs to birth something for us and through us. Often this is the thing that we most strongly resist, are afraid of, or think we aren't ready for. When we ignore the call, it doesn't go away; it gets louder. Eventually, it becomes a 911.

Tune in and see if any of these are resonant for you.

- You feel lost and unsure about the trajectory of your life, and the traditional resources that served you in the past are no longer working.
- Things that used to bring you joy are falling flat.
- You feel a persistent yearning—like something is missing or off.
- You run from opportunity to opportunity, looking for some trace of your old spark.
- You're being asked to radically change some aspect of your life (or life seems to be forcing such a change on you), and some part of your familiar identity has been shaken or stripped away.
- You are hiding out or playing smaller than you know is possible for you.
- You are grappling with the bigger questions in life, such as, "What is the purpose of life? Who am I, and what am I here to do?"

We all undergo challenges in life and not all become a 911. The distinction with a 911 is that there is a magnetic pull deep within ourselves, a luring forward, that accompanies the challenge. There is a bubbling-up of new questions that, try as you might, you can no longer brush over, sweep aside, or avoid. It might speak loudly; it might scream. Or it might whisper subtly, yet with such persistence that you simply cannot ignore it.

Ultimately, it prompts a holy reassembly of who you are, and who you know yourself to be. Life is speaking, and it's asking you to grow beyond where you've been.

During a 911, you may wake up to everything you've been keeping yourself too busy to acknowledge, and all the ways you've been squeezing yourself into a box you didn't create or desire. All the parts of you seeking growth and evolution are calling for your attention. You may be directed to take action you don't understand or have feared. You may be invited to embody greater courage, truth, and alignment—to step into the space of the "and," where all of you can be present and find room to thrive.

You've always been in search of this, whether you are aware of it or not. At the core of you is a deep, primal longing—a longing to meet yourself and live in union with the sacred, which is within, beyond, and all around you.

And yet, we miss or deny that call for months, even years. Why? Because it works for us not to address the



struggle. We often prefer the pain of the familiar to the fear of the unknown. As long as life is still working (sort of), we see no reason to blow it all up. Why rock the boat that's still afloat?

I think we've lost sight. We've forgotten we are more than human beings that do and acquire and produce. We deeply crave love, beauty, awe, and wonder. We crave freedom and belonging. We crave to potentiate to our fullest nature. Still, we don't allow ourselves to actually go there.

When was the last time you let a sunset take your breath away, or really listened to the sound of the ocean waves as the salty air caressed your face? When was the last time you felt totally at peace, or connected to something bigger than yourself? When was the last time you felt true freedom? When was the last time you had a sacred experience, or knew that you *mattered*?

This is what your Soul is calling you home to. You are *longing* for a path back to your sacred self.

Will you listen? Will you hear those 3:00 a.m. whispers, that quiet voice? Will you make the choice to go where you're being called?

Along my wild, not-at-all linear journey from psychotherapist to Fortune 50 Executive to Transformational Coach, I nevertheless accessed seven clear spiritual principles which I collectively call The Soul Solution for a 911 from your Soul. These 7 principles (Soul - Mind - Body - Heart - Gratitude - Service - Love) provide a blueprint for daily living as you invite the truth of who you are to come forward

and take the helm in your life. They are statements to live by and also deep wells of wisdom that empower you to live in greater harmony with your truest nature and your human experience.

I've been a hospice volunteer since graduate school, both formally and informally. Often, as I sit with people whose physical lives are ending, they speak about the years flying by in the blink of an eye. Nearly all of them thought they had more time. More time to enjoy life and do all of the things they had put off until a better time. More time to make a different choice. More time to have that difficult conversation.

More time to be the person they knew they could become. And then—bam! Life shifted, and suddenly they were living their last days or months in this round of Earth School. They spoke with such clarity and conviction about what really mattered—connection, relationships, love—and what, in retrospect, did not matter at all.

The lesson from these beautiful souls is clear: if you want a life with no regrets, seize the precious, gifted moments *now*. Peace and joy are enlivened by the deep knowing that you gave it your all and left nothing on the table.

So, if you are feeling the pull ...

If you are hearing the whisper ...

If you are at a critical point of choice in your life, and you're being called forward into the unknown ... your Soul is speaking and inviting you to embark on a quest. Not the kind that will take you to a far-away landscape where your current life seems only a dream, but one that will take you deeper into yourself.

You are more than you know yourself to be. You are limitless, infinite, and whole.

Now is your time to answer the call. For you, for others and for all of humanity. 🌿

Copyright © 2022 by Jeanine Thompson, a Transformational Coach, speaker and author whose breadth of knowledge and experience spans multiple disciplines and professional expressions, from clinical psychotherapy to global business to advancing spiritual growth. She shares her journey and how others can reach their full potential in her first book, *911 from your Soul*, published by World Changers Media, September 2022.

Tuesdays in Jail

BY TINA WELLING

Eight p.m., and still light outside. The air felt warm and daisy-petal-soft on my arms. Like Navajo stonework, a band of turquoise was inlaid into the darker lapis lazuli of the sky and outlined the nearby mountains. Inside the entrance of the Teton County Detention Center, I lifted the phone and identified myself.

“Here for the journaling workshop.”

An officer answered. “I’ll buzz you through.” I heard him announce to someone, “She’s here.”

I performed a clumsy gymnastic maneuver: hung up the phone with my left hand, slung my heavy canvas bag to that hand and leaped toward the locked door several feet away in time to reach the handle with my right hand during the brief buzz that signaled it was unlocked. If I didn’t work it just right, I was spread-eagled with one foot in the open door and the phone not cradled properly. Seven years of Tuesday nights, and I was still working on my timing.

Inside the waiting room, I set down my bag. It held my notebook, ten journals, and a handful of pencils — short yellow pencils, designed for keeping golf scores. The rules. Also no spirals, no hardbacks, no staples, no paper clips, no computer or cell phone.

After I shrugged out of my jacket, a brown-uniformed sheriff’s deputy came to lead me through five more locked or coded doors. This was the ritual in order for me to meet with a group of inmates for our workshop. I came fortified with a two-inch-thick file of journaling exercises and quotes that encouraged interest in looking inward. I told the inmates — most always men, only occasionally women — that this was where freedom was found. Which, of course, was true no matter which side of the locked doors we were on.

Each of the five doors needed keys or a code in order to pass through; each was made of thick metal and slammed closed with a deep clang that echoed off

the cement-block walls. My stomach tightened with increasing discomfort as each door shut with finality behind me. I couldn’t find my way out of this place even if I held the ring of keys and the memory of codes.

I followed behind the officer, who was wearing a bullet-proof vest and a holster, through hallways, an elevator, and sometimes a dark spiral staircase wedged into a narrow shaft. I stepped into a place called the tower. The last door clanged and locked behind me.

And I was in the belly of the whale.

Joseph Campbell said about this phase of the hero’s journey: “The belly is the dark place where digestion takes place and new energy is created.” Journaling provided a tool for this process. Campbell also said this mythic theme of the hero going into the dark often resulted in his coming out transformed. The chance to witness such an event brought me back week after week. The same also applied to me: I went into the jail workshops and came out changed, every time.

The tower was a two-story room with no windows. A balcony ran along one side, and often a guard would walk there overlooking our circle as I conducted the workshop. On the other side, halfway up the wall, a window with black glass bowed out into the space, and behind that another officer operated all the controls — locks, lights — and watched everything through monitors. It felt like a fortress here. I didn’t like institutional places, I recalled at this point each week, as if it were a brand-new thought. I liked creeks and trees. I lived in a log cabin.



The officer looked up toward the window, spoke into his lapel mic, and said, "Send them out." The wide heavy doors opened from cell blocks B and C. Several men in striped pants and shirts stepped out.

Abruptly all unease within me vanished and I was where I enjoyed being each Tuesday night.

I stepped forward to greet the inmates I knew, happy to see their familiar faces. To those men I hadn't met yet, I extended my hand and introduced myself. In jail only last names were used, so I asked for the men's first names and then said them often. We pulled gray plastic lawn chairs into a circle, and I passed out notebooks and pencils. The armed deputy leaned against a pillar behind me. The concern, a sergeant told me once, was that I could be taken hostage. But I never felt threatened.

Everyone received two short yellow pencils. Less than four inches long, no eraser, and they needed sharpening every few sentences. I bought the journals in a variety of colors and made a big deal out of having them choose one — inmates weren't offered many choices.

I asked one of the new guys, "James, what color for you?"

"I don't care. Any color."

"Hey, this may be the most excitement that comes your way all week," I joked. "Don't pass it up." I asked him, "What's your favorite color?"

"Blue, I guess."

I handed him a royal-blue speckled notebook.

"Raymond?"

"Yellow, please. It'll match my pencil."

We all laughed, and I was happy we were starting off so well.

I set the seventy-nine-cent plastic pencil sharpener on the floor in the middle of our circle. I'd been warned to make sure I never left it behind. It was true that a year earlier one man had held it up close to his face and studied it for a long time, finally sticking a fingernail into the screw, testing its looseness. That was when I realized the blade could be removed, so once I got home that night I dropped a dot of super glue on the screw head.

Sometimes I wondered what I was doing here, talking to inmates about their past lives, present incarcerations, and future hopes. What did I know?

The answer, it seemed, was just barely enough for the hour or two that I spent with the inmates each week. In this jail, inmates stayed no more than a year. If sentenced longer they were sent to a state prison. Most inmates stayed a few months. Any longer, and my guidance would be sorely tested. I had no training, no degrees that would be helpful, no experience in the areas of crime or addiction. The best thing I had going for me was that I was a decent cheerleader... and that the inmates had no one better showing up. That was how I got myself past the challenge that my mental judges set up for me periodically when they asked with sarcasm: "Who made you queen of the tower?"

Once notebooks and pencils were passed out, the workshop began.

"What are your good qualities? Make a list. Be generous with yourself. It's important to become conscious of our positive characteristics."

I waited until the little yellow pencils stopped moving around the circle before I went on to the next journaling question. They were all about self-esteem tonight. Afterward I asked the men what they had answered for the first question.

Mike, who had been incarcerated for five and a half months now, raised his hand to read his list first.

"Interested in other people. Like to be helpful. Good at math." He looked up. "Really good at math." He continued. "Stick with a job until finished and done right. Smarter than my foster mothers always said I was." He laughed. We'd heard about the number of foster homes Mike was sent to as a kid. Now at twenty-nine, he was beginning to separate himself from the reputation that followed him from one home to the next: "Brains useless as a bag of dog shit" was one way a foster parent had put it.

Mike said, "I'm thinking better about myself lately. I used to figure I could only get the two o'clock girls,

you know?" The guys laughed, but I was lost. Mike said, "You know, at the bar. Closing time. Maybe I could get the only girl left to come home with me. These guys know what I mean."

Lots of agreement around the circle. I pictured the scene, last call, and Mike checking off girl after girl as each one left with someone else.

He said, "But I don't think I'll feel like that anymore. I've got good things to offer a nice girl. I'm a good listener. Got some manners."

"Miguel, how about you? Read the list of your good qualities. When we say them out loud, we're really claiming them."

"I couldn't think of any."

I was startled but covered up. "None?"

"No." He shrugged. Miguel was new to the group. Only nineteen. Arrested for possession, possibly selling. His hair was shiny black; his skin was flawless. He seemed shy and kept his head down.

"Well, I just met you, but already I've noticed some good qualities about you."

Miguel looked up at last.

I said, "You treat the other guys well. They seem to like you." The group murmured in agreement. I held up two fingers. "That's two: you're nice and you're likable."

Miguel dipped his head again, but I saw he was smiling.

"While the group talks for the next few minutes, write down the names of three people you admire, and make a list of the qualities you like in them."

James was also new, arrested just last week. He was a handsome, strong-looking guy in his early forties. The newspaper reported he was driving under the influence, with an open container in his vehicle and a loaded pistol on his lap. He was in a national park, and at the time that was a federal offence. He began to speak and choked up.

"I've served five missions in Afghanistan, been shot three times, everything hurts, and all I need is a break from that once in a while. So I get in my truck, drive where it's beautiful, park someplace, and tip that bottle until I feel better." I didn't ask about the pistol. "I've been using drugs and alcohol for most of twenty years.



Joseph Campbell said about this phase of the hero's journey:

"The belly is the dark place where digestion takes place and new energy is created."

Journaling provided a tool for this process. Campbell also said this mythic theme of the hero going into the dark often resulted in his coming out transformed. The chance to witness such an event brought me back week after week.

My kids have grown up, left home, and I missed their entire lives — gone on a mission or drugged up. This is the first I've been completely sober all this time. I don't have nothin' on my list. But I'm going to. I'm going to start living like I got something for a list." And then he quietly let the tears stream.

We were hushed. I looked around the circle, and like me, the others were too choked up to say anything. After a moment, a couple of the men said, "Thanks, man." The rest nodded. Mike patted him on the back.

I wanted to honor him in some way. I said, "James, you are a warrior. You've fought for our country, and now you'll take that warrior energy and direct it to yourself."

James glanced up, nodded at me, and tipped his face to each shoulder of his shirt and wiped his tears.

“Miguel, back to you. What’ve you got?”

“My grandfather; he’s dead now. My little brother; he’s six. My one aunt.”

“Good. Tell us their qualities.”

He kept his head down but listed: he learned how to fix a lot of stuff from his grandfather and about happiness from his little brother, and his aunt let him live with her when he was kicked out of his family’s house by his mother’s new husband.

“Here’s the big news, Miguel. You own all those qualities or the potential for them, or you wouldn’t be recognizing them in others. So you can add to your list that you know how to fix things, you hold the ability for happiness, and you are a welcoming person, friendly, like your aunt.”

We were all drained. I glanced over my shoulder at the officer behind me, and he nodded that time was up. He approached, ready to escort me out of the tower. The men and I stacked the gray plastic chairs and stored them against the wall. I passed out extra pencils to any who needed them. The men were led back to their cells, and I was taken to the first of the six locked doors.

In the elevator, after a bit of silence, the officer said, “They’re all good guys.”

I agreed.

I READ ABOUT LIAM in a newspaper report. He had been arrested over the weekend for being an inebriated pedestrian and was sent to court. There he yelled profanities at the judge, including the f-word. He was warned but continued, ever louder, ever more profane. With each outburst the twenty-four-year-old was sentenced an additional two weeks over his originally brief overnight detention.

I was appalled. I couldn’t imagine anyone yelling the f-word in a courtroom directly at a judge, much less doing it repeatedly. Liam’s behavior put him in maximum security, according to the newspapers. I knew that meant a twenty-four-hour solitary lockdown, with one hour each day to shower, use exercise machines, and grab a couple of books. I met with maximum-security inmates individually in a locked-down situation.

I sent a tiny prayer: Please do not let this man request to meet with me Tuesday night. I figured if he

exhibited this level of disrespect and lack of self-control with a judge, I wouldn’t have a chance.

First thing Tuesday night, the officer greeted me in the lobby of the detention center and said, “We got this guy in max ready for you in CV 2.” And he gave me his last name.

The officer spoke into his lapel mic, “Charlie Victor 2.” And the door unlocked with a loud buzz. I went in and there he was, sitting in a plastic chair on the other side of the metal grate in the small locked-down room. He was good-looking, young, dark-haired. He wore the pants and shirt assigned to maximum-security inmates — mustard-yellow — bright and gaudy as a caution light. The heavy door in my side of the room clanged shut behind me and locked. We exchanged names and without thinking about it, I began to tell him a story I’d heard. I didn’t know if the story reflected reality, but the message was solidly true.

“There’s a tribe in Africa that believes every person is born good. When someone does something hurtful and wrong in the community, they take the person to the center of the village, and the entire tribe comes and surrounds him. Each person tells the man every good thing they can remember about him from the time he was born. Because they believe he’s just forgotten.”

Liam dropped his head to his chest. I knew tears were falling. Tears welled in my eyes too.

After a bit of silence, he said, “It’s good to know somebody understands.”

Maybe the story about the tribe and the village was just one of those fictional reports popping up on the internet; it didn’t matter. The story let Liam know there was compassion in the world. Somewhere.

I scooted my wooden chair, with the ratty orange upholstered seat, in closer to the grated window. I said, “Our culture doesn’t hold that practice, so we have to remind ourselves about all our good qualities on our own.”

I had given the officer a journal and two yellow golf pencils, and he unlocked the door on Liam’s side and handed those to him now. I said to Liam, “This week, list all your good qualities in your journal. Fill pages.” I assigned this to many inmates and never tired of seeing a man’s face light up the following week when he reported his discoveries.

Often the men in maximum security chose to meet with me because it was the only chance they got each week to talk to someone. And I liked it because intimacy

was easily reached during these one-on-one meetings. Since the maximum-security sentence extended to at least a month, we got the opportunity to build a good relationship. That happened with Liam and me. He was never disrespectful but always straightforward, soft-spoken. Soon he opened up about his life back home.

Liam had a sister. He said she was quite beautiful, two years older than him, and was diagnosed schizophrenic but refused to take her medication. The two of them lived with their mother, who was rarely home. Liam felt responsible for his sister.

"She brings men back to the house who are homeless and dirty." He hung his head. "She walks them right past me to her bedroom. She won't stop. I'm so afraid for her. I feel... I don't know..." He hung his head.

"Powerless," I said.

Liam raised his eyes. "Yeah. These guys are scary, doped up. They're filthy. I just feel like I can't stand it sometimes." He dropped his head again, then looked up. "I beg her to take her medicine."

"What about your mother? Can she help?"

"She works, goes to the bar, comes home drunk. She's no help." Liam shook his head. "I'm no help either. I'm a failure."

Suddenly an image arose of Liam yelling at the judge. I thought to myself, this kid got himself arrested so he could take a break from this burden. In order to ensure he wasn't just given a fine, credited with time spent incarcerated over the weekend, and released, Liam consciously or, more likely, unconsciously set up a situation in which he could rest and pull himself together.

I said, "It's so damn sad and frightening how your sister has chosen to disregard herself. But Liam, you can't be responsible for her. That's why you feel you're failing her. Because she has guaranteed no one can possibly succeed in helping her."

He nodded, wiped tears.

"In your library upstairs, when you get your break tomorrow, look for the book *Codependent No More*. You will feel like it's talking directly to you. You are not alone in feeling the way you do. Your predicament is unique and especially horrible, but there is a way to deal with it. Get the book."

I made a mental note to read Melody Beattie's clarifying book again myself. It was something I did periodically. And every time it was a fresh reminder of how I was, by default, codependent. Even sitting in CV 2 I was struggling not to solve Liam's life for him.

Suggest he move away from home. Find something he loves doing, do it a lot, give his attention to himself. On and on. Better get that book out tonight.

After a few weeks in solitary confinement — an inhuman, often devastating experience that itself encouraged mental illness and was typically used only for the violent inmates — Liam regained strength and found a new balance. He was managing the isolation well. He read a lot and wrote in his journal. No one came to visit him. He was a stranger in town; his friends and family lived five hundred miles away.

"I feel like crap about how I treated the judge," Liam said one night. "I was way out of line. I yelled at that man." Liam said he was due to go to court again that coming Thursday and he felt embarrassed at how disrespectful he had been toward the judge. "I might not be allowed to say anything in court, so I don't know how I can make it up to the guy."

I didn't know if this was a good idea, but I suggested that Liam write a letter to the judge saying just how he felt and apologizing. I added, "I don't even know if that's something that's legally allowed."

Liam wrote the letter. Went to court on Thursday. And the next Tuesday he was no longer in jail. I asked an officer what had happened.

"Blew us all away. They uncuffed his hands in court without any explanation and said he was free to go. I don't know what the heck happened. But nobody goes from max to freedom. Not since I've been on the force."

When I met with the workshop group I asked if anyone had been in court on Thursday. I heard the same version: "A cop came to the cell where we were all waiting in handcuffs to see the judge; he uncuffed that guy, and the kid walked!"

I've thought of Liam often over the years. I hoped that his life was fulfilling, that his sister was taking her meds, and that his mother was sober, but I knew the unlikelihood of all that. Still, I was convinced that whatever was going on in his household, Liam was managing it better than before his incarceration. He had made sure of that before leaving there. 🌸

Excerpted from the book, *Tuesdays in Jail: What I Learned Teaching Journaling to Inmates*, copyright © 2022 by Tina Welling. Printed with permission from New World Library www.newworldlibrary.com. *Tuesdays in Jail* is Tina's fifth book; her nonfiction has appeared in national magazines and seven anthologies. The recipient of a Wyoming Arts Council writing fellowship, she has been conducting her Writing Wild workshops for ten years. Visit her online at <http://www.tinawelling.com>.

Helping Others with Death and Dying

In whatever way someone dies, there are ways to benefit them, even after much time has passed. **BY PEMA CHÖDRÖN**

WHEN MY MOTHER passed away, I wasn't able to get there until after she had died, but Trungpa Rinpoche told me it wasn't too late to help her. He suggested I sit by her body and tell her what a good mother she had been and how much I loved her. He recommended sharing fond memories of our being together and saying anything I could to make her feel happy and relaxed.

Trungpa Rinpoche's other key piece of advice was to keep reminding my mother that she had died so she could let go of her life and not feel like she needed to hang around. I was able to follow his advice. I felt touched to be alone with her in the funeral home in this way, and I had the sense that I was easing her mind and helping her make the transition.

What I did with my mother was based on the Tibetan view that the consciousness stays close to the body for a certain period after death. Although the physical body is dead, the consciousness is still very aware of what's happening. This view is also shared by many hospice workers I've spoken to. After someone has died, hospice workers do their best to maintain a peaceful atmosphere. They're careful about what they say and about how they treat the body and the person's belongings.

When people ask me how they can help others through the process of dying and the bardos, I often start by telling them this story. Whatever your beliefs are, the overall idea is to be sensitive that the person is

going through a major transition. From the moment they find out they're dying, they will go through many intense experiences, and the best thing we can do is to be open and sensitive and present with whatever arises. Whether they're in a state of advanced dementia or in a coma or have just passed away, we should behave as if they're aware of our presence and try to be with them in a strong, loving, steady way.

Mother Teresa founded her hospice in Kolkata, India, based on the simple idea of making sure people felt loved when they died. She picked up people off the street who would have died without a single person caring about them, and she brought them in to her hospice so they could live their last days in a peaceful, loving environment. If we can keep this simple motivation in mind for the dying and recently deceased people we're connected to, then I think we can do a lot to encourage them and help make their transition a smooth one. Again, we can remember the line from Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche's prayer: "May I, with ease and great happiness, let go of all attachments to this life as a son or daughter returning home." This ease and great happiness is what we wish for anyone who is dying or has died. It is also our wish for ourselves.

Within this general advice to be caring and encouraging, many additional things are recommended to help people in the dying process, some of which I will pass on now. From here, I will speak more or less from the Tibetan point of view, but much of this advice can be adapted to align with your own belief system and the person you are caring for.

Whatever your beliefs are, the overall idea is to be sensitive that the person is going through a major transition. From the moment they find out they're dying, they will go through many intense experiences, and the best thing we can do is to be open and sensitive and present with whatever arises.

The first recommendation is to let the dying person know what is happening, stage by stage. If we ourselves are familiar with the signs of outer dissolution, we can let them know, for instance, when the earth element is dissolving. We can tell them that feeling uncomfortably heavy is natural and nothing to fear. This will help them understand that what they're going through is part of the universal dying process.

After the person has physically died, we probably won't be able to tell what stage they're in, but if they're a Buddhist or spiritually inclined, we can read to them from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which is written in the form of a conversation. One traditional way of doing this is to whisper it in the person's ear. You can keep reading the book to them over the forty-nine days of the bardo of becoming. Since a being in this state has some level of clairvoyance, we don't need to be in their physical presence in order to communicate with them. However, if the person is of a different faith—or in life would have had no connection to something as foreign as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*—then it's best to just talk to them like I did with my mother and help them to feel appreciated. In any case, it's important to remind them often that they have died and can now move on.

A few years ago, I was doing a solitary retreat where my main focus was on the bardo teachings. During that time, a dear friend of mine passed away. Because I was in retreat and had plenty of time, I was able to spend the whole forty-nine days talking to her and reading her *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and doing whatever I could to encourage her. For the last few years of her life, she'd had Alzheimer's and was confused. But after the elements of this life dissolve, those particular clouds part and the consciousness becomes very receptive to any words of wisdom. This process with my friend informed my whole idea of death. The teachings became much more real for me

and inspired me to welcome the challenge of my own transition from this life.

Another thing to consider when someone dies is how to relate to their possessions. If we think about how attached we are to some of the things that belong to us, we'll understand how much it could disturb a dead person if we treat their belongings carelessly. It may be unrealistic to keep every little thing they cherished and maintain it in pristine condition, but whatever we do, we should keep in mind their attachments and do our best to treat their possessions with respect and at least not quarrel over them. If we can do this for forty-nine days, that's the best.

I've started working on my own attachments to possessions to lessen the chance that they'll disturb me in the bardo. I have a list of what things should go to what person, but I'm also trying to give them away before I die. When I think of how ruffled I've become when I've lost trivial things like water bottles, I realize that the more I can loosen my grip ahead of time, the better chance I'll have of making it successfully through the bardos.

One of my favorite stories is of a monk who was so dedicated to letting go of his attachments before he died that he'd given away almost all his possessions. At the moment before death, he noticed his teacup sitting on his bedside table and motioned to his friend to hand it to him. Throwing the teacup out the window was his last act on earth.

In whatever way someone dies, there are ways to benefit them, even after much time has passed. We can do virtuous acts and dedicate them to their well-being—wherever they are and whatever form they may have taken. Giving money to people who are destitute, helping animals, visiting a lonely elderly neighbor, just smiling at someone: anything you do on others' behalf, you can also wish for it to help the person who is dying or has passed away.



When my father died, my first Buddhist teacher, Lama Chimé Rinpoche, instructed me to offer my father his favorite food and drink for forty-nine days. Following this advice, I put the offerings by my shrine every morning, and every evening I threw them out in a clean place where they wouldn't be trampled on. Since then, I've done this practice for many people. When my dear friend died, I offered her a daily feast of espresso and chocolate. For me, it will be hot water and apple pie.

Finally, it's crucial to let yourself fully grieve the loss of anyone close to you. There are no Buddhist teachings that say you shouldn't miss people and that you should just move on as if nothing big has happened. Even though people with positive propensities will have favorable rebirths, grief is a natural and beautiful human emotion. It's uncomfortable when grief swells up and overcomes you, but as time passes, the sadness becomes less and less intense. But every once in a while, out of nowhere, you'll think of the person you lost and you'll cry, which is a good thing. It's a sign of love.

Letting yourself grieve allows you to gradually let go. It allows the flow of impermanence to continue. Of course, we know impermanence never stops, but we have a magical ability to freeze things in our mind and get stuck in the past. Grieving fully allows us to move on with our life when we feel ready to move on.

Trungpa Rinpoche often spoke about the "genuine heart of sadness," which is a tender, open place where you feel connected to people and receptive to the world. This is a positive state of mind that can accompany grief. When I've been in a state of grief, I've experienced this feeling of connection and appreciation with others, even when I don't know them and will never see them again. I remember once when I was grieving going to the post office and feeling overwhelming love for all the other people in line. Unlike many other painful emotions, such as anger and jealousy, sadness and grief tend to connect us more than separate us. Perhaps it's because sadness makes us more tuned in to the universal impermanence of all aspects of our lives: days turning into nights, fresh blooming flowers fading, children growing up, friends and relatives aging, ourselves growing old.

On the relative level, everything changes and everyone dies. All people and all things are as transitory as clouds, and this can break our hearts. But on the absolute level, nothing dies. Life after life, our bodies come and go, but our true nature always remains the same. It is like space itself: vast and indestructible and full of potential for life to manifest. 🌸

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Forgiveness

Letting Go of Life's Hurts

As we travel the road of life, we hit bumps, have conflicts and misunderstandings. We experience daily hurts and deeper hurts. Learning to deal with and overcome these is one way we grow as souls. **BY JONATHAN ANSLEY WARD**

FORGIVENESS IS NOT EASY. From my experience it is not just found in saying the words: "I forgive you," when the same hurtful thoughts and feelings arise. In my own search for forgiveness, I experimented with spiritual methods to improve my results. My journey was rewarding and I wanted to share my findings. Thus, I hope that this article will assist you in finding greater peace in your life through forgiveness.

Maiti Girtanner was a devout Catholic and concert pianist when the German army invaded France in 1940. Within a year she was arrested as part of the resistance, imprisoned and tortured. After the war, as a result, she was unable to play piano, unable to have a family, and lived in chronic pain. Over time she realized that forgiveness cannot be intellectual; it needs to be directed toward someone. As she wrote: "Forgiveness does not come about in the abstract; it calls for someone to whom it can be addressed, someone to whom it can be received." She began to pray for those who had imprisoned and maimed her, particularly the doctor who had tortured her. Forty years later this same doctor contacted her and asked to see her. When he came to her home, he knelt before her and cried and asked for forgiveness. She held his head in her hands, kissed him and said, "I forgive you."¹

As we travel the road of life, we hit bumps, have conflicts and misunderstandings. We experience daily hurts and deeper hurts. Learning to deal with and overcome these is one way we grow as souls. Small slights are forgotten over time, but how about deeper pains? Two questions I ask myself: "Have I forgiven

when the same thoughts and hurt feelings revisit, over and over?" And, "If not, how can I move on and forgive?" These destructive thoughts and feelings can follow us through life, repeating like a broken record, despite our knowing the harmful effects.

Learning to forgive means not letting our hurtful emotions rule us, but to analyze our feelings, learn, and move on. In the highest sense, forgiveness can mean living in the peace and happiness of God's presence. Forgiveness does not mean we let ourselves be hurt again and again. It means that we process the hurt and then offer love, compassion and understanding while forming a strategy of not feeling hurt again.

An insight that may smooth our travels on the road of life is not expecting perfection from people, because we all make mistakes. Make your happiness stand alone, independent of others' actions or inactions. Give them the same benefit of the doubt you'd want given to yourself. Sometimes it's just an honest misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Roadmap Toward Forgiveness

Meditation

THE HEART OF YOGA is union with our souls, and where is that union to be found? In deep meditation. My first step toward forgiveness was meditation—absorbing that peace of God found in its practice. Also, carrying the effects of meditation into our daily lives can shield us against life's hurts. This castle of peace can prove unassailable if we can learn to live within its strong walls built in meditation.



Practice of the Presence of God

ST. PAUL ADVISED TO “pray without ceasing.” Some do this by repeating a mantra or affirmation mentally. Others have an ongoing conversation with God. They reason that they’re going to think anyway, so why not bring God into their thoughts. An example would be: “Lord, why can’t I think of You more often?”

Prayer

WE HELP OTHERS WHEN we pray for them. Sincerely praying for those who’ve hurt us can literally heal the situation on both ends. I believe when we sincerely and deeply pray for others we absorb God’s light within and direct it to those for whom we pray. This can also be a great strategy of mind control—rather than allowing our thoughts to recall past hurts that give rise to painful feelings, we can stop the negative trend and guide our thoughts into prayer. The hurts will defuse and we can react positively.

Affirmations

THROUGH AFFIRMATIONS we can change every aspect of our lives. We can go from victim to hero using this

powerful tool in the process of forgiveness. I sometimes use this affirmation by Paramahansa Yogananda: “As I radiate love and goodwill to others, I open a channel for God’s love to come to me. Divine love is the magnet by which I draw all good.”

Conclusion

FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN we become helpless victims or do not strive for justice. It means that in our hearts we give love and friendship to those who have wronged us.

Jesus Christ said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and ‘hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” From the New Testament: “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven!’” Seventy times seven times, that’s a lot of forgiveness! But isn’t it better to forgive than to go through

life carrying hurts with you?

From the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” If we want forgiveness, we should learn to forgive. Only then can we harness the karmic law of cause and effect to our benefit, and be more easily forgiven for our past actions. The above roadmap can help us live in a paradise of unconditional love.

In closing, from India’s great epic, The Mahabharata: “One should forgive, under any injury. It hath been said that the continuation of the species is due to man being forgiving. Forgiveness is holiness; by forgiveness the universe is held together. Forgiveness is the might of the mighty; forgiveness is sacrifice; forgiveness is quiet of mind. Forgiveness and gentleness are the qualities of the Self-possessed. They represent eternal virtue.” 🙏

Notes

1 www.ncregister.com.

© 2023 Jonathan Ansley Ward. Jonathan was a manager of SRF Hidden Valley Ashram Retreat (now retired). He spends his time in meditation, service and writing. His blog can be found at <https://jonathanansleyward.com/>.



Healing Sounds

The Power of Harmonics

Through the principle of resonance, sound can be used to change disharmonious frequencies of the body back to their normal, healthful vibrations.

BY JONATHAN GOLDMAN

AS THE ANCIENTS seemed to know, everything in the universe is in a state of vibration. The chair you may be sitting on is in a state of vibration. Sound may be understood as being vibration. “Resonance” is the frequency at which an object most naturally vibrates. Everything has resonant frequency, whether or not we can audibly perceive it. From the orbits of the planets around the sun to movement of the electrons around atoms, everything is vibrating.

It is also important to understand that, in alignment with this concept of sound, every organ, bone, and tissue in your body has its own separate resonant frequency. Together they make up a composite frequency, a harmonic that is your own personal vibratory rate. Through resonance, it is possible for the

vibrations of one vibrating body to reach out and set another body into motion. This can easily be observed, for example, when a singer breaks a glass with his or her voice. What happens is that the singer is able to match the resonant frequency of the glass and set that glass into vibration. Then, when too much sound energy is used and the glass is overamplified, it breaks.

There are numerous examples of resonance with which we may be familiar. You may have seen footage of a bridge that has been vibrated by a heavy wind: the bridge begins to sway and then starts to vibrate and soon it breaks apart and falls into the water. This phenomenon is well known to architects who now create structures that are not easily resonated by external vibrations such as wind.

Yet, as sound can be used to destroy, it can also be used to heal and transform. Just as it is possible to set an object into its own natural motion through resonance,

so it is possible to restore the natural vibratory frequencies of an object that may be out of tune or harmony. When an organ or another portion of the body is vibrating out of tune, we call this “disease.”

Let us conceive of the human body as a wonderful orchestra that is playing this marvelous symphony. When we are in a state of health, the entire orchestra is playing together. However, when disease sets in it is as though a player—the second violin, for example—has lost their sheet music and begins to play in the wrong key and the wrong rhythm. First it begins to affect the rest of the string section. Ultimately this person causes the entire orchestra to sound poorly.

Traditional allopathic medicine currently has several approaches to the problem we have just described. One solution is to drug the violinist, sometimes to death, in hopes of getting this person to stop playing. Another more frequently utilized solution is to cut out the offending organ, as occurs in surgery. But what if it were possible to give this suffering musician back their sheet music and let the whole orchestra return to normal? Analogously, what if it were possible somehow to project the proper resonant frequency back into the organ that was vibrating out of tune and harmony?

When an organ or another part of the body is in a state of health, it will be creating a natural resonant frequency that is harmonious with the rest of the body. However, when disease sets in, a different sound pattern is established in that part of the body that is not vibrating in harmony. Therefore, it is possible, through use of externally created sound that is projected into the diseased area, to reintroduce the correct harmonic pattern into that part of the body that is afflicted and effect a curative reaction. Through the principle of resonance, sound can be used to change disharmonious frequencies of the body back to their normal, healthful vibrations.

Entrainment

THE DIFFERENT RHYTHMS of the body may also be changed through sound. This is known as “entrainment” and involves the ability of the more powerful rhythmic vibrations of one object to change the less powerful rhythmic vibrations of another object and cause it to synchronize its rhythms with the first object. Through sound it is possible to change the rhythms of our brainwaves, as well as our heartbeat and respiration.

Different brainwave rates have been equated to different states of consciousness. There are four basic categories of brain waves, based upon cycles per second (hertz or Hz), the measurements given to sound. They are:

1. Beta waves—from 14 to 20 Hz, which are found in our normal waking state of consciousness
2. Alpha waves—from 8 to 13 Hz, which occur when we daydream or meditate
3. Theta waves—from 4 to 7 Hz, which occur in states of deep meditation and sleep, as well as in shamanic activity
4. Delta waves—from 0.5 to 3 Hz, which occur in deep sleep and have been found in very profound states of meditation and healing

The use of music in sacred ceremonies and shamanic rituals has occurred since ancient times. It has recently been verified that sound can be used to affect and change our brainwaves. The changing of these rates creates changes in consciousness, allowing mystically altered states to be induced.

These principles of using resonance and entrainment are the fundamental concepts behind the use of sound to heal and transform. They are found in every practice that uses sound, regardless of the tradition, belief system, or culture. Many times those utilizing sound for spiritual or magical purposes may not be aware of them. But examination of these practices, from the Hindu use of mantras to shamanic use of chanting and drumming, reveals a commonality in these principles of resonance and entrainment as the basis of sonic transformation and healing.

Sound and Healing

THE USE OF SOUND as a healing modality is probably as old as the first sound ever made by a man or a woman. The first humans are believed to have used sounds in sacred and ritualistic ways to promote fertility, to aid at birth, to facilitate the growing of crops, to accept death, and for many other occasions. Using sound, they would summon spirits and ancestors to cure sickness and rid a body of disease.

As humankind developed in its understanding and knowledge of sound, the masters of the ancient Mystery Schools realized the true power of sound to bring healing and transformation. While little of the exact knowledge of these ancient Mystery Schools remains, it is, however, quite probable that the major instrument used in those times was the human voice.

For all the instruments available on this planet, the most powerful is the human voice. This is especially true when the voice is used for healing. Electronic instruments can make louder sounds with more amplitude and decibel levels than the human voice; these machines can also create tones that are well above or below the ability of any human. This does not mean, however, that great loudness or frequency range are any more effective than the volume and frequencies of the human voice. Bigger is not necessarily better. Louder does not necessarily mean more healing.



Sound as a “Carrier Wave of Consciousness”

WHEN I FIRST BEGAN working with sound and music for healing, I understood that everything was based upon frequency. As the Hermetic Principles tell us, the universe is nothing, more or less, than an endless number of vibrations and rhythms. Yet, as I began to pursue and study this work more, I began to notice another interesting phenomenon. Sometimes different people apparently used different frequencies or different sounds to heal the same problem. “How could this be?” I wondered, unless there was something else besides the frequency. There must have been something equally important in sound that I had been ignoring.

It was my friend and fellow colleague Steven Halpern, Ph.D., who first brought my attention to the missing area in question. “Sound is a carrier wave of consciousness,” Steven said. This means that depending upon where an individual’s awareness is placed when he creates a certain sound, the sound will carry information on that state to the person receiving it. If, for example, you are angry and you create a sound, even though it may be a pleasant sound, you will be sending anger that is incorporated into that sound. This will be perceived on some subtle level by those receiving the sound.

I like to think of this as the intent or purpose behind the sound. With this word *intent*, we are really talking about the consciousness of the sound being created. This encompasses the overall state of the person making the sound and involves the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of that person. The initial understanding of intention involves our conscious mind. Is the conscious intent of the sound to heal or to hurt, or is there no specific intent or purpose there at all?

A more advanced understanding of intent involves what may be understood as alignment with the purpose of our higher selves, or the “Divine Will.” It is that aspect of consciousness that is able to align with the sacred energy of sound. It is “thy will,” not “my will.” When we have reached this level, our intent is to become a vehicle for sacred sound, and we are able to bypass the lesser aspects of self that may be out of balance. For many people, the initial understanding of intent is a major stepping-stone in using sound as a transformative and therapeutic tool, for most of us have never created sound with conscious awareness and purpose. Once I began to bring the concept of intent into the area of healing with sound, answers appeared for me. The concept of intent relates to the Hermetic principle that all is mind, for intent stems from the mind of the creator of sound. All is vibration and rhythm, but what is the intent behind the energy?

John Diamond, M.D., worked for years with behavioral kinesiology, a method of muscle testing. With kinesiology you would test a person to determine if his muscle was strengthened or weakened by an external force or stimulus. For example, when someone held a cigarette and you pressed his arm down, his arm would be much weaker than before he held the cigarette. Dr. Diamond spent many years demonstrating that not only would certain substances make us strong or weak, but that music could do the same thing. The main aspect of what made the music positive and strengthening or negative and weakening depended upon the intention of the person creating the music.

The Human Voice

THE MAJOR FOCUS in this book is the human voice. There are two reasons for this. First, the human voice is

The use of music in sacred ceremonies and shamanic rituals has occurred since ancient times. It has recently been verified that sound can be used to affect and change our brainwaves. The changing of these rates creates changes in consciousness, allowing mystically altered states to be induced.

the most accessible of instruments. We do not have to go out and buy a piece of scientific machinery or a musical instrument in order to experience harmonics. Second, the easiest instrument through which intention can be focused and channeled is the human voice. It is a bit more difficult to pick up an instrument and project your intent. It is more difficult to turn on a machine and project your intention, especially if the machine is designed for healing and all you have to do is turn it on and leave the room.

Because of this understanding of the importance of intention within the use of sound as a modality for healing and transformation, I have created a formula that is important for us to comprehend. It is this:

Frequency + Intention = Healing

IT MEANS THAT the intention of the person working with the sound is as important as the frequency that is being projected at a person to create resonant frequency healing. Since the concept of intention is, at present, a scientifically immeasurable quality, it is extremely difficult for many in the medical community to understand it. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this formula is correct and that without the aspect of intention, working with pure frequency alone is not the answer.

This is another reason why I have been working more closely with the human voice. When we have learned techniques for harmonic toning, the human voice is able to create nearly every frequency, at least within the bandwidth of audible hearing. Due to the Principle of Correspondence, these sounds can potentially relate to any vibrating object. We therefore have the resonance and entrainment aspects of sound within our own capacity.

Try this for yourself. Take a little phrase such as “I really like you” and project different qualities onto this. For example, say “I really like you” and imagine saying this to a loved one such as a parent, a child, a brother, or a good friend whom you haven’t seen in a long time.

Close your eyes and see this person and say “I really like you.” Now imagine that you are with a person whom you find sexually attractive. It may be a husband, wife, boy- or girlfriend. Whoever it is, imagine your attraction to this person and then say “I really like you” and perceive the difference in the way you felt it from the first time you said it.

Now imagine that you are with someone you really don’t like and really can’t stand to be with. Close your eyes, feel the disharmony in the situation, and say “I really like you” to this imagined person. It may sound very different or it may sound very similar. But the energy behind this “I really like you” is certainly different from the other two. Even if you use the exact tone of voice with all three “I really like yous,” do you think the different people receiving these sounds would be able to perceive the differences in intention in them? They are the same words (the same frequency), but with different intentions they will affect us very, very differently.

We can learn to use our voices for positive means or we can create the opposite effect. The human voice seems to be the most potent creator of sound frequencies that can be coupled with intention. Through these principles we can understand how the voice may be used to heal and transform. We can embody the mystical and sacred power of sound and rediscover our own innate ability to use our voices as extraordinary instruments of health and well-being. 🌸

Excerpted from *Healing Sounds: The Power of Harmonics, 30th Anniversary Edition*, © 2022 by Jonathan Goldman, published by Healing Arts Press, www.healingartspress.com, a Division of Inner Traditions Press International. Jonathan Goldman, MA, is an international authority and pioneer in the field of sound healing. He is the author of numerous books, director of the Sound Healers Association, and president of Spirit Music, Inc, in Boulder, CO. A Grammy nominee, he has created over thirty award-winning recordings. Jonathan lectures, gives workshops and online courses on the therapeutic and transformational use of sound throughout the world. For more information visit HealingSounds.com.

The Net of Indra

We spend our lives in a kind of amnesia, sensing disconnection that doesn't exist. Einstein called this an "optical delusion," imagining ourselves to be separate beings, cut off at the root from the rest of creation. **BY MARK MATOUSEK**

YEARS AGO WHILE volunteering at a hospital, I spent time with a man named Jack, who'd worked fifty years on an oil rig, had arms like a wrestler, and was now, at seventy-five, battling a tumor in his lung. Jack's physical pain was being managed with a morphine pump, his nursing care was impeccable, yet he seemed racked with meta-physical pain, as Jim MacLaren would call it, an isolation so profound that no number of visitors, narcotics, or games of five-card rummy with me were able to alleviate it. The first rule of volunteer training is never to presume to understand how the patient feels, as in "I've been there, I understand." You haven't and you don't. The second rule is to check your cheerleader self at the door and resist the overwhelming urge to do something—anything—to raise their spirits or help them smile. You're there to listen, to be empathic, to put yourself aside sufficiently to be a container—in the therapeutic sense—for whatever a patient might need to express.

So I struggled not to cheer Jack up, dealt the cards, didn't ask any questions, avoided his forlorn expression as much as possible. One day while I was in his room, the hospital chaplain poked her head in. Sister Loretta weighed three hundred pounds and looked a lot like Rosie O'Donnell. "How's my favorite hunk?" she asked Jack, scraping a chair across the floor to sit at his bedside.

"Lousy, Sister."

"Loretta's here," she told him, signaling for me to get lost. I backed into the doorway and listened. From where I stood, I saw Sister Loretta take Jack's hand. At first the old guy didn't say anything. Loretta waited. Then I heard him starting to snifle. "Talk to me," Loretta said.

"My father never loved me," said Jack. At this his tears broke into sobs. I was stunned to hear this coming from him, amazed that in the midst of a physical crisis, at a time when his health remained uncertain, the ghost

of his father's absent love should be the thing that pained this tough guy the most.

Such glaring disconnects are common among survivors of all kinds, the gaps between what ought to be wrong and what really is: The homeless guy who wants conversation more than he wants pennies or food. The ex-POW who needs to belong somewhere more than he needs hosannas or financial aid. The individual surrounded by love who complains about not feeling "cosmic connection," because God, she believes, left her high and dry the day she lost her beloved child.

We spend our lives in a kind of amnesia, sensing disconnection that doesn't exist. Einstein called this an "optical delusion," imagining ourselves to be separate beings, cut off at the root from the rest of creation. "A human being . . . experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest," wrote the father of relativity.

This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

We sequester ourselves inside our own minds, then project this awful abyss around us, picturing ourselves to be fenced-off, abandoned citizens of a private, bullying universe. This imaginary chasm seems only to widen during times of pain. Yet even under the worst conditions, strength in numbers continues to prevail. As one Holocaust survivor put it, "Lone dogs died first." Mary Robinson, the ex-president of Ireland, observed this principle at work during the troubles in her country. "It is in each other's shadow that we flourish," Robinson insisted to me when we spoke.



This is not sentimental pabulum. In a universe where boundaries do not actually exist, where waves and particles, protons and neutrons are indivisibly strung together, such baseline connection is obvious. In Indian philosophy this glistening, intergalactic jewelwork of matter (and antimatter) is known as the Net of Indra. This web is so tightly strung that “the flap of a butterfly’s wings on earth can be felt on the planet of Bettelgers,” as a physicist observed. If a full moon can make women menstruate, it’s not so much of a stretch to realize that individuals in our lives are ricocheting off of us at every moment, creating positive or negative charges depending on their own chemistry.

“We’re wired to connect,” science writer Daniel Goleman tells me over lunch at his favorite Tibetan restaurant in Northampton, Massachusetts. Ten years ago Dan became a culture hero with *Emotional Intelligence*, a seminal book that helped redefine what it means to be smart in our IQ-obsessed culture. Recently Dan has turned his eye to the workings of what he calls social intelligence, which includes the contagiousness of common emotions (think of giggles, yawning, tears, and screams) as well as the pharmaceutical value of keeping good company.

“The brain itself is social,” Dan tells me over a plate of yak sausage. “That’s the most exciting finding

in the past ten years.” His gentle mien and thoughtful diction reflect his own thirty-year meditation practice (he was posted in India while doing his Harvard Ph.D. fieldwork). “One person’s inner state affects and drives the other person. We’re forming brain-to-brain bridges—a two-way traffic system—all the time. We actually catch each other’s emotions like a cold.”

“Is that really true?” I ask.

“If we’re in distressing, toxic relationships with people who are constantly putting us down, this has actual physical consequences,” Dan assures me. Stress produces cortisol, a chemical that hinders cell health. (He cites a study done on women caring for husbands with Alzheimer’s, which found that their actual cell life diminished at an accelerated rate.) Conversely, positive interactions cause the body to secrete oxytocin, the chemical released during lovemaking, nursing, and delivery, which lowers stress hormones and amplifies the immune system.

“I have this experience often with my two-year-old granddaughter,” Dan tells me. “She’s like a vitamin for me. Being with her actually feels like a kind of elixir. The most important people in our lives are actually our biological allies.”

Indeed, neuroplasticity, the discovery that the brain is always growing (not diminishing, as our grandparents believed), has revolutionized our

understanding of how people evolve over the course of a lifetime. “Stem cells manufacture one hundred thousand brain cells every day till you die,” Dan explains. “This defies what used to be the dogma. In fact, the brain continually reshapes itself throughout life with ongoing experience. It’s where the maxim ‘use it or lose it’ comes from in neuroscience. The more you challenge it, the more the brain seems to rise to the occasion, and social interaction helps neurogenesis.”

Take something called mirror neurons, whose sole function is to reflect (in us) the things we see in the world around us. “There are neurons whose only job is to recognize a smile and make you smile in return,” he explains. “The same goes with frowning.” I’m reminded of the Michelangelo effect, in which long-term partners come to resemble each other over time through facial muscle mimicry. Such mirroring on a mob scale helps to create creepy-sounding things called memes, those oversized cultural ideas (Democracy! Hygiene! Infidels!) that spread through populations like viruses. “By mimicking what another person does or feels, we bring the outside inside us,” Dan tells me, speaking literally, not figuratively. “To understand one another we actually become like the other a little bit.”

Dan describes two kinds of relationships—the I-IT and the I-YOU (first described by the philosopher Martin Buber)—which have antithetical effects on our social lives. I-IT relationships happen when we treat people as objects or functionaries because we want something from them (in the way, perhaps, that Jack’s father might have treated him when all the boy wanted was an I-YOU pat on the back). “In I-YOU relationships, there’s human connection. There’s feedback, a loop, because who the other person is, and what they have to say, matters.” Unfortunately, the “inexorable technocrep” of our culture conspires against such intimacy, Dan believes. As T.S. Eliot presciently observed of our first major cultural social wedge, the TV set, back in the early sixties, television “permits millions of people to listen to the same joke at the same time, and yet remain lonesome.” Not only is constant digital connectivity stressful, science has discovered, but also, Dan says, “to the extent that technology absorbs people in virtual reality, it deadens them to those who are actually around them.”

Since “empathy is the prime inhibitor of human cruelty,” as he reminds me, such alienation can have disastrous results. “Withholding the natural inclination

to feel with another allows us to treat the other as It—as Them,” Dan says. “The more Thems we have, the more dangerous the world becomes.” But how can it possibly be true that human beings are essentially altruistic or that “the human brain is preset for kindness,” as he has written? What about the newspaper headlines? “Remember,” the ex-New York Times reporter tells me, “if it bleeds it leads. We pay more attention to human cruelty. But it’s an aberration to be cruel.”

The famous Yale University Milgram experiment was not the last word on human nature, he assures me. Despite their reputation for being selfish savages, even young children demonstrate altruism from an early age, apparently. In one study, infants reportedly cried when they saw or heard another baby crying but rarely when they heard their own distress. Monkeys have been known to starve themselves after realizing that grabbing food delivers an electrical shock to their cage-mate. Dan makes reference to the philosopher Mencius’s assertion that any conscious adult would automatically jump down a well to save a drowning child. Yes, I say, but do they cheat on their wives? “We may not always be hooked up,” he says, laughing, “but that doesn’t mean that the wiring’s no good.”

THE LINK BETWEEN KINDNESS, survival, and social intelligence seems obvious. As a Harvard post-doc studying meditation in India, Dan noticed that seasoned practitioners tended to exude what he calls “a special quality, magnetic in a quiet sense.” Contrary to stereotype, these spiritual types did not seem otherworldly at all, but were “lively and engaged, extremely present, involved in the moment, often funny, yet profoundly at peace—equanimous in disturbing situations,” as he describes it. What’s more, this quality was *communicable*. “You always felt better than before you’d spent time with them, and this feeling lasted.”

Physicists and mystics agree on this point. The components of altruistic energy appear to be as measurable as photons and electrons; they are also more palpable than a skeptic might imagine, as San Francisco psychologist Paul Ekman reports to me after spending a week in Dharmasala with the Dalai Lama. “At the airport afterward, my wife looked at me and said, ‘You’re not the man I married!’” says Ekman, who is not a Buddhist, laughing. “I was acting like somebody who’s in love.” The foremost authority on the physiology of emotion,

Remembering our indissoluble connection might actually bring more love into our lives. I've sensed this love myself in the company of genuine masters: a great, unstoppable, pulsating love that draws you toward its own radiance. This force could radically change the world, melt away borders, give hope for increased happiness.

Ekman detected four characteristics common to people with this contagious power: A “palpable goodness,” first of all, that went far beyond some “warm and fuzzy aura” and seemed to arise from genuine integrity. Next, an impression of selflessness—a lack of concern with status, fame, and ego—a “transparency between their personal and public lives that set them apart from those with charisma, who are often one thing on the outside, another when you look under the surface.” Third, Ekman observed that this expansive, compassionate energy nurtured others. Finally, he was struck by the “amazing powers of attentiveness” displayed by these individuals, and the feeling he had of being seen in the round, wholly acknowledged by someone with open eyes.

If these qualities were unique to spiritual masters, they wouldn't be nearly as compelling. What inspired Ekman the scientist was the evidence that such energy is available to the rest of us. “It wasn't luck or culture or genes that created this qualitative difference,” he tells me. “These people have resculpted their brains through practice.” Survivors with no knowledge of brain science often experience this phenomenon for themselves—the way in which when we stretch past our limits, stretching becomes our second nature. Pushing the envelope seems to actually rewire our brains, adding a new repertoire of thoughts and emotions. When writer Andrew Solomon speaks of becoming more compassionate after his recovery from depression, for instance, this is more than Prozac speaking. It is an actual realignment of self through shifts in chemistry and neural conditioning.

In a laboratory outside Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, a monk was monitored a few years back while meditating on compassion. Among other findings, scientists reported a dramatic increase in gamma waves (sparked in the part of the brain associated with positive emotions) while the monk focused on maintaining an open heart. Gamma-bumping like this requires ongoing practice. As a healer named Maxine Gaudio told me, “Everybody can

draw, but not everybody's a Picasso.” Unfortunately, we can't even pick up the brush sometimes, much less locate the canvas. Such forgetting is our nemesis, teachers maintain. “It is our daily dilemma,” as Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast tells me from his hermitage in Upstate New York. “A spiritual energy flows through the universe, a super-aliveness—an active yes,” says the eighty-year-old hermit. “Yet even though our greatest happiness comes from feeling this eternal connection, there's a tendency in all of us to close off from it. Those who counteract the tendency through practice deepen their sense of belonging and free this latent energy.” Brother David recommends such remembrance practice to his students. “When we say, ‘Count your blessings,’ this is a very profound teaching,” he stresses. “A stream of energy—is flowing from the universal source as blood pulsates from the heart. Knowing this, I'm energized and pass the blessing along to my brother so it flows again to its source.” In this way, Brother David believes, “we create a network of grateful living.”

The Net of Indra, shimmering. Remembering our indissoluble connection might actually bring more love into our lives. “It is love,” Brother David assures me. “The love which passes understanding.” I've sensed this love myself in the company of genuine masters: a great, unstoppable, pulsating love that draws you toward its own radiance. This force could radically change the world, melt away borders, give hope for increased happiness. Another great Christian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, articulated this hope for all time. “Someday after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we shall harness . . . the energies of love,” the French paleontologist-priest wrote. “Then for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” 🌸

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PARAM PARA

Answers to Questions on the Spiritual Path

by Swami Amar Jyoti

Would you say a few words about the relationship between relaxation, devotion and longing after God? If the person is longing for God, can they relax about it?

LONGING IS NOT RESTLESSNESS or disturbance or misery. It comes from being very relaxed within. Let us differentiate between longing for God and longing for worldly things. When you long for God your mundane urges or motives are transcended; the desires that keep you restless and impatient get straightened out. When you long for God you truly relax, and when you are relaxed your love for God grows. It is only because of disturbance of mind that we are not able to love God. Relax and love of God will spring up in you all of a sudden. Relaxation leads you to one-pointedness. Or put it the other way: longing for God makes you one-pointed, therefore you relax and love awakens.

Is the purpose of prayer to purify and humble us?

YES, PRAYER SHOULD BE for humility. You are asking something from the Lord of the Universe but He is not bound by our prayers. He will understand. Do not say that because you prayed to God, He should give what you ask. This ego trip has to be avoided. And often you have seen that what you ask for is not given. This is not because God did not listen. You may be praying with relatives and friends for someone who is very ill, yet God takes that soul away. Do your duty by loving, caring, bringing medicine, giving water, whatever is needed for that soul but leave the results up to the Lord. That is the best prayer: for the Lord to do His will. If you cannot be so selfless, the second best is to pray, "Lord, Thy will be done, but have mercy upon me." When we are asking something from the Lord of

the Universe, let us be humble. Instantly our prayers will be heard.

What does it mean to fulfill the purpose of human birth?

HUMAN BIRTH IS ONE of the levels of evolution, like animal, mineral and vegetation. We sometimes call human birth a school, where we come to learn lessons. Compared to the lower species, man is more rational, intelligent, and therefore can inquire and seek. Lower species do not seek, at least not consciously. The importance of human birth is that our conscience and mind are given unto us to be open. We are active mentally as human beings, but to make the best of human life we must use conscience. The day our conscience will be more dominant than our mind, we will have fulfilled the purpose of human birth.

Is selfishness the same as suppressing one's True Self?

THE WORD "SELFISH" includes "self," just as "True Self" includes "self." Selfishness is simply being narrow. When you limit your purpose or motive to your ego, you are selfish. True Self is unbound, so that whatever you do becomes selfless. When you suppress the True Self, you are the limited self, and when you act from limitations that is called selfishness or ignorance. When you act through your universal or unbound faculty, that is your True Self. When you are selfish you are not suppressing your True Self entirely, but allowing only a little bit of your cosmic Self to appear. So, selfishness is simply limited Self. If your wishes are in tune with what should be, you are a Realized Soul. That is spontaneous living.



Whatever determination and optimism you have carried with you, the time comes when these do not work. Then you begin to be humble.

You were talking about how ego wants to survive and I wonder how it has a will to survive? And how do you cut it off?

THIS TENDENCY TO SURVIVE is because ego has forgotten from where it came. When you forget where you came from, you preserve what you are not. The forgetfulness of ego makes it want to survive. The remedy is to remember your Source. That is why we need practices like meditation, prayer, yoga, and study to break habits. Practices are counter-habits to break your previous habits. Habits, good or bad, are bondage. Some habits are iron chains, some are golden chains. Your willfulness of ego has become a habit because you have forgotten your Source. Until you come to Consciousness, until you come to Light, you have to go through darkness. The whole purpose of spiritual practices is to break the habits that have caught hold of you. Eventually, even auspicious habits have to be transcended. This needs your will. Where there is a will there is a way. How you will cannot be taught. You have to *do* it.

The aspect of my being that hears when you speak and that contemplates, is that ego too?

THERE IS A THICKER EGO and a rarified ego. The ego that contemplates is a better ego than the ego that does mischief. When I speak of the one who contemplates, I mean the finer ego. These are not separate, however, just degrees of ego. A rarified ego is when you make it finer and finer, when its lightness makes you transcend. The time will come when you transcend ego all of a sudden, but until it remains heavy, you cannot jump from there. Attending Satsang and retreats, meditation,

prayer, grace, blessings, yoga, austerities, penances, fasting, light food and sattvic living make your ego finer. If the mind is heavy, attached, jealous or negative, you cannot contemplate. Therefore, do practices in order to come out of this heaviness. As Jesus said, "Come ye who are heavy laden and find rest."

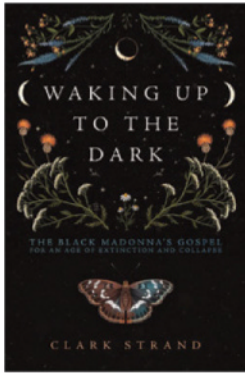
I hear you saying to be humble but what if I am not? Should I try to be humble?

YOU CANNOT TRY to be humble. There are methods to come to humility. You may see someone at Satsang or during retreats who is humble and be inspired by them. You can read biographies of holy people, which will cultivate humility in you by association. If that does not work, suffering will make you humble. The three most important ways to grow in humility are through attending Satsang, study, and the company of those who are humble. Reflection helps too. Reflect upon pride, which makes you stiff-necked and creates tension. Then use discrimination. Some austerities may also help. When you climb high mountains, you risk danger, storms, cold, fatigue, and other adversities. Whatever determination and optimism you have carried with you, the time comes when these do not work. Then you begin to be humble. Sometimes the awe you see in nature humbles you. Go on slowly working upon your mind. Self-suggestion gives insight. It works on a vibratory level. 🌸

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Reviews

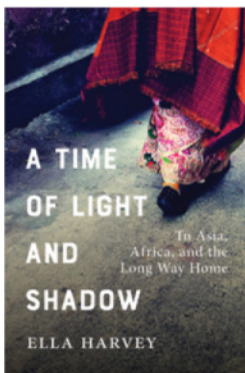
Books



WAKING UP TO THE DARK: The Black Madonna's Gospel for an Age of Extinction & Collapse by Clark Strand, Paperback \$17/eBook \$10/Audiobook \$10, Monkfish.com.

THE GREAT MOTHER has been called by many names: the Black Madonna, the Shekina, Theotokos, Mother Kali. She is the original Matrix from which all life emerges—and to Whom it returns.

Waking Up to the Dark weaves together paleobiology, memoir, history, science, and spiritual archaeology to lead us back into the lost mysteries of the dark. The author offers penetrating insight into the spiritual enrichment that can be found when we pull the plug on our billion-watt culture. As he writes, “We all know that something is wrong. But we would rather argue about things that don’t matter, or about things that won’t make any difference in the end. We would rather be distracted by punditry and gadgetry than realize how lost we are. We stay up watching the Late Show without realizing that we are the Late Show.” Finally, he shares an urgent message for the world, received through a mysterious young woman he calls Our Lady of Climate Change, about the challenges we all know are coming.

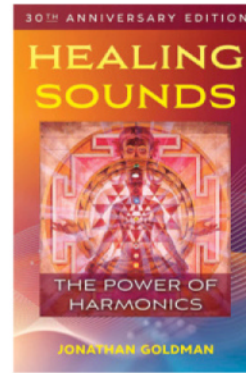


A TIME OF LIGHT AND SHADOW: To Asia, Africa, and the Long Way Home by Ella Harvey, Paperback \$23/eBook \$11, RockyMountainBooks.com.

THIS IS courageous story of compassion, self-discovery and cross-cultural immersion amidst a backdrop of some of the world’s most fascinating wonders and devastating humanitarian crises.

1975 was a time of new freedom for women. Ella Harvey lived in Paris, then worked as a nurse with Medicines Sans Frontiers in war-torn Lebanon. After returning to Paris, she decided to travel to India on the Orient Express—alone—through Italy, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, and Croatia to Istanbul where she stayed three months, then returned home to Canada. A year later she set off alone for India and did a solo trek in the Himalayas. By 1980 she was working for the International Red Cross in a Cambodian refugee camp, and in the drought-ridden desert

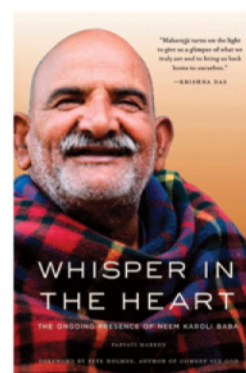
of Djibouti, Africa. Faced with the immensity of poverty and suffering, her commitment to service was shaken. Four decades later, as an older woman she returned to India where she asks herself, “Would I dare do now what I readily did then?” After visiting Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, and elsewhere, she muses, “There are no absolute destinations. There is only the truth of my life that shapes and shifts like clouds billowing under a burning sky.”



HEALING SOUNDS: The Power of Harmonics, 30th Anniversary Edition by Jonathan Goldman; Paperback \$20/eBook \$14/Audiobook \$16, HealingArtsPress.com.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, Jonathan Goldman wrote, “Everything is in a state of vibration. Everything is frequency. This understanding is both spiritual and scientific. In groups, sacred sounds can influence

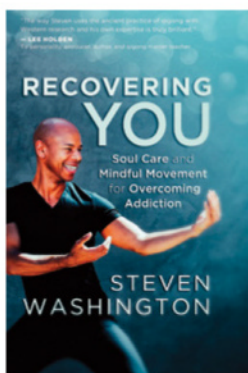
not only ourselves and those around us but can adjust the planet to a new level of consciousness.” In *Healing Sounds*, he chronicles his unique journey of sound healing through decades of study with healers and within cultures around the world. In this 2022 edition he presents a step-by-step process of vibrational activation using sacred and healing sounds. Exploring the vibrational principles that underlie the framework of the universe, including frequency and resonance, Goldman explains how harmonics represent the colors of sound and affect us on all levels, bridging body, mind, and spirit. He explores mantra and chakra chanting, sacred vowels, vocal toning, conscious listening, cymatics, sonic shamanism, magical incantations, and other vibrational and sound healing techniques. In the audiobook he shares more than 100 minutes of audio downloads of sound healing exercises, guided meditations, and sonic excerpts to help you experience and embody the power of harmonics. You can read an excerpt on page 36 of this issue.



WHISPER IN THE HEART: The Ongoing Presence of Neem Karoli Baba by Parvati Markus; Paperback \$20/eBook \$8, Mandala Publishing/InsightEditions.com.

NEEM KAROLI BABA, the great Indian saint, left this world in 1973 but continues to touch souls everywhere and awaken their consciousness. *Whisper in the Heart* is a beautiful compilation of personal experiences from over 150 people who “met” Maharajji in dreams, visions, meditation, and in ordinary life. These extraordinary stories are told from the heart by

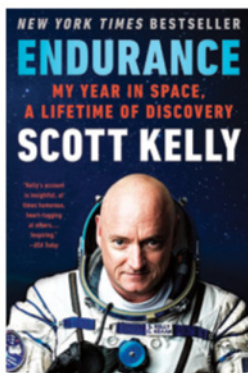
those who were overwhelmed with the blessings Maharajji bestowed. The book is divided into ten chapters including Appearances, Photos, Kirtan and Hanuman Chalisa, Temples and Ashrams, Retreats and Yatras, Dreams, Many Roads Home, and others. Among the miracles shared are Maharajji showing up at a desperate woman's doorstep in France, bringing an end of years of abuse to a child in Australia, dancing on a beach in Miami, and appearing to a policeman in Taos (we also share one in this issue). As Parvati Markus writes: "He comes to open hearts with a blast of unconditional love, to bring comfort and aid in response to calls for help, and as a reminder that we are, indeed, all One."



RECOVERING YOU: Soul Care and Mindful Movement for Overcoming Addiction by Steven Washington; Paperback \$14/Audiobook \$16, NewWorldLibrary.com.

STEVEN WASHINGTON has dedicated his life to helping those with addiction find their own path to health and happiness. An acclaimed qigong master and Pilates teacher, he shares his story

of growing up around alcoholism and going into recovery from his own addiction and alcoholism. Substance abuse has worsened dramatically since Covid-19 and those with alcohol and drug addictions have been especially impacted. Our collective anxiety has affected people in many ways, including over-eating and over-buying. In this book, Washington offers gentle advice and tools and techniques for anyone struggling with addiction. In each chapter he shares recovery tools, motivation, exercises and practices for self-care. He gives simple breathing exercises, mindful movement, diagrams and instructions for self-massage, meditations, and practices for overcoming isolation, opening communication, and moving beyond fear. He also gives coping strategies, how to overcome triggers, and ways to build social support. *Recovering You* offers a lifeline to the discovery of a new and better way of being.



ENDURANCE: A Year in Space, a Lifetime of Discovery by Scott Kelly; Paperback \$12/eBook \$13/Audiobook \$21, RandomHouse.com.

THE VETERAN OF four space flights and the American record holder for consecutive days spent in space, Scott Kelly has experienced things very few have. In *Endurance* he gives us a glimpse of life inside the extreme challenge of

long-term spaceflight. This is an amazing memoir from the astronaut who spent a record-breaking year aboard the International Space Station, a candid account of his remarkable voyage, of the journeys off the planet that preceded it, and of his colorful formative years and journey to become an astronaut. Part of his year in space included a comparative study of the effects of space flight on the body along with his identical twin and NASA astronaut, Mark Kelly, back home. He describes everyday life on the space station, the pressures of constant close cohabitation, the work performed daily and weekly, the physical challenge of oxygen levels dropping due to carbon dioxide, the catastrophic risks of depressurization or colliding with space junk. He also describes the camaraderie among the astronauts from the USA, Russia, Japan and Europe, along with his feelings of isolation from being away from loved ones on Earth. Kelly's humanity, compassion, humor and passion resonate throughout as he recalls his rough-and-tumble New Jersey childhood and the youthful inspiration that sparked his astounding career, and makes clear his belief that Mars will be the next ultimately challenging step in American spaceflight. A natural storyteller and modern-day hero, Kelly has a message of hope for the future that will inspire for generations to come. Here, in his personal story, we see the triumph of the human imagination, the strength of the human will, and the boundless wonder of the galaxy.

Noteworthy Books

YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE: Ram Dass Maps the Journey arranged and illustrated by Amy Buetens and Julie Weinstein—This beautifully presented YA graphic novel is distilled from five decades of recordings of Ram Dass as he shares his life story and transformative teachings with honesty and humor. He offers inspiration for understanding universal truths, navigating your unique path with compassion and awareness, and living a meaningful life. (Paperback \$23 / eBook \$9, Mandala/InsightEditions.com)

THE MAGIC IN YOUR MIND: An Eckhart Tolle Edition by U.S. Andersen—Eckhart Tolle recognized the brilliance of this self-empowerment classic and here presents it anew as the latest volume in his imprint. In clear, crisp, invigorating language, Andersen offers a liberating message for anyone seeking to change, improve, and awaken their consciousness. (Paperback \$8/eBook \$2/ Audiobook \$17, NewWorldLibrary.com)

CIRCUMLOCUTION: One Hundred New Verses & MACROTEXT: One Hundred Lyrical Experiments by David Belcheff—Listening to David recite his poetry is like listening to Conscious Rap: "Humility is the currency and coin of Nature/A veggie's happy whether eaten or just left There/It's

pleased to be useless or to serve many uses/Fiber in your clothes or jamba in your juices..." —and many more-such, we love it!

Books for Children



HORSING AROUND IN THE TOWN OF GOLD HILL by Amy Fortunato, illustrated by Sidney Meireles, Ages 4-9, Paperback 8.5x11 \$25, cowboys-sweetheart.com/horsing-around-gold-hill.

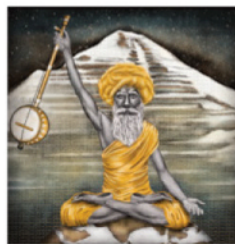
SWAMI AMAR JYOTI established Sacred Mountain Ashram in 1974 in Gold Hill at 8400' elevation, 12 miles and 3000' above Boulder, Colorado. Within our mountain community we have the oldest continually running school in the state, and lots of colorful and talented community members. Among them is Amy Fortunato, whose children's book, *Horsing Around in the Town of Gold Hill*, has just been published. The book features gorgeous water-color paintings on every page, and a fun and humorous, rhyming tale for readers of all ages. When Horse decides that a change of routine is needed, a nutty Squirrel opens his gate to freedom. Moving through the pasture they meet Rabbit, then Bear, then Raccoon and Owl and together they explore and enjoy the high peaks and wildflowers. Later, when Horse returns to his corral, he celebrates, "Imagine the look on that old cowboy's face when he gets here and sees what we've done with the place! A herd of horses that aren't simply grazing, but doing all sorts of things fun and amazing!" Delightful.



EVERYTHING CHANGES—AND THAT'S OKAY by Carol Dodd, illustrated by Erin Huybrechts, Ages 3-7, Hardcover \$18/ eBook \$11, BalaKids/Shambhala.com.

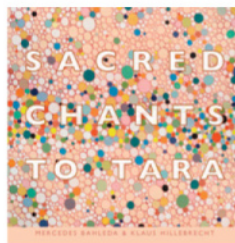
THIS BOOK IS about impermanence, that everything is always changing and nothing stays the same. Each page is carefully woven around the same message with lovely illustrations of people from all cultures, and scenes from around the world. Every page invites careful examination and discussion, finding so many different birds, animals, kids and cultures. We learn how everything changes: a best friend moves away, we move away from beloved homes and friends, a pet dies, the weather changes, plans change. Everything changes and that's OK. Sadness might come but then something happens to make you smile. Things might get scary but take a deep breath and remember that everything changes and that's OK. We have all seen and experienced this changing world. A comforting message for children of all ages.

Audio Reviews



DUST & TEARS by Jai Uttal, 74 min, CD \$20/Digital Album \$20, JaiUttal.com.

WAY OFF IN the distance, across endless desert sands and beneath an infinite starry sky, you can hear the faint cry of the mystic, weeping in love and longing, and singing a melody so profound that it can only be discerned by beings of the most incandescent light. Yet his voice is strangely human and raw, and, like a raging river descending from the Himalayas, his song rolls and churns with all the passionate emotions of a human being yearning for his God. The nine compositions on *Dust & Tears* continue this ancient stream of devotion. These mystical songs, though veined with heart-wrenching sorrow, express the deepest spiritual longings of the human psyche. Yet, when sung with beauty, heartfelt intensity, and vulnerability, these primordial emotions give birth to an unspoken well of sublime joy. The lyrics, composed by Jai Uttal and Nubia, rest on the very breath of our mystical ancestors. The inspiration is from their passionate hearts and ardent poetry. "These songwriters of Bhakti were untamed revolutionaries, proclaiming the triumph of love over hate. May we, in our small way, sing like they sang, fearlessly and with abandon, longing for darshan, praying for all beings to be free."



SACRED CHANTS TO TARA by Mercedes Bahleda & Klaus Hillebrecht, 76 min, CD \$17/Digital Album \$9, WhiteSwanRecords.bandcamp.com.

THE ESSENCE of Tara is fearlessness and courage. Bringing to mind the great compassion of Tara assists in overcoming spiritual and everyday obstacles. In *Sacred Chants to Tara*, Mercedes Bahleda lifts her gorgeous voice to intone eight chants in Tibetan and English. The album is primarily Tibetan prayers to the Goddess, but among them is Tara's Hymn, especially sweet, sung to the tune of "Can't help falling in love with you." There is also a Hymn to the Virgin, which Mercedes describes as "a modern mantra to Tara," inspired by 11th-century poetry honoring the Virgin Mary. The praising chants to Tara focus on the Six Perfections associated with the goddess: Giving, Kindness, Joy, Patience, Meditation and Wisdom. When practiced devotedly, these chants are believed to uplift us to an elevated state of enlightenment. *Sacred Chants to Tara* is a collaboration with Emmy-nominated German composer and musician Klaus Hillebrecht. Also contributing are singer Emily Waters, percussionist Will Duncan, along with Mercedes on tambora and harmonium, and Klaus Hillebrecht on guitar, piano and keyboards. They are also joined by the Tibetan Buddhist nuns of Dolma Ling Nunnery, chanting the ritual Tara Sadhana accompanied by tantric instruments.



Spiritual Cinema

Brilliant Disguise: The Samadhi of KC Tewari

Produced by Raghu Markus, Executive Producer Krishna Das, Directed by David Silver.

IN THE LATE 1960S, Ram Dass brought a group of westerners to India to meet his Guru, Neem Karoli Baba, also known as Maharajji. In this unique biopic, viewers get a rare glimpse into the years following and the life-changing journey that would later influence an entire generation of spiritual seekers. Set in the stunning backdrop of India, *Brilliant Disguise* tells the story of Maharajji leaving his body and instructing his close disciple, KC Tewari, to care for his Western disciples. This film is the story of a man who represents the intrinsic potential in all human beings to live in direct contact with the Divine Presence. KC chose to live within the humble disguise of a husband and school teacher, yet at any moment he could transcend this world and enter into samadhi or cosmic consciousness. While Ram Dass had spoken of the yogic ability to inhabit more than one plane of consciousness at once, KC was a living example of this exalted state. *Brilliant Disguise* features Krishna Das, Raghu Markus, Jai Uttal, Radha Baum, Parvati Markus and others, as well as KC's family in India. The film also includes scenes from the 1989 Maha Kumbha Mela, the largest spiritual gathering in the world, which KC attended with a group of Western disciples. Most of all, this film offers sublime glimpses into the blessed relationship of the Guru and disciples.

77 min, Color, © 2022 by Love Serve Remember Foundation, Stream and download on iTunes/YouTube/Vimeo/Amazon/Google Play, www.ramdass.org/brilliantdisguise.

Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, a Journey, a Song

Directed by Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine.

LEONARD COHEN WAS A life-long seeker, poet and novelist whose legacy as a folk singer and songwriter was monumental. This documentary focuses on his iconic hymn, "Hallelujah," by weaving together the songwriter and his times, the dramatic journey of the song from record label reject to chart-topping hit, and moving performances from major recording artists for whom Hallelujah has become a personal touchstone. Watching Cohen perform from his thirties into his eighties, along with personal footage, we get a deeper understanding of the man and his soul as revealed through his songs. Judy Collins shares memories of "Suzanne," which she performed live with him on TV. Jeff Buckley and Cohen's partner, Marianne Ihlen, also reveal memorable stories, as do many others who knew and worked with him. Approved for production by Cohen just before his 80th birthday in 2014, *Hallelujah* offers never-before-seen archival materials from the Cohen Trust, including his personal notebooks, journals, photographs, performance footage, and rare audio recordings and interviews. As Leonard Cohen commented: "This world is full of conflicts and full of things that cannot be reconciled. But there are moments when we can... reconcile and embrace the whole mess, and that's what I mean by 'Hallelujah.'"

118 min, Color, © 2022, Distributed by Sony Pictures. DVD \$15, Streaming on most platforms.



The Love of the Guru

By Victoria Angel Heart

ONE DAY I WAS at Ram Dass's house in Maui, thinking about how I've never been willing to surrender to the love of the guru because it felt too much like the religion I broke free of. As I stared into Maharajji's picture, Govinda began to recite the Hanuman Chalisa; his dog Leela hung out around us. I surrendered to the beauty of the prayer and came into the place of being that is loving awareness. As the Chalisa ended, a profound silence settled over us. I opened my eyes and with a hint of sarcasm I said to the photo, "Alright Maharajji, I am open to you. Let me feel all the compassion of the universe."

Before that thought had been completed, Leela dog was upon me, *showering me with kisses!* Kisses going up my nose, in my mouth, on my ears, everywhere. She put her paws on my shoulders as the shower of kisses continued. Eventually, she knocked me to the floor as she gave me every ounce of love she had. I laughed and squealed and surrendered into this immediate manifestation of infinite compassion. I felt Maharajji's love completely wash over me—literally washing me with puppy kisses. In that moment, I experienced Ram Dass's mantra "I am loving awareness" completely...

The next day I came to the house for kirtan and found Ram Dass alone in the living room. I told him about meeting Maharajji through Leela, and he smiled and said, "Yep. That's Maharajji." After kirtan, out of nowhere Leela knocked me onto the ottoman, climbed on top of me, and again showered me with slobbery kisses. I felt myself become totally universal again. This is what the love of the guru is like!

On Christmas Eve 2019 I returned to Baba Ram Dass's house to be in his physical presence one last time, this time to say goodbye. As I took off my shoes, I saw a blur coming at me. Before I could even take a breath, I was overtaken by Leela. She knocked me onto my butt as yet again I was swept away in the ocean of love. Leela put her paws on my shoulders, stopped kissing me, and looked directly into my eyes. I saw in them the same penetrating stare of unbearable compassion that I'd seen in Ram Dass's eyes just two weeks earlier. My heart tore open in a simultaneous tumble of grief and love, and I burst into tears.

Excerpted with permission from *Whisper in the Heart: The Ongoing Presence of Neem Karoli Baba* by Parvati Markus, © 2022 Love Serve Remember Foundation, MandalaPublishing.com.

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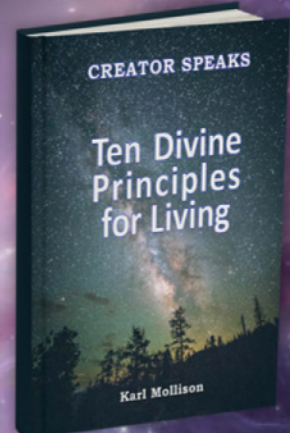
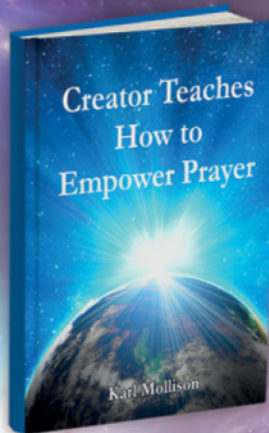
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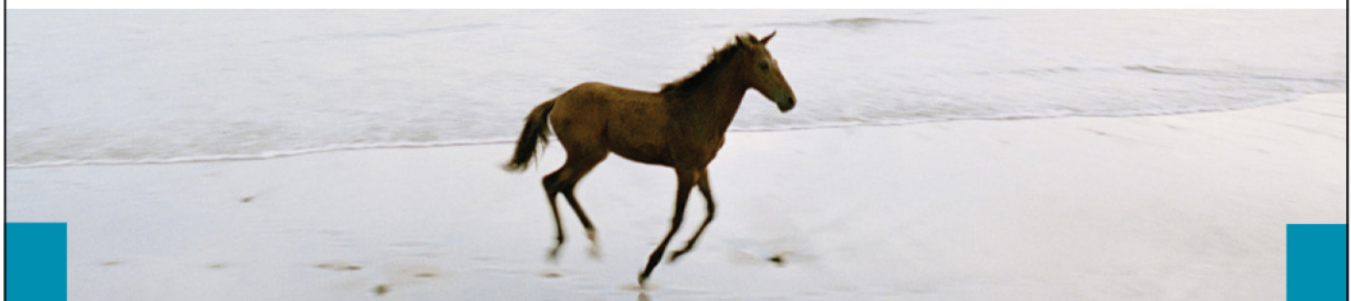


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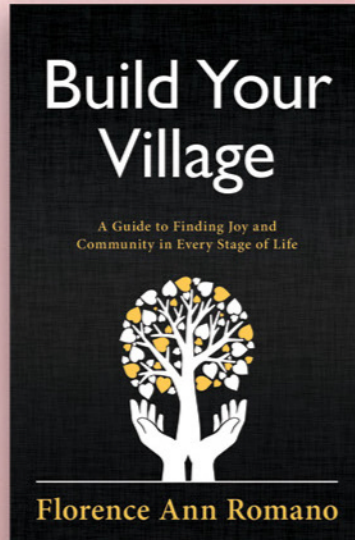
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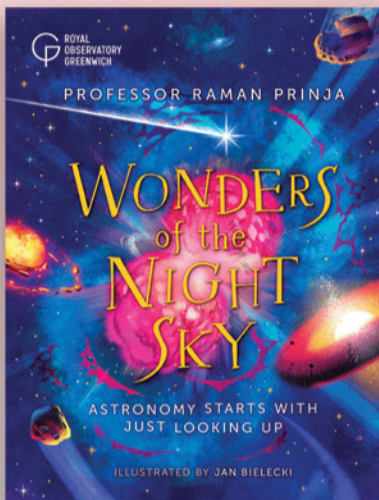
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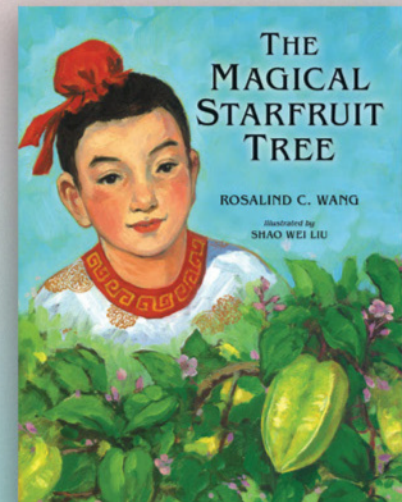
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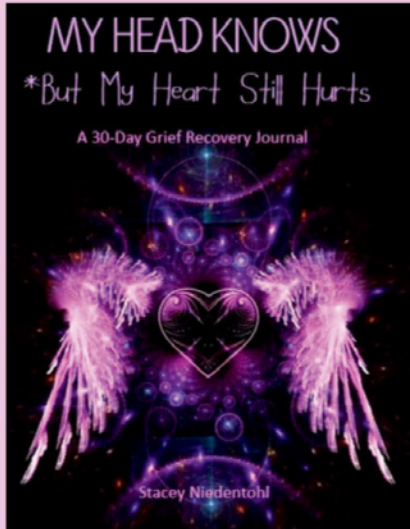


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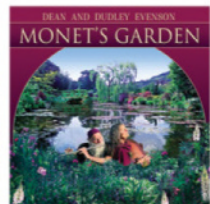
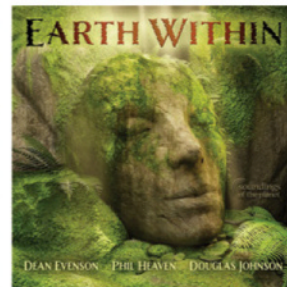
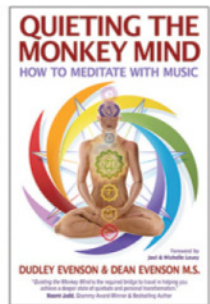
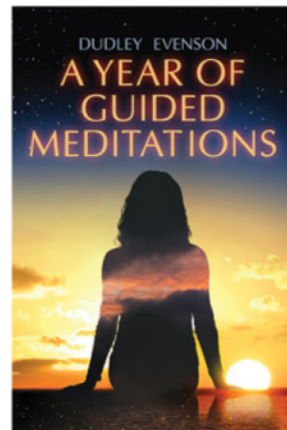
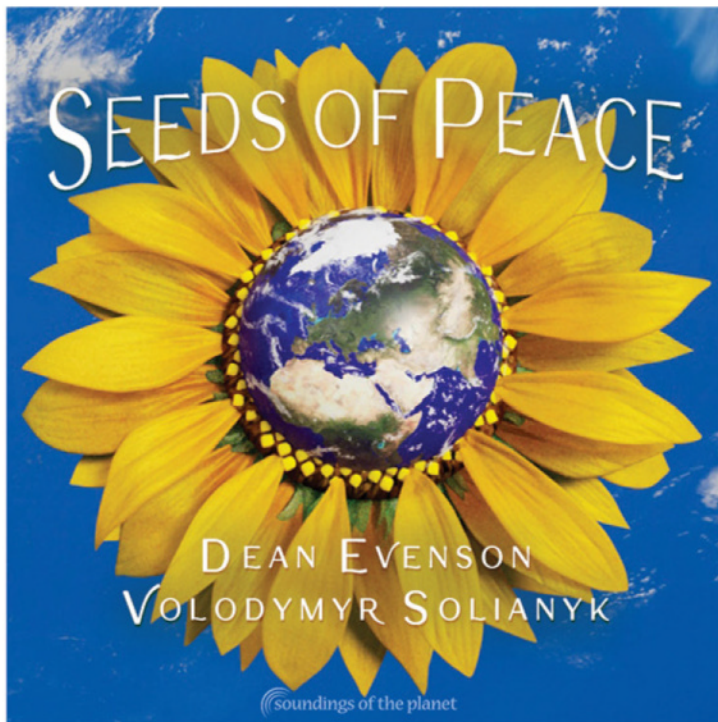
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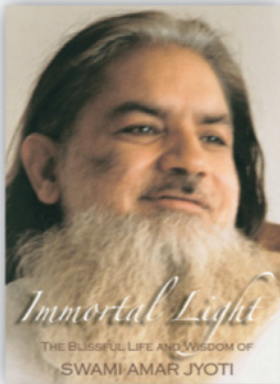
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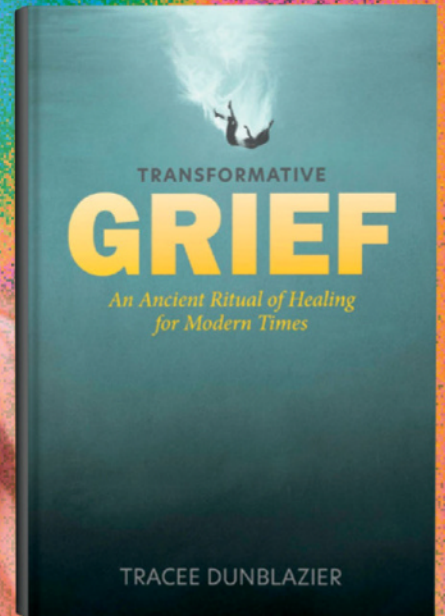
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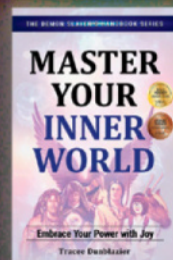
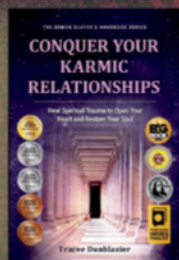
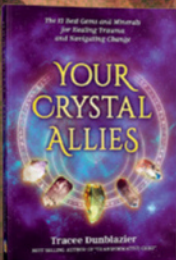
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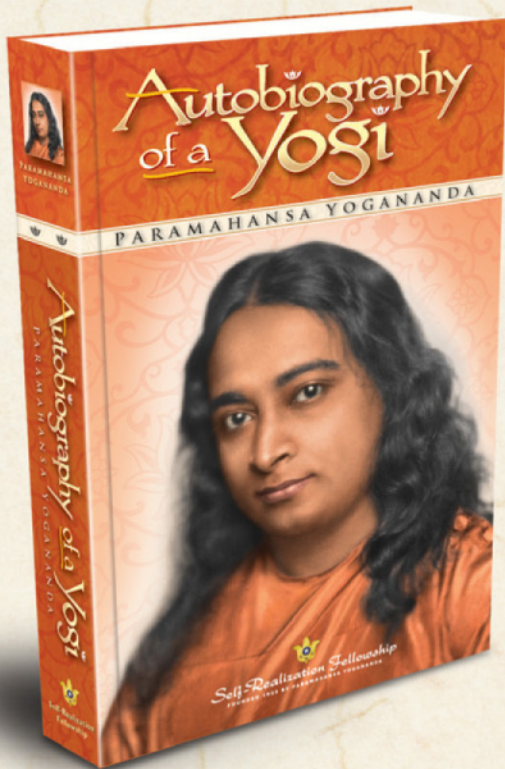
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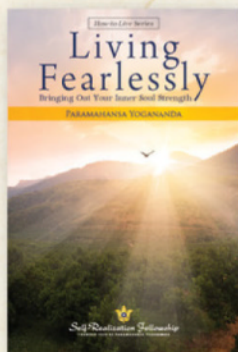
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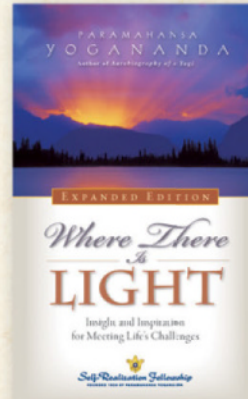
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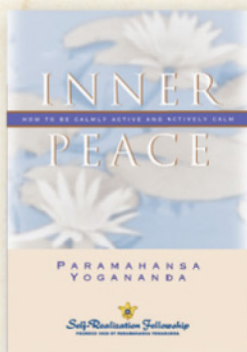


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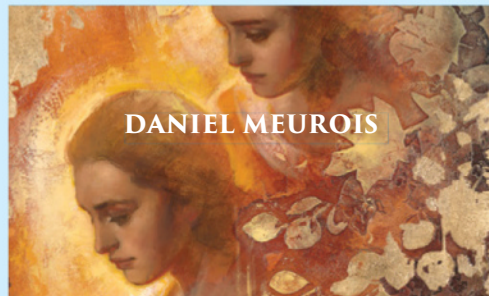
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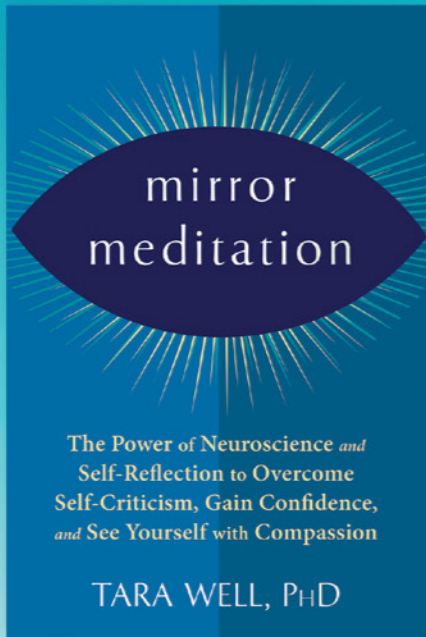
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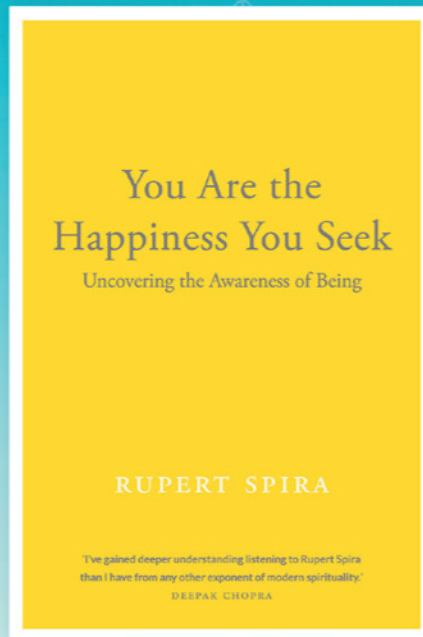
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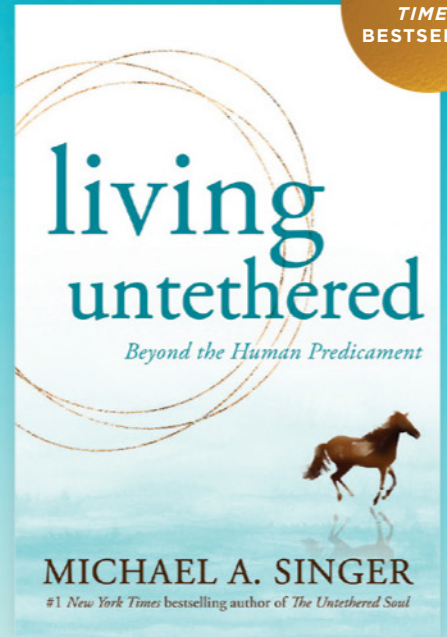
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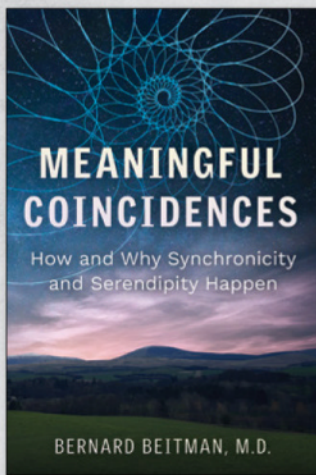


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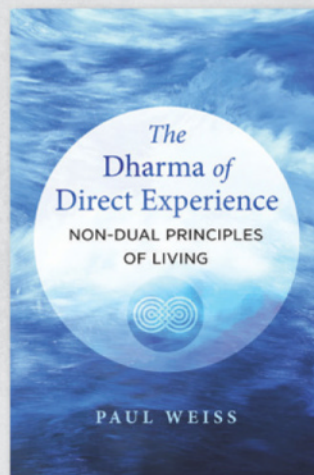
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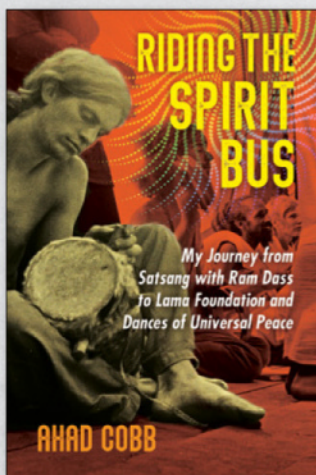
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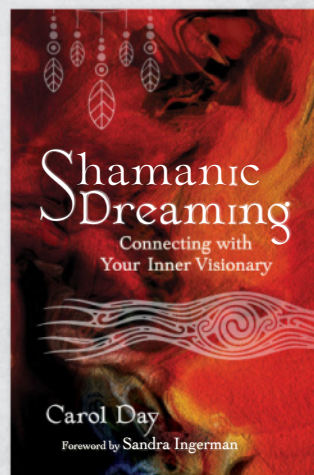
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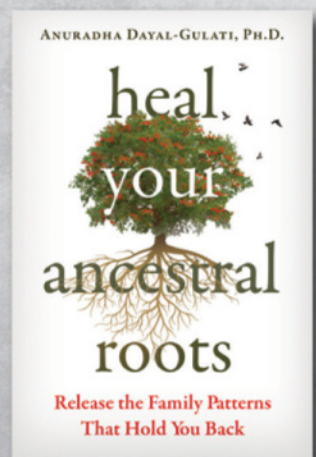
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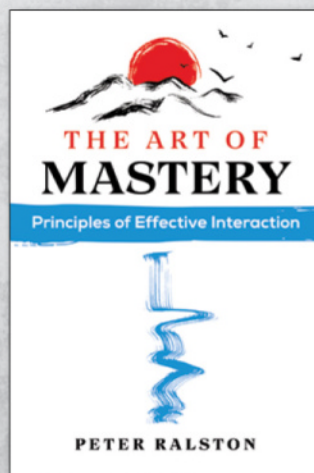
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